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By

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Mutual Authentication of Intangible Cultural Heritage:
The *Rush Mela* Festival in the Bangladesh Sundarbans

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Abstract

Authentic experiences of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) are popular as tourist attractions, particularly in developing countries. However, how the authenticity of ICH is conceptualized in the context of tourism and how ICH relates to community empowerment is unexplored in recent literature. This study aims to investigate how hosts and guests (in this case domestic tourists) at a traditional cultural festival perceived the role of ICH in community empowerment. The study also sought to identify the factors influencing how hosts and guests perceive the authenticity of ICH, and how the effect of mutual (host-guest) authentication of ICH can build on community empowerment. A qualitative case study approach was utilised to understand host and guest perceptions and experiences of the traditional Rush Mela Festival (as an example of ICH) in the Sundarbans forest region, specifically at the sites of Dublar Char (inside the forest) and Chila (on the periphery of the forest), in Bangladesh.

The study was based on a conceptual model for understanding mutual (host-guest) authentication of ICH and its relationship to community empowerment. This model was developed based on prior literature. The study revealed that the major elements of the Rush Mela Festival comprised of religious rituals, cultural programmes, economic activities, tourism, and community institutions. The majority of hosts and guests perceived that these elements play an important role in four dimensions of community empowerment (psychological, economic, social and political). However, there was some variation in the perceptions depending on the locality of the festival (i.e., Dublar Char or Chila) and the tourism opportunities available. The study found that factors such as the hosts’ attitudes, motivations, economic benefits, emotional benefits, individual participation, and institutional involvement influenced their perceptions of authenticity (both objective and existential) of the Rush Mela Festival. Also, the study found that factors such as guests’ attitudes, motivations, authenticity of objects, and authentic experiences also play a significant role in building guests’ perceptions of authenticity of the Rush Mela Festival.

Despite some differences, most of the hosts and guests have perceived that some of the objects (e.g. the statues of the God and Goddess, the temple, the dried fish and local foods...
(sweets)) and experiences (e.g. worship ceremony, the holy bath, cultural programmes, and meeting family and friends) during the Rush Mela Festival were authentic, and these support the objective and existential authenticity of the festival. Mutual authentication of the festival has led to host support and guest loyalty towards Rush Mela tourism. Few hosts were concerned about excessive tourism and commodification of cultural practices, whereas some guests were not satisfied as they expected improved tourist facilities and more authentic local products.

Moreover, the research also suggests that the mutual authentication of the festival and support for tourism have ultimately influenced the community’s psychological empowerment (i.e. strengthens spiritual belief), economic empowerment (i.e. increasing economic benefits), social empowerment (i.e. increasing social cohesion and consensus for preserving cultural tradition and natural resources), and political empowerment (i.e. development of community institutions). Finally, the study suggests that empowerment of the community could influence host and guest factors for authenticating the Rush Mela Festival and increasing loyalty and support for tourism, which could contribute to the development of sustainable ICH tourism. Further research should be carried out to test and validate the conceptual mutual (host-guest) authentication model in various ICH-based tourism contexts. Also, further study could explore the potential for a community-based ICH tourism programme that can facilitate the preservation of authenticity of ICH and enhance community empowerment.

**Keywords:** Mutual authentication, intangible cultural heritage, tourism, community empowerment, Rush Mela festival.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed By: Shahida Khanom

Date: 04 September 2019
Dedication

To

My parents Muminur Rahman and Minara Begum
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List of Publications and Awards/Achievements

During the course of this research work, the following peer-reviewed papers have been published or submitted for publication.

Journal Papers


Conference Papers


Award/ Achievements

Received ‘Best Paper Award’ at the 2nd Bali International Tourism Conference, Indonesia, 08 - 10 Nov 2018.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... i  
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................................... v  
List of Publications and Awards/Achievements .................................................................................. vii  
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................................... viii  
List of Tables ....................................................................................................................................... xii  
List of Figures ....................................................................................................................................... xii  
Abbreviations and Acronyms .............................................................................................................. xiv  

## Chapter 1: Introduction ................................................................................................................. 1  
1.1 Background to the research .......................................................................................................... 1  
1.2 Problem Statement ....................................................................................................................... 3  
1.3 The case study: Rush Mela Festival, Bangladesh .......................................................................... 6  
1.4 Research aim—objectives and questions ....................................................................................... 7  
1.5 Overview of research design ......................................................................................................... 9  
1.6 Research contribution .................................................................................................................. 10  
1.7 Structure of the thesis .................................................................................................................. 11  

## Chapter 2: Literature Review ........................................................................................................ 13  
2.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................................... 13  
2.2 Intangible Cultural Heritage .......................................................................................................... 13  
   2.2.1 Conceptual development of ICH ............................................................................................. 13  
   2.2.2 Conservation of ICH and tourism development ...................................................................... 17  
   2.2.3 The Festival as ICH and a tourist attraction .......................................................................... 21  
2.3 Authenticity ..................................................................................................................................... 25  
   2.3.1 The quest for authenticity in tourism ....................................................................................... 26  
   2.3.2 Authenticity of ICH ................................................................................................................ 28  
2.4 Empowerment ............................................................................................................................... 32  
2.5 ICH-based tourism and community empowerment ......................................................................... 33  
2.6 Existing models of authentication and empowerment ...................................................................... 39  
2.7 Gaps within the literature ............................................................................................................. 43  
2.8 Conceptual model of mutual host-guest authentication of ICH .................................................. 45
Chapter 3: Methodology ........................................................................................................51

3.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................51
3.2 Overall research framework .........................................................................................52
3.3 Research paradigm: Constructivism .............................................................................53
3.4 Research design ............................................................................................................54
   3.4.1 Case study approach ..............................................................................................54
3.5 Selection of the case study: Rush Mela festival, Sundarbans ........................................56
3.6 Data collection ................................................................................................................59
   3.6.1 Selection of the participants ..................................................................................59
   3.6.2 Hosts (community) participation in the Rush Mela Festival ..................................61
   3.6.3 Guests (Tourists) participation in the Rush Mela Festival ....................................64
   3.6.4 Semi-structured interviews ..................................................................................66
   3.6.5 Protocol for recording information ......................................................................72
3.7 Data analysis and interpretation ....................................................................................73
   3.7.1 The coding process ..............................................................................................74
   3.7.2 Interpretation of results .......................................................................................76
3.8 Credibility and trustworthiness .....................................................................................76
3.9 Ethical issues ..................................................................................................................78
3.10 Summary .....................................................................................................................80

Chapter 4: Case Study: The Rush Mela Festival .................................................................82

4.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................82
4.2 Location of Rush Mela (Dublar Char and Chila) .........................................................82
4.3 Brief history of the Rush Mela Festival in the Sundarbans, Bangladesh ....................84
4.4 Main programmes of the festival ..................................................................................85
4.5 Tourism trends and major participants in the Rush Mela Festival in the Sundarbans area ..........................................................................................................................92
4.6 Socioeconomic features of the study area ....................................................................94
4.7 Summary .....................................................................................................................95

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion on Perception of Hosts and Guests on Rush Mela Festival Tourism and Community Empowerment .............................................96

5.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................96
5.2 Elements of community empowerment in relation to the Rush Mela Festival .........96
Chapter 6: Findings and Discussion on Authenticity of ICH (Rush Mela) and Community Empowerment ................................................................. 122

6.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 122

6.2 Factors determining the authentic experience of guests (domestic tourists) at the Rush Mela Festival ..................................................................... 122

6.2.1 Guests’ attitudes ............................................................................................ 123

6.2.2 Guests’ motivations ....................................................................................... 127

6.2.3 Finding authentic objects by the guests ....................................................... 131

6.2.4 Finding authentic experiences by the guests ............................................... 133

6.3 Guest satisfaction and loyalty for Rush Mela tourism .................................. 137

6.4 Factors determining the authentic experience of the host at the Rush Mela Festival ....................................................................................... 139

6.4.1 Hosts’ attitudes ............................................................................................ 140

6.4.2 Hosts’ motivations ....................................................................................... 144

6.4.3 Hosts’ emotional benefit from objects and events ..................................... 145

6.4.4 Hosts’ economic benefits ........................................................................... 148

6.4.5 Hosts’ individual participation ................................................................... 151

6.4.6 Hosts’ institutional involvement ................................................................ 152

6.5 Hosts’ support for Rush Mela tourism ......................................................... 154

6.6 Mutual authentication (host-guest) process of the Rush Mela Festival (ICH) .. 156
6.7 Role of mutual authentication (host-guest) of ICH (Rush Mela) for sustainable community empowerment ................................................................. 162

6.8 Summary ................................................................................................................. 165

Chapter 7: Conclusions ................................................................................................. 167

7.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................ 167

7.2 Summary of major findings ....................................................................................... 168

7.2.1 Host and guests’ perception on role of ICH in community empowerment ........... 168

7.2.2 Host and guests’ factors affecting authentication of ICH ................................. 170

7.2.3 Mutual authentication of ICH (Rush Mela Festival) and relation to sustainable tourism and community empowerment ......................................................... 175

7.3 Theoretical contributions ......................................................................................... 178

7.4 Practical implications ............................................................................................... 182

7.5 Limitations of the research ...................................................................................... 187

7.6 Recommendations for future research .................................................................... 188

7.6.1 Future research to enhance knowledge of authenticity and ICH tourism ....... 188

7.6.2 Future research to enhance knowledge of Rush Mela tourism ....................... 190

References ..................................................................................................................... 192

Appendix-A: Interview Prompt for Hosts and Guests ................................................ 212

Appendix-B: Example of Interview Scripts in Bengali language ............................... 218

Appendix-C: Ethical Clearance from Griffith University ............................................. 226

Appendix-D: Participants’ Information Sheet .............................................................. 227

Appendix-E: Participants’ Consent Form .................................................................. 231

Appendix-F: Participant Profile .................................................................................. 234
List of Tables

Table 2.1: Significant steps in developing the ICH concept by UNESCO ............... 15
Table 2.2: Definition of authenticity ..................................................................... 25
Table 2.3: Impact of tourism on community empowerment ................................. 36
Table 3.1: List of case study types applied to tourism research ......................... 54
Table 3.2: Summary of selected participants ...................................................... 61
Table 3.3: Summary of data collection in Dublar Char and Chila .................... 71
Table 3.4: Preliminary list of themes and categories used for coding ................. 75
Table 4.1: Historical trends of tourism numbers and revenue in the West division of Sundarbans ................................................................. 93

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Consumer-based model of the authenticity of cultural heritage (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010) ......................................................................................... 40
Figure 2.2: Modified consumer-based model of the authenticity of cultural heritage (Zhou et al., 2013) ................................................................. 40
Figure 2.3: Model for tourist authentication and satisfaction (Cho, 2012). .......... 41
Figure 2.4: Structural model of host authenticity (Zhou et al., 2015) ............... 42
Figure 2.5: Conceptual model of mutual host-guest authentication of ICH .......... 46
Figure 3.1: Research framework ........................................................................ 52
Figure 4.1: Location of Dublar Char and Chila village in Bangladesh ............... 84
Figure 4.2: Worshipping of the statues of God and Goddesses ......................... 86
Figure 4.3: Holy bath in early in the morning in the Bay of Bengal in Dublar Char Rush Mela ........................................................................................................... 87
Figure 4.4: Flying sky lantern (Fanush) in Dublar Char Rush Mela ................. 88
Figure 4.5: Dried fish shop in Dublar Char Rush Mela ..................................... 88
Figure 4.6: Local sweets shop in Dublar Char Rush Mela ............................... 89
Figure 4.7: Craft shop (clay products) in Dublar Char Rush Mela ................. 89
Figure 4.8: Craft shop (wooden products) in Dublar Char Rush Mela .........................90
Figure 4.9: Craft shop (Sea-shell products) in Dublar Char Rush Mela .........................90
Abbreviations and Acronyms

ICH    Intangible Cultural Heritage
ICOM   International Council for Museums
LHT    Living Human Treasures programme
NPAs   Natural Protected Areas
IUCN   International Union for Conservation of Nature
WHS    World Heritage Sites
UNWTO  World Tourism Organization
UNESCO The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the research

Cultural tourism can provide economic benefits for local communities and is a growing part of the global tourist economy (Moswete & Thapa, 2015). Cultural tourism is especially important in developing countries where ‘exotic’ traditional practices, dissimilar to those of the tourists’ origin country, remain part of everyday life (Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009). Cultural tourists are interested in experiencing the authentic culture of local communities, particularly traditional practices, festivals, and rituals, which form their intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Cultural tourism experiences can enable close interaction between tourists and the local people (Cohen, 1988).

There are many examples of destinations where tourists experience historically significant ICH, such as the traditional cultural practices or festivals of the local community. Examples of festivals that draw a large number of visitors every year include the Mekong Naga Fireball Ceremony in Thailand (Cohen, 2007), Holy Week on the island of Sardinia (Giudici, Melis, Dessi, & Ramos, 2013), and the Rush Mela Festival in Bangladesh (Islam, Rahman, Iftekhar, & Rakkibu, 2018), which is the context of this research. Such festivals are usually associated with the religious beliefs of the local community, practiced over many centuries, and can have a significant influence on the local economy. They have become major tourist attractions, providing economic benefits to the local community, as well as revenue to the government (Moswete & Thapa, 2015). However, the growth of cultural tourism in developing countries requires the protection and management of communities’ ICH (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2012).
Cultural tourism may also be associated with unsustainable tourism practices that can impact on a community’s natural environment and may result in modifications to ICH practices that constituted the inherent tourist attraction itself (Fiorello & Bo, 2012; Zhou, Zhang, Zhang, & Ma, 2015). These impacts may include the commercialization of local products (Greenwood, 1977) and shifting community values from traditional spiritual beliefs to economic returns, both of which ultimately result in the loss of ICH authenticity. One such example is Komodo Dragon tourism in Indonesia (Walpole & Goodwine, 2001). Popularity has resulted in economic benefit from the flagship species (Komodo Dragon) which enhances a positive attitude within the local community who receive benefits from tourism activities. The popularity of the species can undermine the ICH value of the species and may influence priorities within customary park management. The commodification process potentially destroys the essential meaning and significance of the ICH to the local community and reduces the enthusiasm of locals for their ICH (Zhou et al., 2015). Therefore, understanding how it may be possible to maintain the authenticity of ICH has become a critical area in tourism research.

Several recent studies have investigated the authenticity of tourist attractions, including ICH, from a host or guest perspective (Cho, 2012; Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou, Zhang, & Edelheim, 2013; Zhou et al., 2015). However, these research have failed to address the holistic view of ICH tourism, where both guests and hosts interact and determine the authenticity of the ICH. It is also the case that much of the research suggests that community empowerment is essential for preserving the authenticity of ICH in the contexts of ICH tourism, which may influence the community to modify the ICH (Fiorello & Bo, 2012; Ghimire & Pimbert, 1997; Maruyama,
Woosnam, & Boley, 2016). However, there is little investigation that links the authenticity of ICH and community empowerment.

Considering these gaps in knowledge, this study provides a qualitative exploration of how ICH is viewed by hosts and guests of a similar culture (through domestic tourism) to examine the issues surrounding mutual authentication of ICH and its linkage with community empowerment. A better understanding of the linkage between the mutual authentication of ICH and community empowerment may help to prevent the commodification of ICH and strengthen the host community’s role in ICH based tourism. These gaps in the literature are discussed in detail in section 2.6 and followed by a methodological discussion in Chapter 3 through an in-depth case study of the Rush Mela Festival in Bangladesh.

1.2 Problem Statement

Heritage tourism is motivated by the desire to experience ICH which represents the past and present of a given tourist destination (Adongo, Choe, & Han, 2017; Leong, 2016). Festivals are one way that ICH can be consumed, and this has generated a growing body of literature (Derrett, 2003; Jaeger & Mykletun, 2013). One of the important attributes of a cultural festival is the perception of authenticity (Fu, Yu & Jiang, 2018; Xu, Wan & Fan, 2014). Authenticity is acknowledged as a universal value that motivates tourists to consume the festival (Farrelly et al., 2019). However, the role of the producer (the heritage manager) in shaping the meaning of authenticity is conceptually underdeveloped. Certainly, tourist perceptions of authenticity are greatly influenced by the core attributes of the process of the production (Farrelly et al., 2019). Often, the ICH of a destination is commodified according to suit tourist demand and the subsequent increased economic
benefits to the hosts, which may devalue the authenticity of the ICH (Fiorello & Bo, 2012; Zhou, et al., 2015).

Impacts on the authenticity of a community’s ICH can be addressed through a community-based approach to defining the ‘ownership’ (power) over the ICH attraction. However, this raises issues regarding the related concepts of authenticity and authentication, as well as links to community empowerment. A host community creates, maintains, and transmits ICH over generations (UNWTO, 2012) and therefore becomes the primary stakeholder in its authentication. However, it has been argued that the role of guests and institutions’ in the process of authentication is also vital for tourism development and safeguarding ICH (Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Mkono, 2013). Current literature discusses the authentication of ICH from either the host’s or the guest’s perspectives (Cho, 2012; Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou, Zhang, & Edelheim, 2013; Zhou et al., 2015). Cohen and Cohen (2012) have argued that authentication is a social process that must be negotiated by both host and guest. This is particularly emphasized for the existential authenticity of ICH, where the host and guest authenticate ICH by experiencing it (Kato, 2006; Wang, 1999).

Despite identifying the role of both host and guest in authentication of ICH, studies have tended to focus on the authentication process by host and guest separately. Some studies revealed the process of host authentication of the ICH, linking economic and psychological benefits gained from ICH as well as host’s support for tourism (Boley, McGehee, Perdue, & Long, 2014; Zhou et al., 2015). The authenticity of the hosts’ experience of ICH can be expressed in how they are involved with the ICH practice emotionally, economically, socially and politically. These expressions of involvement may further help to determine how the hosts’ authentication of ICH plays a role in the
four dimensions of community empowerment (economic, psychological, social, and political) (Kiss, 2004, Scheyvens, 1999).

In the case of guest’s authentication of ICH, a wide range of studies have focused on the authenticity of ICH in view of tourists’ experiences, with research efforts mainly dominated by studies on international tourists, and limited focus on domestic tourists (Io, 2014; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Li, 2004; Prentice, Witt, & Wydenbach, 1994; Zhou et al., 2013). International tourists can experience ICH through staged cultural events or performances, however, they may have limited opportunity to interact with hosts due to language barriers and short-stays in the area. In contrast, domestic tourists can be a key component of the ethnic tourist market, especially in many developing countries (Li, 2004). These domestic tourists can have meaningful interaction with the host communities by participating in ethnic cultural events or performances in a customary manner (del Barrio, Devesa, & Herrero, 2012), rather than through merely observing staged cultural events (Prentice et al., 1994; Zeppel, 1995, 1997). Therefore, domestic tourists can have a better opportunity to authenticate ICH than international tourists.

Studies on authentication of ICH by either host (Zhou et al., 2015) or guest (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010) have demonstrated only the psychological and economic benefits of ICH which result in partial empowerment in the context of Scheyvens’ (2009) four dimensions of empowerment being economic, psychological, social, and political empowerment. However, key findings of past authentication studies have tended to overlook the social and political aspects of empowerment (Zhou et al., 2015; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010, Cho, 2012). There is also little discussion of the mutual (host-guest) authentication of ICH and related power relation between host and guest, although community empowerment is considered essential for safeguarding ICH. Due to the lack of a greater understanding of
ICH authenticity and its links to community empowerment, the ICH tourism are not well developed yet (Alexander, 2009; Cole, 2007).

In view of this lack, this work presents a comprehensive investigation of the mutual authentication (host-guest) of ICH and its relationship to community empowerment. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to the improved management of ICH based tourism, which includes the engagement of community and other stakeholders while maintaining or preserving the authenticity of the ICH. Hence, this study will investigate the process of mutual (host-guest) authentication of ICH and its linkage with community empowerment in the case of the Rush Mela Festival in Bangladesh.

1.3 The case study: Rush Mela Festival, Bangladesh

The Rush Mela Festival is an example of traditional ICH in the Sundarbans region of Bangladesh. The festival attracts many tourists and for this reason it was selected as a case study for this research. The Rush Mela Festival was originally a religious ceremony of the Hindu community, and usually takes place every year on the full-moon night of the Karthik or Agrahayan months of the Bengali Calendar which corresponds with the month of October-November in the Gregorian calendar (“Rush Mela begins”, 2015). Generally, the festival is celebrated over three days and devotees perform the worship of Hindu Lord Krishna, including a holy bath in the Bay of Bengal and other folk performances (Yusuf, 2016). The worship is mainly performed by the fishermen who also engage in the catching and drying fish on Dublar Char and nearby islands in the Sundarbans region. As the festival attracts many Muslims, the Hindu worship also includes the legendary Muslim figures Bonbibi, Gazi and Kalu in the ceremony, recognising their remarkable contributions to save the forest. Around 40,000-50,000 tourists, including domestic and international, visit the festival every year (“Dubla Rush Mela”, 2008).
Following the Rush Mela in Dublar Char, initiatives were taken to organize the Rush Mela in Chila in 2012, which is located in the periphery of the Sundarbans. Chila was suffering from the scarcity of fresh water for drinking and agricultural purposes and the villagers explored a freshwater pond, which served their purpose for drinking and irrigation waters. The villagers therefore consider this pond a blessing from the almighty and decided to organize a Rush Mela to worship God Krishna. The festival usually falls in the same calendar month as Dublar Char, however, unlike the Dublar Char festival, the Chila festival does not include the performance of the holy bath. Around 20,000 people visit the Rush Mela in Chila every year (Field Interview, 2017). A more detail description of the case study context is provided in Chapter 4.

1.4 Research aim, objectives and questions

A literature review (see Section 2.6) identified a research gap in relation to host and guest authentication of ICH, which can influence host empowerment. The overarching aim of this research is to explore the mutual authentication of ICH and its relationship to community empowerment. The specific objectives of the research are:

1. To identify the perceptions of the hosts and guests in relation to the role of ICH in community empowerment;
2. To determine the factors that influence host and guest perceptions of ICH authenticity; and
3. To determine the process of mutual ICH authentication (host-guest) and its influence on community empowerment.
The following three questions drive towards the attainment of this research aim and objectives, with a focus on a specific case study of ICH – the Rush Mela Festival in the Bangladesh Sundarbans:

1. How do hosts and guests perceive the role of ICH (Rush Mela Festival) in community empowerment?
2. What factors lead to an authentic experience of ICH (Rush Mela Festival) by domestic tourists and hosts?
3. How can mutual authentication (host-guest) of ICH (Rush Mela Festival) build and sustain community empowerment?

Investigating the above three research questions will help to achieve the objectives and the aim of the research. Within the literature, the impact of tourism on community empowerment has tended to focus on the perspectives of the host community (Kato, 2006; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005), often ignoring the views of guests who are the main consumer of the tourism products offered by the community. In this research, Question 1 aims to explore the role of ICH, which is the main tourist attraction, in creating/achieving community empowerment. Understanding the view of guests in relation to community empowerment, together with the host’s perspective, will help to develop better policy for community empowerment through ICH tourism. Research Question 2 investigates the factors that lead to hosts and guests determination of ICH authenticity by. Although research has identified the factors that contribute to guest’s perceptions of authenticity within tourism products (or attractions) (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2015), very few studies have explored the host factors. To understand the mutual authentication process, we need to identify both host and guest factors that lead to their perceptions of ICH authenticity and this will be addressed in Research Question 2. The findings from Research Question 1 and 2 provide the foundations for Research Question 3, which aims to determine how the mutual authentication (host-guest) of ICH develops and its linkage to community empowerment. While several studies have investigated the authenticity of tourist attractions in view of either host or guest perceptions (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2015), none have considered mutual authentication (Moyle et al., 2010) and its linkage to community empowerment. The findings of Research Question 3, supported by Research Question 1 and 2, presents a
complete picture of ICH tourism by explaining how the authentic experience of ICH is perceived by the host and guest, the common ground in relation to authenticity, and linkages to community empowerment. Although the research was conducted on the Rush Mela Festival in Bangladesh, the findings of this study will provide insights for enhancing the authenticity of ICH based tourism attractions and explore opportunities for community engagement and empowerment in ICH tourism in the global context.

1.5 Overview of research design

This research has employed a constructivist qualitative approach which lends itself to a case study methodology that investigates mutual authentication. A case study is considered a convenient approach for this research for a number of reasons. First, a case study approach is considered appropriate for studies that raise “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 2009). Second, case study involves detailed enquiry of a phenomenon (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). This feature of case study approach is important where knowledge of a topic is not well-explored or does not exist (Punch, 2005).

The study involved in-depth interviews with 60 hosts and 60 guests of the Rush Mela festival in Sundarban. The categories of key informants (i.e., host categories include organising committee members, retailers including fishermen, tour operators, and forest officials; guest categories include tourists from different parts of Bangladesh) were identified through an extensive literature review prior to going to the field. An interview schedule and the field plan were discussed with the principal and associate supervisors, and three native Bengali speakers who were undertaking PhD research within Griffith University. The outcome of this discussion stressed a need to consult with local experts and NGOs who are engaged with the Sundarban festival to tease out relevant informants. The work was discussed with a local expert from environmental science discipline, who has extensive research and publication experience relating to the Sundarban. The local
expert then forwarded the issue to the Rupantor NGO to collaborate and identify key informants for the field research. A pilot interview was taken in collaboration with the NGO in the periphery (Chila) to check the suitability of interview prompts and modify/adjust the prompts for final interview.

The researcher conducted a field interview from the 3rd to the 5th of November, 2017 in Dublar Char (inside the Sundarbans) and the Chila (periphery of the Sundarbans). Rush Mela usually takes place at the same time in these two locations. The researcher also hired three research assistants to undertake interviews in Dublar Char and Chila. The assistants conducted onsite interviews with both hosts and guests during the festival. However, the majority of the interviewees preferred to be contacted by phone so that they could share their experience after the festival. Contact details were collected, and the researcher and research assistants conducted telephone interview within one week of the close of the festival.

The interviews were conducted in the native language (Bengali) and recorded via a tape recorder. In addition, interviewers kept notes of the interviews. The interviews were transcribed into Bengali and then translated into English. The English transcripts were cross checked with audio recordings and the Bengali transcripts to ensure consistency within the interview data. The researcher employed structural coding to assign the text into themes and categories to explore mutual authentication of the festival. Further details of the process are discussed in Chapter 3.

1.6 Research contribution

The core contribution of this research is the development of a conceptual host-guest authentication model for ICH, which accommodates the perspectives of guests and hosts.
with a similar cultural background. Therefore, the research will advance a conceptual understanding of the potential of mutual (host-guest) authentication of ICH and its linkage with community empowerment (economic, psychological, social and political).

This research will also enhance an understanding of how mutual authentication can be linked to both host and guest to engage in sustainable conservation of Sundarbans. The findings will help to gain insights into host-guest interaction in ICH tourism and potential influence on community empowerment. This research provides an in-depth study of the Rush Mela festival in view of ICH based tourism. The research has undertaken pioneer research to unlock the potential of the Rush Mela festival and its capacity to demonstrate community empowerment from a domestic tourism perspective.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1: Has outlined the broad direction of the research, providing an introduction to the research background, knowledge gaps, research aim and questions, research design and significance of the research within the field of cultural tourism.

Chapter 2: Critically reviews the literature on the nexus of ICH, authenticity and empowerment, with particular attention to exploring mutual authentication from core discipline context and theories.

Chapter 3: Identifies and justifies the methodology adopted for this research commencing with the philosophical approach, followed by a justification of research design, including data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations. A case study method was adopted for this study and relied on interview of both hosts and guests.
Chapter 4: Describes the location, presents a brief history, and outlines the programme of the Rush Mela Festival. The socio-economic features of the study area and tourism during the Rush Mela Festival are also discussed.

Chapter 5: Summarises the findings of the role of the Rush Mela in community empowerment from both the host and guest perspective. The role of Rush Mela is examined utilising the four dimensions of empowerment which include economic, psychological, social and political. The remaining discussion explores the views of hosts and guests in terms of empowerment.

Chapter 6: Presents the factors that lead to an authentic experience of Rush Mela festival as determined by domestic tourists. The factors that contribute to an authentic experience are then identified from the host perspective to explore how mutual authentication (host-guest) of ICH (Rush Mela festival) can build and sustain community empowerment.

Chapter 7: Concludes with a synopsis of key findings, a summary of the implications of this research for theory and practice, a statement regarding the unique contribution of this study, limitations of the study, and finally, suggested avenues for future research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the relevant literature on intangible cultural heritage (ICH), authenticity, and community empowerment. The chapter is structured in six sections. It begins by focusing on the conceptual development of ICH. The chapter then illustrates the contribution of the conservation of ICH in tourism development and the conceptualization of festivals as a form of ICH and as tourist attractions. In the third section, a review of literature focuses on the theoretical orientation of authenticity within the tourism literature. The fourth section addresses how ICH based tourism may drive community empowerment. The discussion on empowerment mainly focuses Scheyvens’ (1999) four dimensions of empowerment, namely economic, psychological, social and political empowerment. The fifth section presents the review of existing models of authentication, in relation to community empowerment. Finally, identified gaps in existing knowledge are highlighted, and is followed by a conceptual model of mutual host-guest authentication developed based on this review of literature.

2.2 Intangible Cultural Heritage

2.2.1 Conceptual development of ICH

This section traces the evolution of the terms ‘heritage’ and ‘intangible cultural heritage’, and their usage in international policy and academic research. In particular, this section highlights the active involvement of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in defining and guiding an understanding of ICH; critical to this research. The term ‘heritage’ can be traced back to 1790, originating from
the French term ‘*patrimoine*’, meaning ‘property’ and ‘heritage’ in English (De Naeyer, Arroyo, & Blanco, 2000). Early use of the term from a legal perspective inferred goods inherited from a father or mother, indicating personal heritage. Later, the term was used to refer to the common goods and property of the nation (Vecco, 2010). From the 1930s to 1945, the concept of patrimoine was associated with culture and was formalised in use by certain international institutions. This is particularly evident when Euripide Foundoukidis (General Secretary of the Organization of International Museums and the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation) first used the expression of artistic heritage at a conference in Athens in 1931. In the mid-1950s, the concept of cultural property, often used by various countries when referring to heritage, first appeared in the Hague Convention (1954), specifically for the protection of cultural heritage in a situation of armed conflict (Prott and O’Keefe, 1992; Vecco, 2010). Later, in 1956 in New Delhi, the UNESCO recommendations within the *International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations* defined the major principles for preserving archaeological remains of artistic and historic significance. The UNESCO recommendations of 1962 concerning the safeguarding of beauty and the character of landscapes and sites further emphasized the importance of protecting natural environments, and the man-made cultural heritage of particular groups. The first formal definition of heritage was given by the International Charter of Venice (1964), which stated:

> “*Imbued with a message from the past, the historic monuments of generations of people remain to the present day as a living witness of their age-old traditions. People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognized. It is our duty to hand them on so that the full richness of their authenticity is found*”.

This definition has stimulated discussion on the preservation of heritage around the world and has assumed concrete form in national documents, the work of ICOM and UNESCO.
UNESCO adopted a recommendation on the safeguarding of traditional culture and folklore in 1989, which brought the intangible aspects of cultural heritage within the international legal framework. This recommendation was the first step in the introduction of ICH as a formal convention within the policy and institutional domain in 2003. The adoption of the convention is demonstrated in Table 2.1, which presents the major steps for the international legal instruments and programmes brought by UNESCO to develop the safeguarding of ICH convention in 2003.

**Table 2.1: Significant steps in developing the ICH concept by UNESCO**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Legal instruments and programmes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore (1989)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity (2001)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Park, 2013

The 1989 Recommendation did not use the term ‘intangible cultural heritage’, but the terms ‘traditional culture’ and ‘folklore’ were used and could be interpreted as alluding to ICH as it is now understood. The 1989 Recommendation defined folklore or traditional culture as “the totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals and recognized as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity” (UNESCO, 1989). This Recommendation treated ICH as an object that could be disseminated to the public in
various ways, rather than as a form of cultural expression that requires transmission between generations within the community. It has been suggested that the consideration of ICH as an object gives the community a passive role in its safeguarding (Park, 2013). Following the UNESCO 1989 Recommendations on Traditional Culture and Folklore, a conference on the global assessment of the safeguarding of traditional culture and folklore was held in 1999 at the Smithsonian Institute in the USA. The conference formulated a draft action plan for safeguarding ICH with the active involvement of the local community together with national and international co-operation (Seitel, 2001). Many concepts from the action plan, including community involvement, were later included in the main parts of the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Park, 2013).

The push for community involvement was also stressed earlier when UNESCO introduced the Living Human Treasures programme (LHT) in 1993 to assign a person as a skill holder to transmit their cultural heritage. Following this, UNESCO made several Proclamations of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity (2001, 2003 and 2005) to raise awareness of the importance of safeguarding ICH. The programme was particularly focused on identifying, preserving, and protecting oral and intangible heritage in danger of disappearing. In the same period, UNESCO added its Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity that led to the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH. As a result of growing interest in preserving ICH, UNESCO adopted a separate Convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in 2003, in which ICH was differentiated from tangible forms of cultural heritage (although the interrelation between tangible and intangible cultural heritage was duly recognized in
The Convention). The UNESCO 2003 Convention provided a clear definition of ICH (UNESCO, 2003), which reads:

“intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation is constantly recreated by communities’ groups and in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity”.

In line with this definition, the 2003 Convention articulated ICH in the various domains related to human life, such as oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge, and practices concerning nature and the universe, language, and traditional craftsmanship. The Convention recognised the significant role of individuals, groups, and communities in safeguarding ICH in all these domains (Aikawa-Faure, 2009; Park, 2013).

The concept of ICH was introduced by UNESCO with the terms ‘folklore’ and ‘traditional culture’, however, the 2003 UNESCO Convention considers all intangible cultural heritage of both rural and urban societies that has traditional and historical significance to the community, is practiced by the present generation, and will be transmitted to future generations (Park, 2013).

2.2.2 Conservation of ICH and tourism development

Local communities particularly in developing countries have a long tradition in the management of protected areas. The development of tourism in a protected area such as Sundarbans (case study for this research), are not limited to the natural attraction. Tourists
are also interested in local customs that are part of the traditional management of the forest.

This section outlines the consequences of the inclusion of ICH in the conservation of the natural protected areas (NPAs) where the local community is a strong force for the management of these protected areas and are keen to develop tourism. The socio-cultural benefits of tourism are widely recognized (Harmon, 2003). Linkages between tourism and NPAs can reinforce the need for conservation (Eagles, McCool, & Haynes, 2002) and can present tourism as an economic stimulus from which the ‘conservation of ICH is justified and legitimated’ (Brockington, Duffy, & Igoe, 2012, p. 131). Revenue generated from protected areas can also impact positively on the socio-cultural wellbeing of the local community (Puhakka & Saarinen, 2013).

It is claimed that local intangible cultural heritage can impact on socio-cultural well-being in three distinct ways: first, as a source of attraction and addition to existing tourism offerings; second, as a conservation tool, especially where the natural environment has strong cultural meanings for the local community, and third, as a driver for facilitating culturally and naturally sensitive behaviour by visitors (Esfehani & Albrecht, 2016). The inclusion of ICH in the national protected areas to facilitate conservation by empowering the local community began with the establishment of Yellowstone National Park, USA in 1892 (Chape, Spalding, & Jenkins, 2008). The new paradigm of protected area conservation considers the ICH of the community as an inseparable part of conservation. This integration of the ICH in conservation management may also give the community a prominent role in boosting tourism, which has an impact on the economic framework of the protected areas (Esfehani & Albrecht, 2016).
Tourists who desire to gain knowledge about nature, often travel to protected areas in order to get close to nature, relax, and view plants and wildlife in their natural habitat (Patbak & Ashish, 2003). However, NPAs in developing countries are often populated and the local community has a traditional linkage with their ICH, which has cultural implications. The traditional linkage is prominent where there is archaeological exploration of local traditions or living rituals connected with built heritage including temples or mosques within the protected area (Esfehani & Albrecht, 2016). Arguably, such interactions are not limited to tangible experiences since the local festivals, rituals, spiritual practices, and worshipping ceremonies form a considerable part of the intangible cultural heritage (Abungu, 2012). ICH can incorporate natural features as well because it takes into account the aesthetic quality or educational value of the protected areas (Patbak & Ashish, 2003). Although NPAs are focused on nature-based attractions, their cultural features, both tangible and intangible, and are increasingly perceived as a means to attract tourists (Bowers & Corsane, 2014).

The current conservation practices of these NPAs (Phillips, 2003) is that the local communities and their ICH are inseparable from the protected area and recognises these areas as the homeland of local communities. In turn, these communities and protected areas, are intertwined in relation to tourism development. As such, the collective rights of locals to their territories, identity, and culture are acknowledged, together with the self-governance of their land and people (Graham, Amos, & Plumtre, 2003; Stevens, 2014). The locals, irrespective of their interest in tourism, need to realise the relationship between tourism and their own ICH, since many populated NPAs experience tourism visitation (Bello, Carr, & Lovelock, 2016). However, increasingly there is an understanding that tourism should emphasise an understanding and appreciation of the
local culture to ensure sustainable development, particularly in developing countries (Giudici et al., 2013; UNWTO, 2012).

These recent developments highlight the importance of local people in protected areas, their socio-cultural values, and ICH assets, which are often closely linked with the natural environment (Taylor & Lennon, 2011). Influenced by this new paradigm, planning approaches for decentralised participatory management that focus on community involvement and empowerment have been advocated (Beltrán & Phillips, 2000; Graham et al., 2003; Phillips, 2003). It is shown that cooperative management (co-management) can be a mechanism to negotiate conservation and socio-cultural objectives in order to enable integrated planning and management (Lane, 2001; Putney, 2003). Such approaches affirm the right of local communities to effectively participate in the designation, governance, and management of NPAs (Stevens, 2014). As ICH forms a significant part of the local cultural context, valuing communities according to the tenets of the new paradigm ensures that it is considered and represented in all local concerns.

Although tourism has not always been a driving force in the establishment of NPAs, it is now an increasingly significant component of many. As each area can encompass both tangible and intangible assets, visitors are able to engage with the place in multiple ways. Indeed, nature-based tourism attractions that are associated with a wide variety of (intangible) natural and cultural heritage can benefit from the inclusion of ICH in the overall tourism product mix (UNWTO, 2012). There are, however, important implications for tourism and tourism management regarding the use of ICH. By merely staying in the local communities and being exposed to the local lifestyle, traditional practices, or customs in person, ICH becomes an often-unintended aspect of the overall tourist experience. Even if unplanned, this exposure can increase tourists’ understanding
and appreciation of the local area and culture (UNWTO, 2012). This is why Giudici et al. (2013) suggest that experiencing ICH may be a driver for the advancement of sustainable tourism development.

2.2.3 The Festival as ICH and a tourist attraction

This section reviews literature which examines festivals as a form of ICH and tourist attraction. Festivals have become increasingly popular as tourist attractions, especially in developing countries as the concept of cultural heritage has shifted from the tangible to the intangible over the last few years. A comprehensive approach has been adopted (Greffe, 2004) to extend the concept of heritage from isolated monuments, historic buildings or archaeological sites to include gardens, landscapes, and forms of production as well as crafts and trades, rural heritage, and urban heritage. Following the extension of cultural heritage to include the intangible, there has been a shift in the criteria to assign cultural value in recognition of a collective identity and the objects’ capacity to interact with memory (Vecco, 2010). In this vein, intangible heritage such as customs, folklore, oral and performing traditions (like festivals), in religious or profane manifestations are also considered part of cultural heritage. The notion of cultural value has been transferred to aspects of an intangible nature (such as religious tourism, festival tourism, congress tourism, fairs, and celebrations), which increase the market for cultural tourism. Indeed, culture with its varied manifestations fulfils different expressions of tourism, which modern tourists consume enthusiastically (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2010).

The largest growing form of cultural consumption in recent years has been the cultural festival, which has ICH characteristics. Such an assertion is based on two main arguments. First, cultural festivals provide the experience of a live performance, which remains immaterial unless exploited by a cultural industry (del Barrio et al., 2012).
Second, such a festival draws on the specific background of accumulated cultural capital through the live performance of new or more avant-garde productions (Throsby, 1999). Such cultural festivals can be perceived as a resource since they display and reinterpret a cultural legacy, which can be considered as intangible cultural heritage.

All of these points offer reasons for the cultural festival, as a particular expression of intangible cultural heritage, to require further scholarly investigation (del Barrio et al., 2012). This particular expression of ICH gives the individual and the community the opportunity to create an idea of value through a live performance, which is then consumed by an audience. Secondly, the consumption of such festivals can trigger a positive economic impact on the society and finally, the effort in planning and management of such a festival can enhance the efficiency of institutional development and political engagement of the destination community (del Barrio et al., 2012).

A cultural festival may be defined as the organisation of a specific event that presents originality or innovation, involves a level of institutional involvement, and is performed over a certain duration, as well as frequency, over time (Frey, 1994; Getz, 2008). Festivals present common characteristics of a cultural experience, which result from a specific purpose and are performed through an intense process of production (McKercher, Mei, & Tse, 2006). So, it can be concluded that festivals are complex cultural phenomena, which are not only cultural manifestations but also constitute a cultural good and a process in which culture is consumed and recreated through renewed performance over time. That is why, the cultural festival is not only considered a service but also a major expression of intangible cultural heritage.
Recent studies by cultural geographers have focused on what festivals can contribute to the development of identities through storytelling and explain the identity through concerts and other events and then through the media, which retells those stories to others (Karlsen, 2007). Festivals also influence place identity by strengthening intangible values for the people involved in the festivals and for the host community itself. This is especially evident in the case of interrogated festivals where the sense of own identity by the host community is closely bound to their ICH attachment to place (Quinn, 2005). It is also recognised that sense of place may contribute to the shaping of the individual’s sense of self (Derrett, 2003). The central criteria of many festivals are to reflect local ICH in order to promote and preserve local history and culture (De Bres & Davis, 2001). De Bres and Davis (2001) argue that boosting the ICH value of a place can promote the sustainability of the festival. Community-based festivals celebrate both group and place identity and often patronage the smaller community rather than the larger group. The greater involvement in the small community festival enhances social interaction, which highlights their ICH value as compared to the larger community. Festivals can help to restore the value of ICH, which give the host community a voice of freedom rather than isolation (Derrett, 2003).

Festivals within a particular community may enhance the image of the place and reinforce their ties to ICH through storytelling and media. Moreover, a festival can bring benefits to a rural community through short term and long- term employment, which enhance social cohesion and the reinvention of places and their images (Brennan-Horley, Connell, & Gibson, 2006). Brennan-Horley et al. (2006) also argue that some communities grow through the continual transmission of ICH through the celebration of festival, whereas some become caught in a vicious cycle of decline, losing residents, industries, and
confidence in their ICH and their capacity to promote a sustainable future (Brennan-Horley et al., 2006). Festivals may also be a sign of development potential by restoring the ICH despite a decline in the population (Gerrard, 2000). Owusu-Frempong (2005) argued that a festival could be a tool for ICH reconstruction and the transmission of knowledge to the younger generation. Further, Winchester and Rofe (2005) showed in their study of the Lobethal Lights Festival that the intersection of the rural ICH heritage and community brought joy and pleasure to the givers and the receivers. Lobethal’s Christmas wonderland presents simplicity, community, and Christianity in a time and place set apart from the urban every day. Festivals can also contribute to reinterpreting ICH identity tied in different spaces (Elias-Vavotsis, 2006). For example, the Cebuano Food Festival’s reinterpretation of ICH identity, strengthens the community’s collective memories and town identity. Food and fiesta provide an authentic taste of ICH which provides the town residents a sense of history through storytelling with links to the physical landscape (Sabanpan -Yu, 2007). However, it is also recognised that festivals could become placeless due to increased globalization and commodification of culture (McClinchey, 2008).

The rise of the consumption of festivals in recent times may be due to reasons of supply and demand. The argument has been made that a tourists’ higher level of income and education will lead them to seek out and consume authentic experiences at a festival (Seaman, 2006). Such cultural consumption shifts the practice of tourism to enjoying the particular expression of ICH. Many cultural festivals are thus celebrated in the holiday vacation, which satisfies tourists’ authentic taste for participating and engaging in a festival (Ali-Knight, Drummond, McMahon-Beattie, Robertson, & Yeoman, 2004). This section concludes that festivals can be seen as ICH and their potential to attract experience
seeking tourists may provide the foundations for host empowerment. The next section presents a conceptual clarification of authenticity in tourism in relation to ICH and community empowerment.

2.3 Authenticity

Authenticity within the context of tourism, implies all that is genuine, unadulterated, without hypocrisy, and honest in itself, in terms of superficial characteristics (Relph, 1976). The concept of authenticity has been deployed in tourism studies in several overlapping senses which are as follows:

Table 2.2: Definition of authenticity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author (Year)</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taylor (2001)</td>
<td>‘Sincerity’, particularly in human relationships, in the expression of feelings, as in the ‘sincere welcome’ extended to the guest, or in ‘sincerely yours…’ in the conventional ending of a letter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel (1996)</td>
<td>‘Creativity’, particularly in cultural production, as in the work of artists, musicians, and dancers; its antonym, copied, is when the imitation is overt and fake if it is covert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohen (2004)</td>
<td>‘In pristine condition’, in an unadulterated state, particularly of nature, such as a ‘pristine tropical paradise’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the abovementioned definitions, this research focuses on the genuineness of the product, which can be categorised as objective authenticity and the expression of feeling, known as existential authenticity. The following section will explore the theoretical clarifications of authenticity in tourism.
2.3.1 The quest for authenticity in tourism

Authenticity in tourism has generated diverse scholarly discourse over the past four decades (Barthel-Bouchier, 2001). During the early 1970s, the concept of authenticity first emerged to advance inquiry surrounding the impact of modernity upon the unity of social existence (Berger, 1973; Trilling, 1972). Authenticity has the sense of ‘origin’; this usage is borrowed from the language and practices of museums (Trilling, 1972; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006), where its antonym is falsification. The judgments of authenticity in this sense are based mostly on such criteria as antiquity, a traditional or customary way of production and usage, pedigree, and authoritative certification (Bruner, 2005). Authors in tourism studies have frequently used the term authenticity, at least implicitly, in this sense. Its use involves the tacit assumption that the tourist’s quest resembles that of the ethnographer or anthropologist (van den Abbeele, 1980), eliciting the claim by critics that tourists are not ethnologists (Cohen, 2007). According to Trilling (1972), the term authenticity was primarily applied in museums to determine:

“…whether objects of art are what they appear to be or are claimed to be, and therefore worth the price that is asked for them or, if this has already been paid, worth the admiration they are being given” (p.93)

The process of certifying original artefacts by curators and ethnographers was later conceptualised as a determination of their objective authenticity. During this time, authenticity was considered as primitive and tourism was thought to adversely impact on the authenticity of the local culture, particularly ICH (Appadurai, 1986). However, McCannell (1973) argued that even though the tourists themselves think they may have gained authentic experiences, this may be judged as inauthentic, if the toured objects are in fact false or contrived, commonly referred to as staged authenticity. In contrast, Cohen
(1988) suggested that authenticity is a socially constructed concept and therefore negotiable.

Importantly, authenticity is noted to be constructed by points of view, beliefs, perspectives or power, aptly termed, constructive authenticity (Wang, 1999). This notion is thus relative, negotiable, determined by contexts (Salamone, 1997), and often ideological (Silver, 1993). It can be the projection of one’s imagination, stereotypical thoughts, and expectations of toured objects (Bruner, 1991; Silver, 1993).

According to Wang (1999), unlike both objective and constructive authenticity, which involve whether and how the toured objects are authentic, the existential experience involves personal or intersubjective feelings activated by the liminal process of tourist activities. In such an experience, people feel they themselves are much more authentic and more freely self-expressed than in everyday life. This is not because they find the toured object is authentic but because they are engaging in non-ordinary activities. A potential existential state of being can be activated by tourist activities, which are in this case, characterized by what is termed existential authenticity.

During late 2000s, the negative impacts of the commodification of ICH was increasingly expressed within the tourism literature (Cohen, 2007). To designate something as authentic is associated with the conferring of status and is bound up with the issue of power (Xie, 2011). To this end, Xie (2011) identified key stakeholders, including governments, tourism businesses, tourists, and ethnic communities, as implicated in the authentication of ethnic tourism products.

Arguably, authentication as a social process by which the authenticity of a tourist attraction (role, product, site, object or event) is confirmed, remains almost unexplored
In the field of tourism, there exist two modes of authentication from a power relation perspective and can be theorized as ‘cool’ and ‘hot’ (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). Cool authentication is typically a single, explicit, often formal or even official, performative act, by which the authenticity of an object, site, event, custom, role, or person is declared to be original, genuine, or real, rather than a copy, fake, or spurious, which is usually assessed by scientific knowledge and is certified by an identifiable authenticating agent (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). A prominent example is inclusion on the lists of World Heritage Sites (WHS) and ICH by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2016).

In contrast, hot authentication is an imminent, reiterative, informal performative process of creating, preserving, and reinforcing on object’s, site’s, or event’s authenticity (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). It involves a high degree of commitment and self-investment on the part of the participants. Hot authentication is an accumulative, self-reinforcing process: the performative practice by and between visitors helps to generate, safeguard, and amplify the authenticity of the visited site or event (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). The case study of the Naga Fireball Ceremony is an illustration, as it is supported by the belief and worship of local populations in Thailand (Cohen, 2007).

### 2.3.2 Authenticity of ICH

Early work on authenticity attracted global attention, as issues surrounding the commodification of culture were identified to have the potential to destroy the meaning of local product, and inadvertently detract from the tourist experience (Greenwood, 1977). Specifically, studies during this era found that the propensity of tourism to transform destination communities was critical to tourists’ perceptions of authenticity (Appadurai, 1986). Issues surrounding the touristic consumption of ICH also became
prominent, with the potential commodification of local customs such as rituals and feasts, and folk and ethnic arts beginning to enter scholarly discourse (Appadurai, 1986). Related issues, such as tourist-orientated prostitution also attracted attention in the literature, with academics arguing that this was a form of commodification and exploitation of vulnerable communities (Greenwood, 1977).

However, alternative views emerged in extant literature, citing that tourism does not necessarily destroy the meaning of ICH products for host and guest; instead, this depends on the tourist experience (Cohen, 1988). As such, authenticity was identified as undefined, primitive and in need of conceptual clarification and theoretical refinement to provide empirically driven insights into the nature of modern tourism and its impact upon host communities (Cohen, 1988).

Due to the ongoing debate surrounding commodification, to preserve the authenticity of ICH, host community empowerment was emphasized, especially in protected areas (Meyer & Helfman, 1993; Ghimire & Pimbert, 1997; Maruyama, Woosnam, & Boley, 2016). Host community-based conservation was introduced by UNESCO during 1979, to enhance biodiversity conservation while providing an incentive for the use of ICH to empower destination communities.

Most of the early initiatives by UNESCO’s Man and Biosphere programme actually undermined host cultural and social norms, along with traditional or indigenous knowledge (Wells & Brandon, 1993; Ghimire & Pimbert, 1997). The concept of park and protected area management which reflected a North American and European mindset towards nature, separate humanity from nature or the natural environment. This arguably western mindset often conflicts with the local/indigenous views in relation to the human
environment relationship (Ghimire & Pimbert, 1997). This, in turn, excluded marginal groups from the use of ICH for empowerment, with the commodification of unique culture ensuing (Hackel, 1999; Wainwright & Wehrmeyer, 1998). Core findings from earlier research on ICH unearthed that commodification varies depending on host-guest interaction, in addition to other factors such as the power relations to process authentication, local empowerment, and control (Liu, 1994; Akama, 1996; Jackson, 1999).

During the early 1980s, the emergence of mass tourism led to debate surrounding the influence of Western culture on the ICH of indigenous, remote, and traditional communities across the globe (Wood, 1984). As such, tourism in destinations with limited alternative development options were promoted purely for the exponential growth of Western tourists, rather than for the preservation of unique ICH (Van den Berghe & Keyes, 1984). For instance, mass tourism led to costumes used in Tahitian traditional dance being modified to accommodate the exoticism perceived by Western tourists (Dilley, 1986).

During the 1990s, there was a shift in the literature from object to existential authenticity, to encompass the living value of ICH as a mechanism for building host community empowerment, thus reducing the negative impact on communities (Stephen, 1990; Casey, 1993). Existential authenticity involves personal or intersubjective feelings activated by tourists’ experiences of ICH, including visiting friends and relatives, beach holidays, nature tourism, ocean cruising, shopping, fishing, hunting or sports (Wang, 1999).

Towards the end of the decade the concept of authenticity shifted from power relations, to the process of authentication of ICH, as a mechanism for empowering host
communities (Noy, 2009; Xie, 2011). As such, cool authentication by UNESCO in tourism is problematic due to a lack of accepted criteria for certifying tourist attractions as authentic (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). However, Kim and Jamal (2007) argue that acts of hot authentication typically take place within a backdrop of destination communities and are invoked by the experiential reflection of participation. Mkono (2013) concluded that instances of hot authentication were much more prevalent than instances of cool authentication when considering the empowerment of a destination community.

As Yu (2015) argued, ICH safeguarding requires officials and experts who should know how to research, preserve, protect, promote, enhance, transmit, educate, and revitalize various aspects of heritage to fulfil the requirements of their job, making expert knowledge essential in ICH authentication. However, this elite-driven approach also marginalizes vernacular understandings and practices of ICH by host communities. Similarly, studies by Fan (2014) and Yan (2015) have pointed to a lack of involvement by local communities in heritage conservation. As Yan (2015) noted, heritage conservation in China privileges expert knowledge over local voices, while it empowers the government by ignoring local residents’ capability.

Recent scholarly discourse from Maags and Holbig (2016) focused on the identification and authentication of ICH in China, which is dominated by government-scholar networks, potentially limiting the involvement of other stakeholders in the certification process. In a contrary example however, to recognize ICH, the villagers (a shaman group) of Pamsom in South Korea signed a petition to inscribe the cultural practice of Pugundung Kut onto the UNESCO ICH list. This was designed by reconstructing their identity through the recreation of their long village history (Kwon, 2017).
Walter (2016) found that the residents of Bann Tong Luang in Thailand were largely in control of the direction of tourism development in their villages. To authenticate ICH, visitors were billeted in local homes, ate home-cooked meals with local families, participated in agricultural, livelihood, and cultural activities, and were taken on forest treks with local guides, directly paying local people for these experiences.

While distinguishing between different processes of authentication, the notion of hot and cool authentication fails to address the interaction between host and guest for mutual authentication (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). In a situation of mutual authentication, the sincerity of the relationship between host and guest results in a deeper feeling of empowerment (Zhu, 2015).

2.4 Empowerment

Empowerment is the capacity of individuals or groups to determine their own affairs to have control over factors that affect their lives (Di Castri, 2003). It represents the end of participation where community members are active to make their own decisions, implement actions, and evaluate their decisions. While a body of literature exists in relation to empowerment and employment (Lashley, 2001; Wynne, 1993), there are few studies that highlight the empowerment and tourism development outside the business sector (Sofield, 2003). Scheyvens (2003) built a framework of the four dimensions of empowerment grounded on community-based eco-tourism perspectives. The four dimensions include economic, psychological, social, and political empowerment. The economic benefits through employment and business in tourism provides for the economic empowerment of the community (Scheyvens, 2003). The economic empowerment of the host community through tourism are well documented in the tourism
literature (Kato, 2006; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005; Scheyvens, 2003). Psychological empowerment comes from self-esteem and pride in cultural traditions (Scheyvens, 2003). The ability of tourism bring pride is also widely discussed (Adams, 1997; Bissevain, 1996; Cole, 1997). Recognition of the outsider may also add to the self-esteem of the ICH of the community group and individuals. For example, in Kiltimagh, Ireland, a number of enterprise development awards added to the community’s sense of pride (McGettigan et al., 2005). Social empowerment arises from increased community cohesion when members of community are brought together through a tourism initiative (Scheyvens, 2003). Many studies have suggested that the enhancement of community cohesion helped to increase social empowerment (e.g. in Bali (Sanger, 1988), in Ngadha (Cole, 2003), and in Ireland (Mc Gettigan et al., 2005). Scheyvens’ (2003) fourth dimension of empowerment is political empowerment, which can be regarded as multidimensional process that offers the community the opportunity to choose and ability to make decisions which directly benefit the community (Sofield, 2003). Defining all these four dimensions of empowerment in the context of tourism could help to develop policies that can enhance the host community’s ownership and decision-making powers.

2.5 ICH-based tourism and community empowerment

Traditional cultural festivals of indigenous communities, as a form of ICH, have gained popularity for both domestic and international tourists. For instance, the Holy Week celebration of Christian communities in Sardinia, that includes events on several days such as Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, in the week leading to Easter Sunday, attracts many domestic and international tourists, mainly of Christian backgrounds (Giudici et al., 2013). Another example is the Rush Mela festival in Sundarbans, Bangladesh. As introduced in Chapter 1, Rush Mela is a large folk festival
predominantly observed by the Hindu community, which has become a major attraction with both domestic and international visitors in recent years (Islam et al., 2018; Yusuf, 2016). A community’s ICH in the form of a cultural festival can be considered to be a good or service from an economic point of view, in addition to its evident status as a major expression of cultural heritage. Festivals are crucial for generating income for the host as they tend to foster interaction at some level between the community (host) and the tourists (guests) (Heuman, 2005).

Much intangible cultural heritage, irrespective of its form of expression, is promoted by the government or local community without understanding the guests’ interest in authenticity. While ICH based tourism brings economic benefits and recognition of traditional cultures, there are claims of the commodification of ICH due to mass tourism. During the early 1980s, the emergence of mass tourism led to an ongoing debate surrounding the influence of Western culture on the ICH of indigenous, remote, and traditional communities across the globe (Wood, 1984). As such, tourism in destinations with limited alternative development options were at times promoted purely to grow the numbers of Western tourists, rather than with the intention to preserve the community’s unique ICH (Van den Berghe & Keyes, 1984).

The increasing recognition of the importance of ICH resulted in a shift in academic literature in the late 1990s, with studies beginning to examine issues surrounding the preservation and protection of oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, and traditional craftsmanship, all with the emphasis on host community empowerment (Kirshenbalt-Gimblett, 2004). One such study on the Pataxo Indians of Porto Seguro of Brazil indicated how ICH was transformed with the primary motive of preserving authenticity through the commodification of craftwork and
performing arts. Initially, craftwork had been limited to necklaces made from tree seeds. However, this research uncovered that wood items, earrings, necklaces, loin-cloths, rattles, and a variety of additional decorative objects were critical to revising and sustaining this group’s cultural heritage (de Azeredo Grunewald, 2002).

In reaction to the commodification of ICH and the inequitable distribution of benefits, ecotourism emerged as an alternative to empower communities (Scheyvens, 1999; Di Castri, 2004). Scheyvens (1999) suggested that ecotourism could have impact on community empowerment at economic, psychological, social, and political levels (Table 2.3). However, the business of ecotourism often replaced ICH, thus eliminating the psychological empowerment of destination communities (Entwistle, 2000). For example, the commodification of the Komodo dragon in the Komodo National Park changed the host community attitude towards the conservation of this charismatic vertebrate (Walpole & Goodwine, 2001). This shift was driven by a desire for economic returns, rather than intangible values, particularly in relation to spiritual worship, folklore or art, or use for food or handicrafts (Walpole & Goodwine, 2001). Such commodification is especially common in developing countries, where conservation is dominated by flagship species preferred by international tourists, donor and membership groups, rather than being established by local cultural and religious interest (Bowen-Jones & Entwistle, 2002). The scenario is same in the selected research case study in Bangladesh Sundarbans where the tour operators promoted the Royal Bengal tiger as the primary tourist attraction and offer only limited travel plans within the forest. The focus on the tiger as an attraction somewhat hindered the role of the Rush Mela festival to contribute more to local empowerment.
### Table 2.3: Impact of tourism on community empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological empowerment</th>
<th>Economic empowerment</th>
<th>Social empowerment</th>
<th>Political empowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indication of empowerment:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indication of empowerment:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indication of empowerment:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indication of empowerment:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing self-esteem of community members due to recognition of their values and uniqueness of their culture, natural resources and knowledge by the tourists.</td>
<td>Enhanced economic activities and lasting businesses in the community due to tourism; increased employment; improved infrastructures.</td>
<td>Social cohesion and integrity enhanced; individuals and families work together; cooperation for funding for community development.</td>
<td>Well-structured community organization and representation of different groups in decision making; all initiatives are dealt with shared decision-making process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indication of Disempowerment:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indication of Disempowerment:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indication of Disempowerment:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indication of Disempowerment:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facing hardship due to limited access to resources in protected areas; confused, frustrated or lost interest to tourism and protected area management.</td>
<td>Less economic benefits to the local community; Elites/big businesses get most profits; lack of capacity or skills to get economic benefits.</td>
<td>Decreasing or loss of social harmony or cohesion; lose respects to each other; suppression of ethnic minority or socially disadvantaged groups due to tourism.</td>
<td>Autocratic and/ or self-interested leadership; less or no involvement of the community in decision making or implementing tourism venture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adopted from Scheyvens, 1999

During the early 2000s, much of the conservation of ICH was poorly integrated, resulting in political and social disempowerment (Tosun, 2000). For instance, Campbell (2002a) noted the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) relied heavily on
western scientific criteria to determine appropriate conservation practices. In addition, contemporary examples of bioprospecting in Costa Rica demonstrated that employment of locals was minimal, with external investors acquiring patents for genetic resources of endemic medicinal plants (Campbell, 2002b). A key example of commodification is evidenced by an ecotourism project in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan, China, where tour operators influenced the host community to devalue their culture in order to present a highly stereotypical cultural experience to ecotourists. In turn, this undermined social empowerment to present the local tradition to such tourists (Walter, 2004).

The ongoing debate regarding commodification of ICH attracted the attention of global organizations such as UNESCO (2003), where it was recognised that there was a need for the values of traditional custodians to be integrated into policy and planning as exemplified by the ICH Convention. As such, in the early 2000s, the literature shifted to focus on how it might be possible to preserve authenticity and reduce commodification, while still providing communities with an opportunity to preserve their unique cultural heritage and generate a sustainable livelihood (de Azeredo Grünewald, 2002; Medina, 2003; Mason, 2004; Taylor, 2001).

In the early 2000s, the literature began to focus more on how to maintain authenticity and reduce commodification, while still providing communities with an opportunity to preserve the unique cultural heritage and generate opportunities for sustainable livelihoods (de Azeredo Grünewald, 2002; Mason 2004; Medina, 2003; Taylor, 2001). More specifically, it was recognized that the kind of food and drinks offered to tourists may have implications for the economic, cultural, and environmental sustainability of tourism destinations. Arguably, a focus on locally sourced products can result in a benefit for both guests and hosts, and empower the local community (Torres, 2002). Medina
(2003) conducted an ethnographic study of a Mayan host community, finding that traditional lifestyles had been modified to suit tourists. To overcome this issue, archaeologists worked closely with traditional owners to ensure the unique ideology surrounding ancient Mayan cosmology was portrayed to tourists in an authentic manner, while still delivering a high-quality experience. In this research, the conceptual clarification of objective and existential authenticity from both the hosts’ and guests’ perspectives were essential in order to consider the commodification of ICH. As the negative impacts of mass tourism became increasingly evident, it became clear that the power relations to certify the authenticity of ICH from a host’s perspective were especially important to add conceptual clarity and refinement, with the potential to enhance host community empowerment and improve destination development (Kato, 2006; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005).

During the late 2000s, there was a shift away from authenticity to an emphasis on the power relations involved in the process of authentication from a host-guest perspective, specifically to empower hosts (Alexander, 2009; Ateljevic & Doorne, 2005; Cole, 2007; Noy, 2009). For example, recent research on performance in tourism studies (Knoudsen & Waade, 2010) has documented the constitutive role of the public in the authentication of objects, sites, or events as tourist attractions. The findings stressed that performance leads to remove the barriers between the ‘stage’ and the ‘audience’ to enhance host and guest interaction for the authentication of the ICH. To ensure the sustainability of the authenticity of the ICH, host community empowerment was noted in studies to consider both the antecedents and consequences of host authentic experiences (Xie, 2011). Moreover, Fiorello and Bo (2012), in a study of the indigenous reserve in Malekus, Costa Rica, mentioned that the commodification of the ICH, based on the touristic experience
of authenticity, empowered the host community at the physiological, social, and political levels. This research found the equitable distribution of benefits among the host community stimulated cultural pride, generated social capital, and contributed to positive governance practices. However, findings did not clarify how the authenticity of the ICH was negotiated between the host and guest without commodifying unique cultural traditions, which is critical for ensuring community empowerment.

2.6 Existing models of authentication and empowerment

The previous debates in relation to authentication and empowerment are embodied in several authentication models developed based on host and guest perceptions of authenticity (Cho, 2012; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013). The consumer-based model of authentication was developed by Kolar and Zabkar (2010), in order to demonstrate the relationships between tourist cultural motivation, authentic experience, and tourist loyalty towards the tour attraction (Fig. 2.1). An empirical examination of the model suggested that tourists’ cultural motivation was an important precursor of both object-based and existential authenticity, which influenced tourist loyalty. Zhou et al. (2013) have further updated Kolar and Zabkar’s (2010) consumer-based model by adding ‘attitude’ as another variable and amended the relationships between the variables in the structural model (Fig. 2.2). Attitude was defined by Zhou et al. (2013) as the tourists’ level of understanding of the traditional culture and the extent of their preference for it. The study found that the public’s ignorance of traditional culture affected their perceptions of authenticity, which led the tourists to give importance to the aesthetics and form of the objects or materials, rather than focusing on the experience of traditional culture.
Figure 2.1: Consumer-based model of the authenticity of cultural heritage (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010)

Figure 2.2: Modified consumer-based model of the authenticity of cultural heritage (Zhou et al., 2013)

Cho (2012) offered an alternative conceptual model to explore the relationship between tourist motivation, authenticity, and tourist satisfaction (Fig. 2.3). In Cho’s (2012) model, motivation affects both objective and existential authenticity, which influence tourist satisfaction through both expense and experience. Satisfaction is found to encompass cognitive and affective components yet is considered to be the key driver of consumer loyalty (Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Bryant, 1996; Oliver, 1997). However, Zhou et al. (2013) argued that motivation has no impact on existential authenticity, which opposes Kolar and Zabkar’s (2010) and Cho’s (2012) findings, that both forms of authenticity are related to motivation. Zhou et al. (2013) found that attitude, including
individual beliefs, interests, and understanding of tourism activities, has no effect on the motivation for visiting ICH attractions and does not influence loyalty directly.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 2.3: Model for tourist authentication and satisfaction (Cho, 2012).**

Subsequent studies have tended to focus on the process of host authentication. For instance, Zhou et al. (2015) revealed that host attitudes towards traditional culture plays a role in the process of host authentication, since it affects both objective and existential authenticity (Fig. 2.4). Host attitude is directly influenced by personal emotional benefit, whereas personal economic benefits are indirect and hidden from any obvious position in the hosts’ support of tourism. Therefore, personal emotional benefits potentially emanate from the mutual exchange of culture between host and guest, thus enhancing cohesion and identity to ensure psychological empowerment. However, Zhou et al.’s (2015) study did not clarify the social and political dimensions of empowerment in relation to stated economic and psychological advantages. A quantitative study by Boley et al. (2014) concluded that psychological empowerment and personal economic benefit have direct and positive effects on the hosts’ support for tourism.
Figure 2.4: Structural model of host authenticity (Zhou et al., 2015)

Recent research on authentication models have focused on consumer behaviour and partial empowerment (economic and psychological) to verify the authenticity of experiences from the guest and host perspectives (Cho, 2012; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2015). However, these studies are limited by the use of highly quantitative approaches with structural equation modelling used as the form of analysis to assess authentication. This approach is useful for exploring relationships among variables but, arguably, each concept embedded within these models requires deeper investigation through inductive qualitative methods (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2015).

Further, an authentic experience depends on subjective negotiation between tourism entrepreneurs and government and other key stakeholders who act as intermediaries between the host and guest (Chhabra, 2010). In such a context, the lack of interaction between a host and tourists can devalue the authentic experience for the tourist as well as curtail benefits to the host community and affect host empowerment (Cho, 2012; Zhou et al., 2015). As such, direct interaction can enhance the mutual authentication of tourist attractions and build trust between hosts and guests to amplify host community
empowerment (Moyle, Glen Croy, & Weiler, 2010; Zhu, 2012). Since the current models of authentication of the ICH consider the guest (tourist) and host (community) perspectives separately, they can provide only a partial understanding of the common grounds and interaction or linkages between host and guest in the authentication process and in community empowerment. A mutual authentication model (host-guest) would be necessary to reveal the relationships between host and guest for authenticating tourist attractions like ICH and their impact on community empowerment.

2.7 Gaps within the literature

The literature review presented in this work suggests there are gaps in knowledge within two major research domains, specifically in relation to the authenticity of ICH, and the relationship between ICH and community empowerment.

The authentication of ICH is a critical issue for managing and preserving ICH in the face of commodification by the influence of modern trends of social change and commercialization. In the tourism literature, there is a distinct lack of research in relation to how the authenticity of ICH is understood from the host’s perspective. This understanding of heritage would benefit from how heritage producers conceptualize what is essential to ensure the cultural and historical significance which add their effort in production and preserving authenticity of heritage. For example, the production of the artefacts by the hosts can reflect a range of historically embedded socio-cultural meaning (Farrelly et al., 2019). In the quest for authentication concepts and tools, this review of the literature has revealed an evolution from an external expert based ‘cool’ authentication process to a direct host and guest influenced ‘hot’ authentication process, where it is mainly tourists that participate in the decision making about ICH authenticity.
Most prior research on authentication has a tendency to focus on well-informed, wealthy international travellers and overlooked the critical role of domestic tourists in host-guest ICH authentication. Recent studies have proposed several authentication models based on host and guest perspectives such as the consumer-based model of authentication (Cho, 2012; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013) and the host authentication model (Zhou et al., 2013). Such models separately consider host and guest viewpoints without demonstrating the connection between ICH authenticity and community empowerment.

A detailed investigation is required to better understand the direct interaction between the host community and guests for the mutual authentication of tourist attractions, including ICH, which can enhance community empowerment (Moyle et al., 2010; Zhu, 2012). Further, the recent authentication models are based on a highly quantitative structural equation modelling approach. Each of the variables and concepts embedded in the models could benefit from further detailed investigation using inductive qualitative approaches (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2015).

Several studies suggest that the ICH, especially festivals, have the potential to contribute to regional development, related to social capital, community capacity for development, and support for non-tourism related activities (Moscardo, 2007). Moreover, festival make aesthetic and moral sense of a place through stories and this also endows their own cultural identities (Bird, 2002; Jaeger & Mykletun, 2013). The authenticity of traditional practices in festivals are also very important when they become major attractions to tourists who desire an authentic experience. However, the lack of a conceptualisation of the authenticity of the festival by the heritage manager is a devaluation of the place and an abandonment of the historical roots of the event (Derrett, 2003). This is particularly evident when the heritage manager relies heavily on foreign tourist demand to satisfy their
need for an authentic experience. For example, the tourist guide changes the meaning of the value of the festival when translating the stories of the festival into English (Canziani, 2016). Such an alteration of the meaning can change the pattern and process of the production of the festival that may be rootless within place identity. Therefore, an in-depth study is required to better understand the perceptions of authentic experience by both the hosts and the guests at a festival.

In a festival context, there is a lack of a common understanding of the role of ICH between host and guest for empowerment. Arguably, researchers are yet to adequately consider guests from a similar cultural background in the process of mutual authentication of the festival and its impact on economic, psychological, social, and political empowerment of host community (Yeniyurt & Townsend, 2003). Direct interaction between host and guest has a demonstrated capacity to enhance the authentic experience, from both the host and guest perspectives (Moyle et al., 2010). Furthermore, this has the potential to increase community empowerment, though this has not been explored in depth. To address the identified gaps in literature, a conceptual model has been developed for this work in an effort to describe mutual authentication of ICH and its relation to host empowerment.

2.8 Conceptual model of mutual host-guest authentication of ICH

Considering the gaps in the literature and identified limitations of earlier models, a conceptual model is proposed for the mutual host-guest authentication of ICH (Fig. 2.5), which incorporates both host and guest perspectives. This model supports tourism development and enhanced community empowerment. In this model, the authenticity of ICH is considered to be established by the authentication of the objects of cultural significance (for example structures, artefacts, or similar architectural physical elements)
as well as by the existence of cultural traditional practices (such as rituals and festivals) by both the hosts (the local community) and guests (tourists). Physical objects used to perform cultural practices, either in religious and social events or in the daily lives of the community, are the elements which measure the objective authenticity of the community’s ICH (Asplet & Cooper, 2000). The traditional cultural practices, customs, and the way the community performs rituals and festivals define the unique identity of the community and constitute elements appropriate for measuring the existential authenticity of ICH (Zhou et al., 2015).

Figure 2.5: Conceptual model of mutual host-guest authentication of ICH

A host community can influence the authenticity of its ICH with several factors, such as their attitude, motivation, economic and psychological relationships, and participation in cultural practices, individually, or through institutions. A host’s attitude towards that
community’s ICH is crucial for determining the authenticity of its ICH (Zhou et al., 2013), as it shows the feeling of the host community toward traditional ownership of the ICH. A host’s attitude can directly or indirectly influence ICH-based tourism as well. Also, the host community’s motivation towards the preservation of its own ICH would justify the authenticity of their ICH as well as their support for tourism. Motivation of the hosts was not considered in previous host authentication model, as it was in guest authentication model. In the mutual authentication process, it could be a potential factor for the hosts as well. Most importantly, the economic benefits from ICH (such as festivals) and psychological or emotional benefits from ICH (the religious or social rituals) received by the host, reinforce the host’s perception towards the authenticity of their ICH and towards support for ICH-based tourism (Xie, 2011; Zhu, 2012). Further, the host community’s active participation in their traditional cultural practices, either individually (Theodori & Luloff, 1998) or institutionally (del barrio et al., 2012), can reflect the host’s perception towards the authenticity of ICH. Therefore, individual participation (Derret, 2003; Theodori & Luloff, 1998) and institutional involvement (del Barrio et al., 2012) of hosts were perceived as crucial in cultural tourism as well as community empowerment, although these were not included in previous host authentication studies (e.g., Zhou et al., 2015).

On the other hand, guests can influence the authenticity of ICH in several ways as well. Guest attitudes towards the traditional culture, expressed by authentic objects or the existence of genuine cultural events, can also contribute to the authenticity of the ICH (Zhou et al., 2013). In addition, guest motivation or intention to experience ICH through tourism can reinforce the authenticity of the ICH and guest satisfaction and loyalty towards ICH-based tourism (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Some literature also urged that the
tourists’ perception of authenticity depended on whether they find authentic objects and experience (Asplet & Cooper, 2000; Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003; Cohen & Cohen, 2012); however, these guest factors (finding authentic objects and experiences) were not considered in previous guest authentication models (e.g., Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013). In this study, all these potential guest factors (such as attitude, motivation, finding authentic objects and finding authentic experience) were included in the conceptual model for mutual authentication of ICH so that the guests’ perception of authenticity could be determined with clear evidence.

This mutual host-guest authentication of ICH might impact community empowerment through tourism. Economic benefit from ICH-based tourism (selling traditional crafts, food, and accommodation for tourists) will enhance the economic empowerment of the community. The guests also make a major economic contribution to valuing the traditional authentic objects and events, in compensation for satisfying their touristic consumption of the ICH. Similarly, the psychological empowerment of the community will be enhanced by owning the authentic ICH (objects and traditional practices) and positioning themselves as a unique community in the global society. Participating in the authentic traditional cultural practices individually or as a group can increase social cohesion and shared feelings, enhancing the social empowerment of the community. Everyone in the community can recognize their own identity with respect to their authentic ICH. Further, local institutions and leadership can be developed for managing ICH (for example through the organisation of traditional cultural events and the management of historical objects), which ensures the political empowerment of the community.
The proposed model includes measuring the authenticity of ICH through both the host and guest perspectives, and hence can help to determine common ground on which the authenticity of ICH stands, and how it can link to the perception of hosts and guests. The common issues emphasized by both hosts and guests may comprise the major determinants of ICH’s authenticity as well as highlight the main concerns for enhancing ICH-based tourism and community empowerment. This research has applied the conceptual model to a case study – the Rush Mela Festival in the Sundarbans, Bangladesh to qualitatively evaluate the model for mutual authentication of the ICH.

2.9 Summary

This chapter has presented the conceptual development of ICH by reviewing the literature leading to and surrounding the UNESCO 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of ICH. The chapter focused on the role of tourism attractions to exemplify the importance of ICH in enhancing cultural tourism. The connection between ICH and tourism clarifies the theoretical discourse of the objective and existential authenticity of ICH, in which it is the culture, in a sense, that is consumed by the tourist. Authentication has been mainly derived by power relations which became a turning point to examine host empowerment. Several authentication models have been discussed which are mainly driven by the guest perceptions of authenticity. However, these were limited by the potential for economic disempowerment by host communities. This discussion was followed by an examination of the relationship between ICH-based tourism and empowerment to integrate host perception of authenticity and to preserve their ICH. A host authentication model was described, which advances the concept of authentication to ensure economic and psychological empowerment. The outcome of this chapter was the identification of research gaps in two key areas: firstly, limited understanding of the interaction between
the host and guest for the mutual authentication of ICH, and secondly, how ICH tourism plays role in community empowerment. Based on the existing authentication models, a conceptual model of mutual host-guest authentication of ICH has been developed, which would be tested in the case of the Rush Mela Festival in Bangladesh. The details of the methodology are discussed in the following chapter which also includes a proposal for how the model will be developed for the Rush Mela case study.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter reviewed literature on ICH, authenticity and empowerment. Subsequently, research gaps were identified and the following three research questions were formulated: 1) How do hosts and guests perceive the role of ICH (Rush Mela Festival) in community empowerment?, 2) What factors lead to an authentic experience of ICH (Rush Mela festival) by domestic tourists and hosts?, and 3) How can mutual authentication (host-guest) of ICH (Rush Mela Festival) build and sustain community empowerment? Chapter three explains the research design chosen to answer these research questions. As previewed in Section 1, a qualitative research methodology was adopted, drawing on the tradition of constructivism as well as a case study approach. The adoption of such a methodology allowed me, as a native researcher, to be involved in the whole research process.

The sections two to four of this chapter present an overview of the research framework, and the research paradigm that guided the adoption of the qualitative case study approach. This discussion explains why the methods were considered to be the most appropriate to this study. The sections five and six present the justification of selecting Rush Mela as a case study and overview of the festival. The sections seven and eight elucidate the data collection and analysis processes. The application of computer-aided NVivo 12 to facilitate the empirical material administration and interpretation is also discussed. Finally, issues surrounding validity and reliability and ethical considerations are discussed.
3.2 Overall research framework

The research framework followed by this work is presented in Figure 3.1. At first, the research questions, objectives, and scope of the research were defined through an extensive literature review and consultation with supervisors and other tourism experts. Then, the research approach and detailed methodology were designed. The researcher adopted a qualitative approach informed by a constructivist paradigm and employed a case study approach. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with participants (both hosts and guests) of the selected case study – the Rush Mela Festival in the Bangladesh Sundarbans. Data analysis utilised a structural coding process (Saldana, 2009, explained in Section 3.8) administered using NVivo 12 software. A detailed description of the research approach and methods adopted in this study is illustrated in the following sections.

![Research Framework Diagram]

**Defining problem and scope of the research**
(Literature review and consultation with experts)

**Defining approach and methodology**
(Qualitative research; Constructivist paradigm; Case study approach)

**Data Collection**

| Selection of the study area | Sampling of participants (Purposive) | Interview of participants (Semi-structured interview) |

**Data analysis**
(Coding and summarising using NVivo 12)

**Thesis preparation**

*Figure 3.1: Research framework*
3.3 Research paradigm: Constructivism

A paradigm is "a basic set of beliefs that guides action" (Guba, 1990), which are usually defined in terms of ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Creswell, 2014; Morgan & Burrell, 1979; Neuman, 2006). These elements specify what knowledge is, what we want to know and how to find knowledge. Morgan and Burrell (1979) claim that sets of assumptions have direct implications for the nature of methodologies whether they are quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. Creswell (2014) highlights four paradigms: post-positivism, constructivism, transformative and pragmatism to apply to research inquiry.

Constructivism is often combined with interpretivism and typically seen as an approach to qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). The goal of this paradigm is to rely as much as possible on the participant’s views of the situation being studied (Neuman, 2006). It often addresses the process of interaction among individuals in a particular context (Creswell, 2014).

As such, constructivism is particularly suitable for observing and interpreting highly contextual situations (Hollinshead, 2006), and in this research to evaluate multiple worldviews of the authentic experience of ICH by the hosts and guests. Through constructivism, the researcher can interpret and map social settings without reducing them to fixed and immobile structures. This non-reductionist paradigm enables researchers to observe tourism as a social construction of reality (Hunter, 2016). Constructivism works by enabling the observer to recognize differences and often confounded worldviews, to better understand how subjectivity (individual or collective), sign systems, and power relations work in the dynamic social system (Meethan, 2011). As such, this study has
adopted a qualitative approach under the paradigm of constructivism to explore the issues surrounding mutual authentication and community empowerment.

3.4 Research design

There are several approaches in qualitative research, including: (a) narrative research, (b) phenomenology, (c) grounded theory, (d) ethnography, and (e) case study (Creswell, 2014). Since the study aims to explore the interaction of host and guest in ICH tourism, authentication of ICH, and community empowerment, an in-depth case study approach was selected.

3.4.1 Case study approach

Case studies are extensively applied in tourism research (Kibicho, 2008; Xiao & Smith, 2006). A case study approach is usually preferred when the researcher looks for answers to ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions relating to complex real-life social phenomenon, which are out of control of the researcher (Yin, 2009, p. 18). There are several types of case studies, which are commonly used in tourism research (Jennings, 2010), as outline in Table 3.1. Some research may apply a combination of case studies types simultaneously, for instance, a study can include multi-case, instrumental, and intrinsic case studies.

Table 3.1: List of case study types applied to tourism research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study type</th>
<th>Brief description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single case study (Yin, 2009)</td>
<td>The research investigates only one case in depth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple case study (Yin, 2009)</td>
<td>The research investigates several cases in depth. The cases may be unique or similar in nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploratory case study (Yin, 2009)</td>
<td>The research investigates single or multiple cases of the tourism activity to explore the characteristics or unique features, because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study type</td>
<td>Brief description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>there are no pre-existing empirical records available in the public domain. It determines the answer of ‘what’ question about the tourism phenomenon.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanatory case study (Yin, 2009)</td>
<td>The research investigates to find answers of ‘why’ and ‘how’ question about a single or multiple case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic case study (Stake, 2006)</td>
<td>The researcher selects the cases with his/her particular interest to the cases considering the context of the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental case study (Stake, 2006)</td>
<td>The cases are investigated to achieve secondary goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jennings (2010, p. 186)

This research adopted an explanatory and intrinsic case study approach. As the research aims to answer of ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions about the authentication of ICH and its relation to community empowerment, therefore an explanatory case study approach is appropriate for this research, as explained in the next section. The Rush Mela Festival is well-known in Bangladesh. However, there is lack of understanding of the authentication of the ICH in the case of the Rush Mela Festival and its relation to local community empowerment, which led the researcher to consider the Rush Mela Festival as an appropriate case study site to fulfil the research aim.

In addition, the researcher selected the Rush Mela Festival as an ICH-based tourism event because of her particular interest in the tourism associated with the festival. In this sense, the research could also be considered an intrinsic case study. The researcher was familiar with the location of festival and the community and has prior knowledge of tourism in the area gained through previous research. Since understanding the authentication of ICH from host and guest perspectives was crucial in this research, the researcher needed a suitable case study that could be easily accessible, and she could communicate with the
participants effectively within short period of time. Being of the same culture, the researcher possesses advantages that imply an intrinsic case study approach within this research.

3.5 Selection of the case study: Rush Mela Festival, Sundarbans

As the study aims to explore the mutual authentication (host-guest) of ICH in the context of tourism and its linkage to community empowerment, the researcher initially reviewed different ICH based tourism where the interaction of host and guest is prominent and the exchange of goods and services can have a noticeable impact on community empowerment. In such contexts, traditional cultural festivals which attract many tourists were chosen as a case for ICH tourism in this study. In line with this proposition, the Rush Mela Festival was selected as a case study for this research for the following reasons: 1) The significance of the cultural festival as a form of ICH and as a tourist attraction; 2) Because it has been relatively unexplored in extant research; 3) Because there are distinguishable hosts (community) and guests’ (tourists) interaction in tourism activities, and the potential for community empowerment through development of authentic tourism experiences, and 4) Because of the researcher’s familiarity and accessibility to the locality and local people.

Being a researcher from Bangladesh and having familiarity with local cultural heritage, it was decided to choose a case study from Bangladesh. The major festivals in Bangladesh are observed by Muslims, who represent the majority of the total population, are Eid Ul Fitr and Eid Ul Azha. Hindus of Bangladesh celebrate Durga Puja, although they may celebrate other religious festival as well. The Buddhists major religious festivals include Buddha Purnima, Madhu Purnima, and Kathin Chibardan. The Christians celebrate
Christmas and Easter Sunday with due religious flavour (Banglapedia, 2019; Hussain, 2019). These festivals are also celebrated by the wider community throughout Bangladesh, and other countries as well. However, there is no distinguishable host and guest for most of these festivals which could be analysed in the context of ICH tourism.

In contrast, there are some traditional festivals organised by small section of a larger religious community or ethnic minorities in Bangladesh such as the Rush Mela Festival in the Sundarbans (“Rush Mela begins”, 2015), and the Boishabi Festival of the indigenous community of Chittagong Hill Tracts (Hashem, 2018). Among these traditional cultural festivals, it was found that the Rush Mela Festival held in the Bangladesh Sundarbans mangrove forest region attracts a large number of tourists every year.

The Rush Mela Festival is a century-old traditional festival organised by the local community where mainly domestic tourists from different parts of Bangladesh participate every year. Although the Rush Mela Festival is organised by Hindu communities in other parts of Bangladesh, tourism related to this festival is not prominent in those areas. The Rush Mela Festival in Sundarbans, however, does attract tourists who like to experience local traditional culture, as well as the natural beauty of the forest. There are several entry points to the Sundarbans through which tourists can arrive to experience the Rush Mela Festival. The majority of the domestic tourists however tend to arrive through the western division. A significant number of tourists visit Sundarbans during Rush Mela Festival and it is possible that the authentic experience of domestic tourists visiting Rush Mela produces greater potential for community empowerment than international tourism. Such a festival is an example of cultural consumption where individuals are able to express their preferences and create some manifestation of value; secondly, festivals can trigger
a series of economic effects which may stimulate economic and product development within the region; and finally, festivals involve considerable planning which may be evaluated in terms of efficiency and performance of authentic experience (del Barrio et al., 2012).

The Rush Mela Festival has also been relatively unexplored in the extant research of ICH and tourism. Most of the research in the Sundarbans has been undertaken in relation to forest recourse use, tourism, and the economic empowerment of the forest dependent community (Uddin et al, 2013; Haque et al., 2016). However, little focus has centred on tourism in relation to the Rush Mela Festival. Although the Sundarbans was declared as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1997 (Iftekhar, 2010), there has been no attempt to recognise the Rush Mela Festival as important ICH. Most of the information for this research has been collected from newspapers due to lack of scientific research in relation to this festival. Therefore, the Rush Mela Festival was selected as a suitable case study that can be explored in the context of authentic ICH tourism and its relation to community empowerment.

Tourism activities related to the Rush Mela Festival consist of particular roles to be played by the hosts (community) and the guests (tourists). The host community, mainly the local fishermen and Hindu people, organise and participate in the festival, which includes worship, cultural functions, and the trade of goods. Guests, mainly from other parts of Bangladesh, experience the festival by participating in worship, enjoying the cultural functions, and by purchasing local goods. This creates greater potential for enhancing community empowerment through the development of authentic experiences from Rush Mela tourism.
In addition, the researcher has prior research experience on the local community and ecotourism in the Sundarbans mangrove forest region from her undergraduate and postgraduate studies. As such, the researcher is very familiar with the local community, language, culture, and tourism in the region, which allowed her to choose the case study for this research.

Considering the above contexts, the Rush Mela Festival presents as an interesting case study for this research. Rush Mela Festival is celebrated in two locations in and around Sundarbans. One site is Dublar Char (an island inside western part of Sundarbans) and the other site is in Chila Village, located along the north-eastern periphery of Sundarbans in Bagerhat district, Bangladesh. The Rush Mela Festival is organised in both locations at the same time and both sites attract tourists during the festival. Therefore, both sites were selected for conducting interviews. More details of the study areas are discussed in Chapter 4.

3.6 Data collection

3.6.1 Selection of the participants

The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites to shed light on the research problem and answer research questions (Creswell, 2014). The researcher can decide what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard, 2002; Lewis & Sheppard, 2006). This can be facilitated through the key informant technique (Bernard, 2002; Garcia, 2006; Gustad, Dhillion, & Sidibé, 2004; Jarvis et al., 2004; Lyon & Hardesty, 2005), wherein one or a few individuals are solicited to act as guides to a culture. Key informants are observant, reflective members of the community of interest.
who know much about the culture and are both able and willing to share their knowledge (Bernard, 2002). It is not possible to determine how many samples should be taken to clearly understand the case and how theoretical saturation can be achieved. If theoretical saturation is considered as the criterion for determining sample size, then defining the maximum or minimum sample size in advance would not be necessary (Bryman, 2012).

In this study 60 hosts and 60 guests were recruited at the two study sites – Dublar Char and Chila.

In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling (Goulding, 2000) to select the participants from host and guest groups. Purposive sampling is a useful technique when selecting cases which are unique and informative, where the members of the population are hard to reach, and the investigation is in-depth (Neuman, 2006). The researcher reviewed the existing literature to gain understanding of stakeholders involved with the Rush Mela Festival as they would be best able to provide information on the Rush Mela. A research schedule was designed for hosts and guests and reviewed with the supervisors, who discussed at length how the study should recruit participants to answer research questions. The research was then discussed with local experts, Professor Dilip Kumar Datta from Khulna University and Mr. Khokon, Chairman of Rupantor NGO, to ensure a practical knowledge of the Rush Mela stakeholders. After discussion, recruitment plans were modified in response to the feedback provided. Forest officials also provided information on important stakeholders who could participate in the research. The researcher then visited the Chila study area to exchange views with the organiser to establish final moderation of the stakeholder categories that constituted host and guest groups. Having a broader understanding of the stakeholders, several criterion including direct involvement of the community or organisations that assisted in the planning of the
festival, involvement in any form of business or involvement in the transport of people to the festival venue were used to define the host participants of Rush Mela Festival. The host categories included organising committee members, retailers in the festival (e.g. people who sells crafts, jewellery, dry fish, crockeries, clothing, etc.), fishermen, tour operators, and forest officials. In addition, guest/ tourist participants were defined based on criteria such as people coming from other areas of Bangladesh to the festival venue for enjoyment and/or to participate in the religious rituals during the festival but did not participate in any business or organising activities at the festival. In relation to guest participation, recruitment was taken from tourists arriving from various parts of Bangladesh. A summary of the selected participants is presented in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: Summary of selected participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hosts group</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Guest group</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tourist by origin (from Bangladesh)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retailer</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Dhaka</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Khulna</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organising Committee</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Comilla</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Officials</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rajshahi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field survey, 2017

3.6.2 *Hosts (community) participation in the Rush Mela Festival*

The host community consists of the people in the tourist destination, whether they are from cultural background (i.e. homogeneous) or different background (i.e.
heterogeneous) and whether they are affected by tourism positively or not (Alhasanat & Hyasat, 2011). This study consists of the heterogeneous community that hosts the Rush Mela Festival, which includes villagers, small business owners, tour operators, forest officials and the event organising committee. Among the host community, the majority live in the periphery of the Sundarbans. The periphery includes Mongla, Khulna, Fultola, Satkhira, Paikghacha, Dumuria, Norail, Batiaghta and Bagerhat Sadar sub-districts. Among the hosts, the study targeted small business owners especially the handicraft, dry fish shop, fruit shop, cloth, food shop, village doctor and magician who take part in the Rush Mela in Dublar Char. Although the festival is a celebration of the Hindu community, most shopkeepers are Muslim. Literacy of the small business holder tends to be below secondary school and attendance at the festival is both for business and to enjoy the natural beauty of the Sundarbans.

The Forest Department of the Bangladesh government is officially assigned to manage the festival given it is within the administrative area of Sundarbans Reserve Forest. Apart from the Forest Department, there is an organising committee who collaborate with the forest officials. Generally, the committee is made up of fishermen. The central attraction of the Rush Mela Festival is the worship of the Hindu God Krishna. The study incorporated the viewpoints of members of the organising committee, as well as forest officials as part of the event ‘hosts’ since they collaborate with each other to organise the event. The Joint Secretary of the Committee is a Muslim and based in Khulna but has a fishing business in Sundarbans. The Secretary feels obligated to organise the event as most fishermen stay in a remote area from home for fishing. This festival gives seafaring fishermen an opportunity to meet with their family for recreation after periods of being away. Nevertheless, they also perform the holy bath in the hope of a good catch of fish.
The fishermen usually catch their fish and dry them in Dublar Char. Therefore, the forest of Dublar Char has special meaning, being a sacred place that is important for the worship ceremony. As per Hindu mythology, they also worship the Muslim legendary figure Bonobibi, Gazi and Kalu who lived in Sundarbans. In this way, the worshipping ceremony in Rush Mela represents a unique symbol of social unity between Hindu and Muslim.

The study also surveyed tour operators (Bengal Tour and Evergreen Tour) who have operated tours in the Sundarbans for about 15 to 20 years. The manager of the Bengal Tour is a graduate in education. While they operate tour in the Sundarbans, they raised concerns about the Rush Mela Festival from a conservation perspective. Although the tour operator earns considerable money from the Rush Mela Festival, they have a vested interest in, and understanding of the sustainability of the forest. This is particularly evident when there is uncontrolled tourism during the Rush Mela, and it was mentioned that there was knowledge of several cases of deer poaching during the Rush Mela Festival. The tour operator urged that control of tourism was needed to maintain a healthy forest habitat which would continue the viability of tourism in the region. The interview also extended to the guide, a tourist attendant and a tourist boat driver who attended Rush Mela.

At the second study site, Chila, on the periphery of the Sundarbans, the Rush Mela is also celebrated. However, this version of Rush Mela in Chila is different from the Sundarbans. The water bodies in Chila are salty and inhibit its use for irrigation and drinking water. The villagers found one pond that provided a source of fresh water and the entire village of around 463 families are dependent on this fresh water for irrigation and daily use. Therefore, worship of Lord Krishna occurs in front of this pond. The villagers in the
region are mostly Hindu however, they invite Muslims from surrounding areas to join with them in the Rush Mela Festival. The villagers and the organising committee members for the Chila Rush Mela Festival are mostly businessmen. The study of Chila villagers included the festival organising committee members and stall owners as hosts of the Chila Rush Mela. Most of the stall owners come from the surrounding villages - Mongla, Holdibania, Mirakhali, Dauatola and mainly sell cosmetic items and food. Other than these shops, the folk songs (*Jatra gan* and *Kobi gan*) are the great cultural attraction of the festival in Chila (Field interview, 2017).

### 3.6.3 Guests (Tourists) participation in the Rush Mela Festival

Ross (1994) defines tourists as people who undertake a journey to, and stay, in various destinations, where the destinations are distant from their normal place of residence and work, and where they take on different roles and activities from the resident working population of the destination. This study interviewed tourists who travelled with a tour operator or by boat in Dublar Char. Other interviews were undertaken in Chila where people arrive by road transports (bus, bike, ricksha etc.) and by walking. The tourists interviewed in Chila comprised of 26% business, 24% service, 6% housewife and 4% student.

The diversity of tourists varied in relation to education, occupation, ethnicity, and age group at Dublar Char. Most of the guests were domestic who come from the capital city Dhaka and nearby Khulna city. About 30% tourists were female, while the men account for about 70%. Most participants were graduates in education and Muslim in religion. The major portion of the people are middle-aged and came with children. They were informed about Rush Mela via the newspaper, Facebook, family, friends, and tour operators. They hoped to see the natural beauty of the Sundarbans and Rush Mela Festival.
together. There were a couple of Hindu families who were there to take part in the worship ceremony. Although the majority of the tourists were Muslim, they were keen to learn about the local livelihood of the Sundarbans during their visit to the Rush Mela Festival. They wanted to see the locally produced craft, drama, music, dance, and clothing of the different occupational groups such as fishermen, woodcutters, honey collectors and *Golpata (Nipa palm)* collectors. The package offered by the tour operator included the festival and the three points of Sundarbans which were declared a World Heritage site. The majority of the tourists found the package was reasonably priced to see both attractions together.

The festival normally takes place in the first week of November. The tour operator generally provides packages during this time to visit the Rush Mela and the Sundarbans together. However, the Rush Mela takes place in the evening and the holy bath occurs in the morning. Therefore, tour operators generally make the tour package very short, of three days duration to cover the full trip including other tourist spots in the Sundarbans. Although a tourist may desire to see the entire three-day festival, a significant portion of tourists claim that they could not watch either the Holy bath in the morning or the festival at night. The study found that the guests were not consulted when making the travel plans which disallow them to participate in the holy bath and the festival at night has significant implications for host empowerment. It is the tour operator who designates the travel plan.

The nature of tourism in Chila is quite different from the Sundarbans. At the Chila Rush Mela, most of the guests are businessmen and have an education level below secondary school level, are male and of Hindu ethnicity. These guests are mainly from Mongla, West, and East Chila. The Rush Mela in Chila is different from Sundarbans, as people mainly come solely to enjoy the Rush Mela, and do not have the scope to see the beauty
of Sundarbans. There are also no formal tours offered by tour operators in Chila Rush Mela. Guests therefore decide on how they will participate in the Rush Mela. It is understood that the organising committee generally are responsible for promotion, make an announcement of the ceremony in the surrounding area and distributing leaflets around the family and relatives. The duration of the festival is normally four days. Those guests who find the Dublar Char Rush Mela expensive can take part in the Chila Rush Mela.

3.6.4 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured in-depth interviews are the most widely used interviewing format for qualitative research and can occur either with an individual or in groups. Most commonly they are only conducted once for an individual or group and can take between 30 minutes to several hours to complete (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Interviews are most appropriate when little is known about the study phenomena or detailed insights are required from individual participant, allowing the study to explore individual perceptions of reality and authenticity in the heritage context (Fetterman, 2010).

Semi-structured interviews are most widely used to evaluate multiple realities for ICH authentication (Hunter, 2016). Whereas the unstructured interview is conducted in conjunction with the collection of observational data, semi-structured interviews are often the sole data source for a qualitative research project (Adams, 2002) and are usually scheduled in advance at a designated time and location outside of everyday events. Further, Patton (1990) suggests that such data collection from individuals and focus groups through semi-structured interview can act as a form of data triangulation to enhance the validity of the research. This study has conducted semi-structured interview to collect the data from the participant.
The selection of the semi-structured option was not entirely pre-structured with respect to content, formulation, sequence, and answers, but provided flexibility to attain a true understanding of what was happening and to make it possible for participants to express their opinions in their own words (Boeije, 2010). Prior to the field trip, the researcher prepared a prompt list of semi-structured questions that related to the research questions to guide the interaction (see Appendix-A). These questions were open-ended, broad, and general to allow discussion with further interaction with participants possible if clarification or additional detail were required (Jennings, 2010).

A pilot test of the interview schedule was undertaken with three native Bengali speakers at Griffith University Campus (Bangladeshi students) in presence of the supervisors (Dr. Brent Moyle and Dr. Millicent Kennelly) to ensure questions were clear and translated in a meaningful way. The purpose of pilot testing was to establish how translation from English fits in the cultural context of the destination. The interview schedule in English was then modified upon consultation with the supervisors prior to field trip in Bangladesh. The interview schedule was translated into Bengali language by the researcher, who is a native Bengali speaker, and subsequent moderation was completed in consultation with native speakers in Griffith University, Australia. During pilot testing, the supervisors and the native speakers provided suggestions into the design of the field trip in Bangladesh. Suggestions were made to hire research assistants from Bangladesh who have research expertise in Sundarbans to ensure adequate data could be collected within the festival time during the field trip. Criteria for the selection of research assistants was further refined with the assistance of a local expert, Professor Dilip Kumar Datta of Khulna university who has considerable experience of the Sundarbans forest and dependent communities. Following these suggestions two post-graduates with an environmental
science background from the Khulna University were selected. The researcher also included a research assistant from a local NGO, who could help to organize interviews and the trip in the Sundarbans.

The field trip was arranged to take place in Bangladesh from 23rd September 2017 to 10th January 2018. After arrival in the Bangladesh, a meeting was arranged with Professor Dilip Kumar Datta to gain understanding of how best to undertake the field work and recruit research assistants. As per Professor Datta’s suggestion, Mr. Tulip and Mr. Foysal, who were postgraduate students of Environmental Science, the Khulna University were selected. Discussion also led to the selection of an NGO researcher with experience in the Sundarbans. The researcher then contacted Mr. Khokon, the Chairman of Rupantor, a local NGO. The Chairman suggested Mr. Halim as a research assistant and extended the co-operation by contacting Evergreen Tours to arrange the trip to the Sundarbans. The trip was confirmed for dates from the 3rd -5th November, 2017. It was also suggested that the pilot testing should occur in Chila before moving on to the Sundarbans to ensure a comprehensive view of the Rush Mela inside the Sundarbans and in the periphery. After recruiting the research assistants, the researcher arranged one day workshop with the three research assistants at Rupantor office. The context of the research and the questionnaire were reviewed to ensure conformity in the field and to check the accuracy of Bengali translations. A tape recorder was given to each of the research assistants and the instructions were given on how to guide the interview while recording. The tape recorder was double checked to ensure recordings were clear enough for subsequent transcription. After the workshop, the interview schedule in Bengali was moderated to take the pilot testing in Chila. The researcher and research assistants arranged a pilot test of the questionnaire in Chila on 1st of November, prior to the final field survey.
In Chila, on the 1st November, a field worker from Rupantor, named Susan, organized the host community for interviews. Also, on arrival, we found several host groups waiting in front of the temple to meet with us. They were engaged in making the statue of Lord Krishna and Goddess Radha as a preparation for the Rush Mela Festival. The interviews were undertaken and provided valuable insights into how to further proceed with the fieldwork. During the testing, it was decided that Mr. Faysal would do the interviews in Chila. He collected phone numbers from the committee to communicate further. Data was collected from the 3rd – 5th November 2017, to coincide with the Rush Mela in the Sundarbans. After the pilot testing in Chila, notebooks, interview prompts and the recorder were provided to the research assistants to start data collection in the field. To begin the journey to Sundarbans, Mr. Tulip boarded a tourist vessel of Evergreen Tours from ferry terminal, Khulna in the morning of 3rd November 2017. At the same time, the researcher and Mr. Halim boarded another tourist vessel of Evergreen Tours from the same location. This is because Evergreen Tours were operating two tourist vessels to cover the Rush Mela Festival in Dublar Char.

The Sundarbans are only accessible by tourist vessel or by small boat through the river networks. Further, there is no accommodation within the forest since it is a protected area, therefore the vessels provided both transport and accommodation. The tour operator provided food and security while undertaking the trip into the forest. Each tourist vessel had the capacity to carry about 50 tourists. By booking on both Evergreen tours we were able to maximise the data collection from the tourists. Mr. Tulip took the tour to the morning Holy bath. It should be noted that not every trip covers the entire festival including the worshipping ceremony, holy bath, fair and the cultural function. As tour packages aim to cover Rush Mela and the visiting the Sundarbans, the tour operator has
limited time and therefore cannot cover the whole festival in a three-day trip. Therefore, the researcher and Mr. Halim took a separate trip in another Evergreen Tour tourist vessel which covered the festival at night and included the fair and the cultural function. Only few hosts were interviewed during the trip as they busy with their business and festival organization. The phone number of retailers and committee members were collected for interview after the festival. This allowed the host group to concentrate on this very important opportunity to conduct business and serve tourist needs. Most of the tourists were interviewed on board after visiting the festival so that they could share their experience better. It was sometimes found to be necessary to guide tourists when they responded to open ended questions. In case of the hosts, limited access to hosts meant that responses needed to be gather via the phone, which may have limited opportunities to elaborate on open ended questions.

In Chila, Mr. Foysal interviewed both tourists and hosts. Similar to Dublar Char, hosts were very busy during the festival in Chila, therefore only few hosts were interviewed on the spot. Most of the hosts were interviewed via phone after the festival. However, interview of the tourists in Chila were completed during the trip. A summary of data collected by the researcher and assistants is given in Table 3.3.

As mentioned earlier the researcher pilot tested the interviews with the research assistants in Chila village on 1st November 2017 to check the accuracy of the local dialect. The pilot interview found that the local native speaker understood the Bengali language well, which assisted with the revision of the questionnaire to suit local conditions. The participants were given the option of using the Bengali language as their preferred language for an interview. All the participants including hosts (60) and guests (60) appreciate the option for the interview to be conducted in Bengali language as they were comfortable to express
their feelings and emotions about the Rush Mela. Transcription was undertaken in two stages by the research assistants and the researcher. The researcher including the research assistants first listened the recording and transcribed the information following the interviews. These notes were further cross checked with notes taken in the field. During transcription, contact by phone with participants was also undertaken if any information was needed to clarify meaning. Another workshop was organized with the research assistants to triangulate the information and clarify transcription. The researcher finally cross checked all interviews before transcription to remove inconsistencies. In order to have comparable, holistic, and comprehensive insight into the authentication of ICH, the researcher also had informal conversations with tourists, local communities, tour operator, forest officials, and the organising committee. Informal conversations with the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) based in the Khulna office, was also cross checked with transcripts collected from forest officials.

Table 3.3: Summary of data collection in Dublar Char and Chila

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surveyor</th>
<th>Interview of Host</th>
<th>Interview of Guest</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mode of transport</th>
<th>Place of data collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shahida</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Tourist vessel/launch (Ever Green 1)</td>
<td>Dublar Char</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulip</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Tourist vessel/launch</td>
<td>Dublar Char</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

71
### Surveyor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interview of Host</th>
<th>Interview of Guest</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mode of Transport</th>
<th>Place of data collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faysal</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Bus and Motorcycle</td>
<td>Chila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halim</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tourist vessel/launch (Ever Green 1)</td>
<td>Dublar Char</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>120</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.6.5 Protocol for recording information

In qualitative research, generally, interviews are tape recorded and transcribed (Goulding, 2000) as this protects against bias and provides a permanent record of what was and was not said (Pontin, 2000). Further, ‘field notes’ made during and immediately after each interview record observations, thoughts and ideas about the interview and can assist in the data analysis process (May, 1991). In this study, four tape recorders were used to record the interview and field notes were collected.

Field notes collected during the research contained sketches of the location of the two selected sites – Dublar Char and Chila. The notes were accompanied by digital recordings, observational memos jotted down in the field, interview notes, and detailed notes written away from the field. These notes provided extensive descriptive detail that supported the
researcher’s memory (Neuman, 2006), the interview and amplified the clarity of the transcripts. Apart from observational memos, impressions, spontaneous ideas, assumptions, hypothesis, evaluations, and thoughts were included as personal memos that recorded reflections and helped to connect thoughts in relation to the study (Boeije, 2010). The interviews were transcribed Bengali language (see example in Appendix-B). The Bengali transcripts were assigned to the respective research assistant for translating into English. Periodic consultation was done with the researcher during this time to assist in the translation to English. The researcher provided comments on relevant sections to improve the accuracy of the translation before finalization. The research assistants were requested to handover tape recordings, notes and the script to the researcher to allow further verification during data analysis. The process of data transcription lasted almost two months, with the researcher returning to Australia on 11 January 2018.

3.7 Data analysis and interpretation

After collection and transcription of the data the researcher was ready to commence data analysis. The researcher had completed a literature review when preparing the study and this highlighted various computer software available for data analysis. NVivo was considered to be the most appropriate, providing a range of tools for handling rich data records and information for browsing and enriching the text, coding it visually or at categories, annotating and gaining accessed data records accurately and swiftly (Richards, 1999). The literature review also suggested that as qualitative data is text-based information it needs to be coded into different categories and themes to increase understanding of the phenomenon. NVivo data analysis was frequently cited as being the best option for text-based information (Welsh, 2002). With Bazeley (2007) asserting five ways in which NVivo software could assist in the qualitative research process: it helps
organise and manage data; it helps manage ideas; it enables the researcher to query data; it can produce visual models of ideas, concepts, or relationships that arise from the data; and it assists in reporting on the data. Given the suitability of NVivo to meet the study’s data analysis requirement the researcher undertook self-training by watching YouTube, reading NVivo operating manuals and by feeding data into the software.

3.7.1 The coding process

Qualitative coding involves reducing the large amount of textual data into smaller, more manageable units to be analysed under themes or categories. The coding process began with a review of the interview transcripts. A ‘structural coding’ process was then employed to code interview texts into major categories and themes. According to Saldana (2009), structural coding is a question-based coding process, which applies the conceptual framework or content-based phrases relating to a specific topic or the research questions based on which the interview was formulated. This process is especially helpful for those studies that employ multiple participants, standard or semi-structured data collection methods, or exploratory research (MacQueen, McLellan-Lemal, Bartholow, & Milstein, 2008; Namey, Guest, Thairu, & Johnson, 2008). In this research, the semi-structured interview schedule was developed based on the three main research questions and the conceptual model for mutual host-guest authentication of ICH (Chapter 2: Section 2.7). Therefore, a preliminary set of categories and themes were predefined prior to coding and are presented in Table 3.4.
### Table 3.4: Preliminary list of themes and categories used for coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Coding of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Host</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community empowerment</td>
<td>Economic empowerment</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political empowerment</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychological empowerment</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social empowerment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest authentication</td>
<td>Guest attitude</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Guest loyalty to tourism</td>
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<td>Guest motivation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Guest support for host empowerment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding authentic object</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Funding authentic experience or event</td>
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<td>Host authentication</td>
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<td>Host motivation</td>
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<td>Host economic benefit from object and event</td>
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<td>Host emotional benefit from object and event</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Host individual participation</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Host institutional involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Host support for tourism</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest_source of tour information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest_experience of the change of the festival</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest_interaction with locals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Host_change in locality</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host_source of products</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The total volume of around 300 pages of transcript was coded using NVivo 12. Interview scripts were initially developed and formatted in Microsoft Word. Before importing the data into NVivo, paragraph styles (such as Heading 1 for interview questions, Heading 2 for participant answers) were applied to interview transcripts to differentiate between questions and answers. This formatting was deemed necessary and was preferred to format the text after it was entered into NVivo. Then, all the interview scripts of host and guest participants were uploaded in NVivo. Nodes were then created with predefined categories and themes, as given in Table 3.4. The categories under major themes – community empowerment, guest authentication, and host authentication were directly related to the research questions and conceptual model. Additional themes, such as guest’s source of tour information, guests’ view on changes to the festival, were used for coding the extra information generated through open-ended questions during interview.

3.7.2 Interpretation of results

The responses of interview participants were aggregated under different categories and themes and analysed to describe the case of Rush Mela Festival and how the host and guest interacts during the festival. The summary of the responses for each categories and themes for host and guest participants were generated from NVivo and used to provide supporting evidence in the results chapters in this thesis. Also, the interlinkages between the categories and themes were analysed, which helped to interpret the mutual authentication of ICH (Rush Mela Festival) and its relation to community empowerment.

3.8 Credibility and trustworthiness

Trustworthiness and credibility are important issues to address in relation to qualitative analysis (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Trustworthiness indicates that the researcher checks
for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, while the credibility of qualitative research indicates that the researcher’s approach can consistent across different situations and projects (Gibbs, 2007).

Trustworthiness is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account. There are many possible limitations which may hinder this including lack of trust, language barriers, elite bias, and level of entry that can mislead the wrong information (Myers & Newman, 2007). However, Creswell (2014) suggests several approaches such as triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, external auditors, and personal reflexivity to validate the research outcome. The researcher used mainly member checking as a method to determine accuracy and validation of the findings. The researcher has communicated with some of the respondents with the initial findings of the major themes, especially with those respondents who provided specific information which was not found in other interviews. Also, the researcher used triangulation to check information on tourism in Rush Mela through consultation with the Rush Mela Organising Committee, local people, and the Forest Department.

The reflexivity of constructivism helps to detect and understand multiple and inter-related issues in tourism (Hall, 2004). As such, reflexivity can be regarded as the act of making oneself the object of one’s observation, in an attempt to bring to the assumptions embedded in our perspectives and descriptions of the world (Feighery, 2006). Having prior research experience in tourism on Sundarbans and being native to the region, the researcher had the opportunity to communicate with the respondents easily and to gain a clear understanding of the social and cultural values of the respondents. The researcher was therefore able to interpret the meaning of the responses given by the interview
participants. Gender, religion, and cultural background of the researcher did not influence the data collection process, as the research topic did not deal with any conflicting issues or taboos in the society. There may have been the possibility of intentional or accidental bias in selecting respondents. However, the researcher worked hard to avoid bias during data collection by taking a large number of samples from mixed groups of host and guest participants. Several section criteria (see section 3.7.1) were also used to select the interview participants. The participants chosen using these criteria were able to provide insights of the festival that addressed the aims of the research. Although this process does not remove the risk of bias, it helped to choose the interviewees in a rational manner. It is however accepted that it may be impossible to remove all potential bias within qualitative research. This is one of the limitations of this research.

3.9 Ethical issues

Qualitative researchers encounter unavoidable contact with human subjects in the field; these may trigger ethical problems and dilemmas (Punch, 2005). To protect research participants from mistreatment and to ensure that they are not harmed, the research should follow research ethics codes (Neuman, 2006; Punch, 2005; Silverman, 2010). Generally, the ethical research codes certify several issues to protect the participant, such as reserving the participant right to take part in, and the option to remove themselves from ongoing research; making an assessment of the potential benefits and risks to the participants; providing informed consent and avoiding harmful treatment of participants (Silverman, 2010).

The current research followed the ethical clearance process, with approval being obtained from the Griffith University’s Human Research Ethical Committee on the 10th of August,
2017 (GU Ref No: 2017/620) and is attached in Appendix-C. Ethical clearance also provided guidelines for conducting research on Sundarbans to ensure that no research participant was harmed from their involvement in the research. The participants were informed about the aims and objectives of the study and were provided with the specific details of their participation prior to conducting interviews. All participants who were willing to engage in the process were required to sign a consent form; they were also provided with the contact address for the researcher at Griffith University, in case they had concerns about the study or their role in it. Part of this process required the establishment of an amiable relationship with the participants; utilising both face to face interviews and telephone conversations to foster relationships. Indeed, it was essential that the researcher build trust with the participants, as it is considered the key to building field relationships (Ryen, 2004).

To ensure that participants understood the study conditions, they were provided with an information sheet and a consent form. The information sheet informed the participants about the purpose of the research including the institution (Griffith University) and a detailed contact address. The consent form provided information about participant rights; and informed them that their involvement was voluntary and that they might withdraw anytime. It is considered important that participants have the right to know about the nature of the research to control their participation (Ryen, 2004; Silverman, 2010). Participants were informed about all conditions prior to sitting for the interview. Some asked that the conditions were read to them to ensure they understood them correctly. A copy of the information sheet is provided in Appendix-D and consent form is provided in Appendix-E.
Another important aspect of research ethics is the confidentiality and privacy of individuals involved in sociological research (Neuman, 2006; Ryen, 2004). Participant privacy was ensured their privacy and was indicated in the invitation letter and confirmation report. Participants were also verbally assured prior to the commencement of interviews. All information from the interviews remain confidential and interviews were conducted individually. All the tape recordings and the interview transcripts were kept by the researcher so that other parties could not access the information. Participants were also assured that their name would not be disclosed with the research instead utilising codes to identify participants. The participant profile is attached to the Appendix-F. Since the research concerns the authentication of ICH, some issues may emerge that require sensitive treatment. This is especially so with the authentication of ICH in tourism as it can be characterised by competition and confrontation of power between hosts and guests. Therefore, anonymity of the respondents was ensured in reporting the results.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has described the appropriateness of the social science theoretical paradigm applied to this study and outlined the qualitative approach of case study chosen to address the research purpose and research questions. The process of data collection was explained, including the choice of semi-structured interviews and purposive sampling of key informants. A summary of data collection by the researcher, including the use of research assistants. Justification for selection of the Rush Mela Festival as a case study was explained in view of its relevance to ICH tourism, the authentic experience of host and guests, and familiarity of the researcher with the study area. The performance of data analysis utilising NVivo software and a structural coding process was detailed in relation to the development of themes and categories from the interview transcripts. The
credibility and trustworthiness of the empirical data to increase the transparency of the research was discussed in the last section. Finally, ethical issues were detailed, including the voluntary involvement of interviewees, and steps taken to mitigate any potential harmful effects arising from participating in the research. The following chapters discuss the findings of the research.
4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented the methodology of the research including the justification for selecting the Rush Mela Festival as a case study. Chapter four provides further details about the Rush Mela Festival and the study area. First, the location of the study area is introduced and is followed by the history and major features of the festival including the major components of the festival program. Tourism trends and major participants in the festival are then discussed, before the socio-economic characteristics of the study area are outlined. In order to explain the Rush Mela Festival, this chapter draws on the scant literature about the event itself, as well as some observations from the researcher’s own travel to the area and the event, and findings from interviews.

4.2 Location of Rush Mela (Dublar Char and Chila)

The age-old tradition of the Rush Mela takes place on Dublar Char Island, located on the southern coast of Sundarbans and at the mouth of the Ganges delta in Bangladesh, where the holy Ganges unites with the sea (Fig. 4.1). People can only reach the Dublar Char by boat, launch, and trawler. There is no permanent settlement in the Dublar Char except a cyclone shelter, a mosque, and a temple. As the Dublar Char is located within the Sundarbans Reserve Forest, permanent human settlement is not permitted. However, the people, mainly fishermen from the surrounding peripheral villages and towns (e.g. Mongla, Dacop, Sarankhola, Bagerhat, Koyra, Khulna), come to Dublar Char all year round for fishing, dried fish production, or collecting other forest resources (e.g., Nypa Palm, firewood). Fishermen access the area by boat and are the main stakeholders who use Dublar Char as a location to dry their fish and they stay in temporary shelters. These
fishermen are involved in organising the Rush Mela Festival in Dublar Char. Other than fishermen, tourists also visit the Dublar Char during the Rush Mela festival. There are several tour operators, such as Guide Tour, Bengal Tour, Rupantor, and Evergreen Tour, who bring large numbers of tourists during the tourist season in the Sundarbans (usually in winter (October – March) including the peak event, the Rush Mela Festival. The tour companies typically use luxurious launches to visit the Dublar Char. They usually anchor the vessels in the two river ports (near Forest Department Office and Railway Station) of Khulna city. Tourists embark from these two stations to start their journey to the Sundarbans.

When researching potential case studies for this project, it was found that another Rush Mela takes place in the periphery of the Sundarbans at Chila village in the Chila Union (local council) and has been celebrated for around seven years. Chila Union is located in Mongla Upazila (sub-district) of the Bagerhat district, which occupies an area of 1461.20 sq. km out of which 1083.00 sq.km is a forest area (Fig. 4.1). It is 18 km away towards south from the Mongla Upazila headquarters and 78 km from the district centre. It lies between 22°33’ and 21°49’ north latitude and between 89°32’ and 89°44’ east longitude. It is also bounded on the north by Rampal Upazila, on the east by Morrelgonj and Saronkhola Upazila of Bagerhat district, on the south by the Bay of Bengal, and on the west by Dacop Upazila of the Khulna district. Access from the Khulna town centre (the closest major centre) to Chila is usually by mixed modes of transport (bus, boat and motor bike/ van). First, people are required to travel from Khulna to Mongla by bus. Then, from the Mongla River Port, there is boat service to cross the Passur River and then van or motor bike is available to reach the Chila village. The village is accessible in the dry season, but accessibility becomes very difficult during the monsoon. This is due to a lack
of paved roads. Motor bikes, three-wheeler scooters, and rickshaws/vans are usual transport modes within the village. It is mostly the Hindu community, who are involved in organising Rush Mela Festival in Chila.

Figure 4.1: Location of Dublar Char and Chila village in Bangladesh

4.3 Brief history of the Rush Mela Festival in the Sundarbans, Bangladesh

The Rush Mela Festival in Dublar Char Island in Sundarbans, Bangladesh was initiated by Hari Bhajan, a disciple of Thakur Hari Chand. The life of Hari Bhajan is considered extraordinary and during his twenty-four year stay in Sundarbans he lived only on the fruits of the forest. Hari attracted many disciples from the nearby villages and one of his most notable contributions was the establishment of the Dublar Char Rush Mela during the Rush Purnima (full moon). During Rush Mela, devotees sit on the beach looking out at the sea with foods and fruits, praying to the Hindu God Krishna until these foods are
washed away by the tide. To celebrate the occasion and keep alive the memory of Thakur Hari Chand, devotees, especially the fishermen of the Sundarbans, celebrate the Rush Mela religious event. The annual event normally takes place on the night of the full-moon of the Bengali calendar in the months of Karthik or Agharayan, which corresponds with the months of October and November of the Gregorian calendar (“Rush Mela begins”, 2015). The duration of the festival is three days. The festival is mostly celebrated at several places in Bangladesh including Dublar Char and Chila in Sundarbans region, Komalganj village in Maulvibazar District and Kalapara Village at Kuakata, Patuakhali District in Bangladesh (Bangladesh Unlocked, 2015). Of these festivals, the Rush Mela in Dublar Char, Sundarbans remains a major attraction for tourists. Around 40,000-50,000 tourists, including domestic and international, visit the Rush Mela Festival every year (“Dubla Rush Mela”, 2008). This large influx of tourists during the festival period facilitates the social and cultural life and livelihoods of the host community (Uddin, van Steveninck, Stuip, & Shah, 2013).

4.4 Main programmes of the festival

The Rush Mela Festival includes worship of the Lord Krishna and Goddess Radha, the taking of holy baths, and other cultural programmes. In Dublar Char (Sundarbans), the festival generally begins with the worship ceremony followed by a holy bath the following morning in the Bay of Bengal. The worship ceremony begins with the making of a statue of the Lord Krishna and Radha and their eight friends (Fig. 4.2). The statues also include the Muslim legendary figures Bonobibi, Gazi, and Kalu to acknowledge the contribution of Muslims in safeguarding the forest. As a part of the worship ceremony, the Hindu community take a holy bath very early in the morning in the Bay of Bengal (Fig. 4.3). The cultural belief of the holy bath lies in the fact that the worshipper considers
the water of the Sea as holy given the Lord Krishna danced with Goddess Radha in the Dublar Char. The Hindus believe that submerging themselves in the sacred waters on the most auspicious day of the new moon will absolve them and their ancestors of sin, thus ending the cycle of rebirth. Pilgrims start lining up to bathe from around 3 a.m. The pilgrims believe that Lord Krishna will fulfil any wish through the holy bath, which provides spiritual nourishment. This is an integral part of the worship ceremony where the worshipper usually floats money, live chickens and goats into the sea to fulfil their commitment to Lord Krishna.

*Photo credit: Shahida Khanom, 2017*

Figure 4.2: Worshipping of the statues of God and Goddesses
In addition to worshiping, cultural functions are a major part of the Rush Mela Festival. The cultural manifestation of the local livelihoods is displayed with the local drama and folk song, which attracts tourists who are keen to understand the culture of the community. The cultural drama mainly explores various myths of the forest goddess Bonobibi and the Muslim legendary figures Gazi and Kalu to acknowledge their contributions to safeguard the forest. The traditional linkage between the Hindu and Muslim community of the region make the worship ceremony a unique experience for the tourist (Field interview, 2017). Flying sky lanterns at night is another major event in Rush Mela in Dublar Char (Fig. 4.4), which attracts both the host community and tourists. The cultural function coupled with the fair of traditional crafts and goods represents the diversity of local heritage, which is also a source of attraction. Dried fish is one of the
main items sold, however other craft products including wooden items, jewellery made of seashells, and bronze products, as well as local sweets, are also sold at the festival (Figs. 4.5-4.9). Local honey collected from the Sundarbans is also very unique in this area and a popular product for locals and tourists (Field interview, 2017).


**Figure 4.4: Flying sky lantern (Fanush) in Dublar Char Rush Mela**

(Source: http://samaihaider.com/2018/03/01/the-fishermens-island/)

**Figure 4.5: Dried fish shop in Dublar Char Rush Mela**
Figure 4.6: Local sweets shop in Dublar Char Rush Mela

Figure 4.7: Craft shop (clay products) in Dublar Char Rush Mela
Figure 4.8: Craft shop (wooden products) in Dublar Char Rush Mela

(Source: https://www.alamy.com (purchased for reuse))

Figure 4.9: Craft shop (Sea-shell products) in Dublar Char Rush Mela

(Source: Sundarbans Tour, Bangladesh (with permission of the twitter account holder, retrieved from https://twitter.com/sundarban_tours?lang=en.)

Figure 4.9: Craft shop (Sea-shell products) in Dublar Char Rush Mela
The organising committee for the Rush Mela Festival in Dublar Char is mostly governed by fishing businessman from Khulna and the committee is responsible for the organisation of vendors, sculpture preparation, organisation of the holy bath, and tourism management. The committee mainly liaise with the forest department, the police, and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) (Rush Mela Organizing Committee of Dublar Char, personal communication, 2017). The committee invites businessmen and tourists from the nearby regions to take part in the festival. A temporary market of retail stalls is established during the festival with retailers mainly coming from the nearby villages of Satkhira, Paikgacha, Mongla, and Khulna. The retailers collect their products from Dhaka, Cox’s Bazar, Chittagong, and Khulna. These products include cloth, bronze made handicrafts, seashell crafts, and food items (such as sweets) (Field Survey, 2017). Among the retailers, the fishermen are the only locals who sell dried fish at the festival. The fishermen catch the fish and process it in Dublar Char to sell at the Rush Mela Festival. The retailers also pay a permit fee to the forest department to take part in the festival and subsequently the government can earn a handsome revenue from retailers during the Rush Mela Festival.

The major features of the Rush Mela, Chila are the same as those of Dublar Char, except for the holy bath ceremony due to a lack of a suitable body of water (Field interview, 2017). Chila Rush Mela commenced around seven years ago and was introduced after locals encountered difficulty accessing adequate fresh water for drinking and irrigation. The villagers were required to bring fresh water from a long distance away restricting day to day activities including irrigation (Chila Rush Mela Organising Committee, 2017). The villagers after seeking a source of fresh drinking water for a long time, finally found fresh water after digging a pond. To the villagers this was a blessing from the almighty and the
pond remains the only source of fresh water for the village. Subsequently, agricultural production has increased dramatically (Field interview, 2017) and the villagers decided to perform worship and organise a Rush Mela in honour of the fresh water. Eventually, they hope to construct a temple of the Lord Krishna in front of the pond as a place to perform the worship ceremony.

4.5 Tourism trends and major participants in the Rush Mela Festival in the Sundarbans area

The Sundarbans mangrove forest attracts a large number of tourists every year. About 125,800 tourists (domestic: 123,032 and foreign: 2,770) visited Sundarbans in 2015-16 (Sundarbans East and West division, Forest Department, Government of Bangladesh, 2017). The main season for tourism is the start of winter to the end of spring (October to April) when the river and sea remain calm and there is no rain in the region. The major scenic spots in the Sundarbans are Katka, Hiron Point, Kalatali, Munshiganj, the Nilkamal World Heritage site, and the Dublar Char. The majority of tourists use the route through the Sundarbans West Forest Division to visit Dublar Char, mainly in November when the Rush Mela Festival occurs (Haque et al., 2016). Although the Rush Mela Festival was traditionally organised by the community over the past century, tourism during Rush Mela began in the mid-1980s in the Sundarbans. The historical trend of the tourist arrivals shows that the highest number of tourists was 62722 recorded in 2016-17 in the west division of Sundarbans (Table 4.1). Although the majority of the tourists arrive to experience the natural beauty and the wildlife of the Sundarbans, arrival numbers increase in November to experience the Rush Mela. While definitive attendance figures for Rush Mela are not collected, it may be extrapolated from the arrival numbers in the west division of the Sundarbans that tens of thousands of tourists visit to experience the
Festival, with other sources such as “Dubla Rush Mela” (2008) citing in excess of 40-50,000 visitors. Several tour companies such as Bengal Tours, Evergreen Tours, and Guide Tour offer tour programmes during this season (Personal communication, 2017). Tourists from the larger cities such as Dhaka and Khulna usually come aboard a luxurious tourist vessel and the tourists from the nearby region of Sundarbans arrive by small boat. As there is no accommodation inside the Sundarbans, tourists stay on the boats and commute to the forest while visiting different places.

Table 4.1: Historical trends of tourism numbers and revenue in the West division of Sundarbans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total tourist (Domestic + International)</th>
<th>Revenue*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>33286 +520</td>
<td>BDT 9745965 ($122199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>28262+197</td>
<td>BDT 4600870 ($59531)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>25888+227</td>
<td>BDT 4588788 ($59199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>37340+233</td>
<td>BDT 7594840 ($97183)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>62722+168</td>
<td>BDT 9333625 ($115116)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Forest Department (West Division), Government of Bangladesh, 2017.

*Historical annual average exchange rate from www.xe.com was used to calcite revenue in USD.

The Rush Mela in Chila also attracts many tourists, however, there are no formal record of tourist arrivals as it is not located inside the forest and does not require an entry permit. The Chila Rush Mela Organising Committee reported that tourists come mainly from the nearby regions and are mostly invited by family and friends. Domestic tourism associated with the Rush Mela Festival in Dublar Char and Chila make it an ideal case study to examine mutual authentication of ICH.
4.6 Socioeconomic features of the study area

Although there are no permanent human settlements in Dublar Char Island, due to it being a mangrove forest reserve, the people living around the Sundarbans go to this island on a seasonal basis for fishing and other forest dependent livelihood activities. Households in the peripheral region of Sundarbans forest have four major types of occupation: fishing, catching crabs, collecting honey, and/or harvesting Nipa palm. Usually, these occupations are divided between households, and the average household engages in only one of these income-generating activities. A recent study suggested that fishing was the most prominent occupation of 67% of households, while 14% caught crabs, and 9% of households collected honey or harvested nipa palm as their primary source of income (Getzner & Islam, 2013).

In Chila Village, the socio-economic conditions are similar to other parts of the rural Bagerhat district. According to the Population Census of 2011, the population of the Chila Union was 20,973 in 4373 households, with a population density of 1097 per sq. km. Around 71.82% population of this union are Muslim, 27.06% are Hindus, and 1.08% are Christians, and 0.04% from other religions. The union has 12 primary schools, 4 secondary schools, and one Madrashah which is run by both government and an NGO. There is no industrial settlement within the union since the majority of the population depend on agriculture (Chila Union Council, 2014). A recent community survey at sub-district level showed that about 60-70% percent (approx.) of the people in the community lived below the poverty line. Most of the people at Mongla Upazila (sub-district), in which Chila village is located, engage in agriculture, fishing, or work as day laborers, as well as shrimp farming and honey collection from the Sundarbans. The main crops are
rice and vegetables, and the main export items from the region are rice, fish (shrimp), and honey. Agriculture and fishing are considered the major livelihood (UNICEF, 2016).

There are no definitive records of formal tourism businesses or tourism related occupations located in the study area. Due to the seasonal nature of tourism, tourism businesses may not seem viable to locals. However, the locals gain benefits from tourism by the sale of products to tourists. Most of the shop keepers come to Chila in the afternoon and stay till to the festival finishes in the evening.

4.7 Summary

This chapter has described the main features of the Rush Mela Festival as a case study situate within the Sundarbans (Dublar Char) and in the periphery region of Chila. Although the festival in the Sundarbans region was initiated by locals a century ago, it has gradually become a tourist attraction due its connection with the natural forest, which is a major tourist destination in Bangladesh. Despite poor transportation options and the short duration of the festival, it draws many tourists due to its unique cultural events and the opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty of the region. This chapter also described the socio-economic features of the study area which provides a background of the local community. The following chapter presents findings from this project related to the perceptions of hosts and guests of the Rush Mela Festival tourism and community empowerment.
Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion on Perception of Hosts and Guests on Rush Mela Festival Tourism and Community Empowerment

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the qualitative interviews of Rush Mela Festival hosts and guests to address research question 1 (RQ1: How do hosts and guests perceive the role of Rush Mela in community empowerment?). Section 4.2 explores the elements of community empowerment in relation to the Rush Mela Festival. Section 4.3 concentrates on the perceptions of hosts and guests in relation to the role of Rush Mela in achieving community empowerment. Community empowerment within this work is explored in four dimensions; namely economic, psychological, social, and political.

The findings presented in this chapter focus on the key themes that emerged from the narratives of the participants. In many cases, each theme includes a number of related concepts and participant responses are used as examples throughout the chapter to illustrate these key themes and concepts. Participant responses are also used to illustrate subtle variations within these themes and concepts.

5.2 Elements of community empowerment in relation to the Rush Mela Festival

The Rush Mela Festival can be linked to four dimensions of community empowerment namely economic, psychological, social and political (Scheyvens, 1999, 2009). The economic empowerment of the community is related to the engagement of the local community in small businesses servicing the festival, tourism operations, transport operators, and revenue received by the government. The festival also generates considerable local employment during this period (November) of the year. The Rush
Mela Festival also includes elements that can enhance the psychological empowerment of the community. The festival has a religious purpose which provides psychological satisfaction to the community. The festival also provides an opportunity for meeting family and friends and often results in the exchange of gifts with relatives to reinforce their solidarity as a family unit. Further, the festival allows the community to express their cultural to others from home and abroad. Thus, the psychological empowerment of the community is also linked to the festival.

The Rush Mela Festival also has elements that demonstrates social empowerment of the community. It has created harmony within the local community through the participation of differing groups. The worship ceremony of the festival celebrates not only the goddess of Lord Krishna, but also the Muslim legendary figures such as Bonobibi, Gazi, and Kalu. This provides an opportunity for the Muslim community to participate while also allowing them to appreciate the Hindu worship ceremony. The unique solidarity between the Hindu and Muslim communities enhances social cohesion and preserves cultural diversity.

Further, the Rush Mela Festival has potential for strengthening the political power of the local community. Generally, the organisation committee in Dublar Char manages the festival and collaborates with the Forest Department, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), and the Police to organise the festival. In Chila, the organising committee has full ownership of the festival and collaborates with the Chairman of Upazilla (sub-district) council to organise the festival. The existence of local organising committees and collaboration with the local and national government departments demonstrates political empowerment within the community through the organisation of the Rush Mela Festival.
In the following section, the perceptions of the hosts and guests in relation to the above-mentioned elements of community empowerment are discussed.

5.3 Host and guest perceptions on the role of the Rush Mela Festival in relation to community empowerment

This study has identified perceptions of Rush Mela Festival hosts and guests on how the festival helps to empower the community as synthesised by Scheyvens’ (1999, 2009)’ four dimensions of empowerment which include economic, psychological, social, and political dimensions. Host and guests’ perceptions were explained separately.

5.3.1 Host perceptions of the role of the Rush Mela Festival in relation to community empowerment

Host community has been organising the Rush Mela Festival for around 100 years in the Sundarbans region which shows their interest in this traditional festival. This could be because of many benefits that result from the festival and provides a unique cultural identity. In this section, the perceptions of the hosts on how the festival benefits them and the role of community empowerment are illustrated.

5.3.1.1 Psychological empowerment

The psychological empowerment of the host community is often dependent on the hosts emotional benefits and the development of self-esteem or pride that arises from a traditional object or event (Ramos & Prideaux, 2014). This study found that most of the hosts experienced emotional benefits through religious satisfaction, meeting with family and friends, and sharing their cultural pride both in Dublar Char and Chila. The majority of the host community were Hindu and attended for both economic benefit and spiritual benefit. The hosts who were mainly the Hindu community gain spiritual satisfaction by
taking part in the worship ceremony. Many Hindu families have a long tradition of participating in the Rush Mela ceremony and perceive the festival as important. Thus, the festival is a spiritual event that is transmitted from one generation to the next. Three Hindu hosts who take part in the worship ceremony at the festival made the following comments in relation to the festival:

*I mainly come here to perform the worship ceremony. Beside this, my father sells clothes in the festival. To perform the worshipping ceremony including a holy bath and the natural beauty of the Sundarbans makes the festival unique to celebrate (Host_Dublar Char_11).*

*Rush Mela is important from the religious point of view. People usually do fasting and float different sweet, candle, fruit in the sea when it is morning. Apart from business, this gives them a spiritual satisfaction (Host_Dublar Char_08).*

*Rush Mela is a significant religious heritage in Hindu Community. The worship of Lord Krishna has a long tradition to keep peace in the community. Not only that, anything blessful in the community they sacrifice it in the name of Lord Krishna. For example, the pond of fresh water is symbolic to bring peace to the community. So, they make the temple of Lord Krishna in front of the pond. It symbolises the pond as an authentic cultural identity of the Chila community to do the worship ceremony (Host_Chila_12).*

Rush Mela Festival is seen as a cultural identity by most of the hosts. The majority of the hosts, mainly Hindus, suggested that they invited the local Muslims to take part in the festival to share their pride and identity. Both Hindu and Muslim hosts take pride in the festival as it demonstrates their cultural identity within the broader Sundarbans community. It should be noted that recreation within the forest-dependent community is very limited, making the Hindu and Muslim communities of the festival very keen to share their unique culture to outsiders. One host quoted below:

*Although, Rush Mela is a Hindu religious event, it welcomes everyone to celebrate. We feel proud when pilgrimage or tourist come to enjoy the festival (Host_Chila_06).*
Also, the cultural programme organised for the festival provides psychological satisfaction to the hosts. The majority of the hosts (both Hindu and Muslim) in Dublar Char informed that they enjoyed the cultural occasion and the natural beauty of the Sundarbans. Similar observations were found by the hosts in Chila, even though there are no natural attractions. The cultural event offers opportunity to share religious and folk songs (e.g., Jatra, Kobi gaan, Baul song) which entertain both host and guest and provides an escape from the city life. The worship ceremony and the cultural events of the Rush Mela Festival appear to place humanity before ethnicity, which amplifies psychological satisfaction. Several shopkeepers cited their psychological satisfaction as quoted below:

*Rush Mela is a Hindu religious festival. But this time people from different religion can get a chance to visit Sundarbans and enjoy cultural programmes. The surrounding environment and the decoration of the Rush Mela give it another dimension (Host_Dublar Char_04).*

*My main activity is fruits selling as well as watching the natural view of Sundarbans and enjoying Rush Mela program. It is mainly a religious festival but different religious persons also visit here. It is a very enjoyable place. It should arrange for the religious purpose as well as the opportunity to see the natural beauty of Sundarbans (Host_Dublar Char_13).*

There is also satisfaction gained by enjoying family and friends and providing an opportunity to invite friends and family to participate. The hosts, specially the fishermen in Dublar Char, indicated that meeting family and friends gave them mental nourishment during the festival. Some of the host community in Chila suggested that they usually exchanged gifts at this time to tie their kinship. The exchange of gift brings psychological satisfaction to the community. One host respondent quoted below demonstrates evidence
of this psychological satisfaction through meeting family and friends and the exchange of gifts:

Yes, we invite our friends and relatives during this time. We also gift them new clothes. Almost every house in our village got guests and relatives during this time. Tourism is still informal here. There is no tour operator or N.G.O who organise the trip here. So, none of my family members are associated with this business (Host_Chila_17)

The psychological benefits from the festival perceived by the hosts leads to the psychological empowerment of the community. The host community has developed sense of identity, self-esteem, and pride in their traditional culture (Scheyvens, 1999; Ramos & Prideaux, 2014). The study did not find any negative perceptions of the hosts in relation to the psychological effects of the Rush Mela Festival, which could lead to psychological disempowerment of the community (Scheyvens, 1999).

5.3.1.2 Economic empowerment

Economic empowerment of the host community was evident through the various economic activities of the community (e.g. small business, tourism, transports) that only operate during the Rush Mela Festival. Small business owners are one of the major groups of host community. It was noted that some shop owners and their families have had a long tradition of participation in both Dublar Char and Chila, as one host quoted below.

I have participated Rush Mela for 10-12 years. Basically, I participate here for religious as well as business purposes. Rush Mela is important for religious and business purpose. As I am an artist, so I usually attend there to enjoy Mela and participate holy bath as well as doing craft business activities (Host_Dublar Char_29).
In Dublar Char, the study found that most of the shop owners from neighbouring towns arrive as a group and rent trawlers to stay in the Sundarbans. The majority of the shops sell craft items and dried fish while some shops sell cloth and food. The craft items are generally collected from different parts of Bangladesh (e.g., Chittagong, Cox’s Bazar, Dhaka, and Khulna). The survey in Dublar Char found that the dried fish and food items were the only locally produced items sold during the festival. Especially, the dried fish which were produced by the fishermen in Dublar Char. At the Chila festival, the shop owners, who come mainly from the surrounding areas, including East and West Chila, and Mongla, sell cosmetics and food items. For example, some respondents from Dublar Char and Chila are quoted below demonstrating economic empowerment of the festival:

*Rush Mela is important for a various reason. The basic reason is to serve the religious festival of Hindu community. Different businesses are developing based on the festival. The tourism business, dry fish business has million dollars return during the festival time. So, this defines the economic value of the festival (Host_Dublar Char_44).*

*Artist mainly craft people show unique products to the fair like brass, seashell and clay products. Tourists are very much interested to buy these products. We earned a handsome money when people and the fishermen buy for their grand kids and family (Host_Dublar Char_8).*

*I am mainly a shopkeeper and a fisherman. I join this fair every year with my betel leaf shop to do some business and to attend the religious program. Actually, I enjoy the nice enjoyable environment of this place (Host_Chila_13).*

Another major host group associated with the Rush Mela Festival are the tour operators, who earn money through tourist activity during the festival season. The study found that most of the tour operators are mainly involved in bringing tourists and offering special packages to attract the tourists to the festival as well as to enjoy the natural landscape in
the Sundarbans. The tour operator employ tour attendants from the Khulna to operate the travel in the Sundarbans. The seasonal employment of tour attendants also supports the economic empowerment of the local people. The managers of two tour companies are quoted below:

_I am engaged with the travel agency and every year we arrange tours for Rush festival with domestic and foreign tourists. We secure local tour attendant who serves as a part time basis during the tourist season. (Host_Dublar Char_37)_

_Basically, I arrange different tour packages for the Sundarbans visit and Rush Mela package is one of them. Various visitors from home and abroad come to this festival. We hire students from the Khulna to serve the pick season of the Rush Mela which promote their economic empowerment through the tourist agency. (Host_Dublar Char_33)._

The study found that most of the tour attendants were students who work seasonally; with the part-time job helping them to support their educational costs. The economic support from these seasonal jobs also reduces the financial stress on their parents and provides psychological satisfaction. Two tour attendants mentioned the role of part-time jobs:

_I am a student of electrical engineering of North-West University, Khulna. I do part-time job in the tourist's vessel. My job is to give different service to the tourist's vessel (Host_Dublar Char_44)._

_Although study is my main job, but I work as a part-time attendant in the tourist Launch. It reduces economic stress on my parents (Host_Dublar Char_44)._

Apart from the small businesses and the tour operators, the Forest Department of the Bangladesh Government earns revenue from the trawler operators and individual participants of the festival in Dublar Char. An interviewee in Dublar Char recognised economic benefits of the government and transport operators:
Trawler and launch (boat) owners earn a lot from the tourist and pilgrimage. It also creates earning opportunity from the shop owner. Government earns a lot of revenue from the festival. (Host_Dublar Char_27).

Although there were no formal tour operators in Chila, mainly local transport owners bring tourists from neighbouring towns. The government does not earn revenue from tourism activities within Chila.

The study found that most of the hosts perceived that the Rush Mela Festival has resulted in economic opportunities, which has facilitated in strengthening the local and regional economy during the festival season. Thus, most of the hosts recognise the role of the Rush Mela in the economic empowerment of the community (Scheyvens, 1999, 2009) and held positive perceptions of tourism (Sharpley, 2014). The Rush Mela Festival and related tourism may also contribute to alleviate poverty for the rural people (Manyara & Jones, 2007) of the region. However, some of the hosts suggested that further support from the organising committee and security agencies would help to enhance the economic activities of the festival by extending the duration of festival, particularly in Dublar Char, so that the shop owners could make greater returns on their investments. This view indicates that institutional support and strengthening (Scheyvens, 1999) may be required to enhance the economic empowerment of the community.

5.3.1.3 Social empowerment

Social empowerment includes strengthened cohesion, and the integrity (Scheyvens, 1999, 2009) that may help the preservation of cultural traditions and the natural resources of the community. The research observed that the Rush Mela in both Dublar Char and Chila included the worship not only of the Hindu Lord Krishna, but also the legendary
Bonobibi, Gazi, and Kalu of the Muslim faith. This combined celebration of faith increases social cohesion among the Hindu and Muslim communities in the region.

Several host interviewees described the social cohesion below:

I think most of the fishermen are from Hindu community. This community has a long tradition to do the Rush puja. It’s about the worship of Lord Krishna and Goddess Radha. However, later on, they include Muslim legend of the Sundarbans like Bonobibi, Gazi, and Kalu for worshiping beside the Hindu God. The unique solidarity between Hindu and Muslim legend is authentic to this Rush Mela. People claim that they don’t have any coalition between Hindu and Muslim in the Sundarbans periphery compare to other parts of Bangladesh (Host_Dublar Char_34).

Selling products is the main issue to visit there. At the same time can able to enjoy the natural beauty of Sundarbans. Rush Mela is important to perform spiritual satisfaction of Hindu community. At the same time, it gathers people from different parts of the country. The fishermen love and respect us. They give us fish whenever need which enhance social bonding (Host_Dublar Char_27).

Initially, the festival in Dublar Char was informal and mainly focused on the worship of the Lord Krishna. At that time, the Hindu minority was harassed by the Muslim community, which distracted them from the worship ceremony. However, many Muslim businessmen have associations with the Hindu fishermen, through business contacts and they found that it was very important for the Hindu fishermen to take part in the festival given their absence at sea. The Muslim businessmen found that if they worked with the fishermen, they could improve their relationship. Some also felt compelled to protect the humanitarian right to perform the worship ceremony. Therefore, Major Zia, a Muslim, formed a committee to organise the festival. Major Zia along with fishermen colleagues built a temple and sculpture to be used in the worship ceremony. Mr. Kamal Uddin, Major Zia’s brother is now the Joint Secretary of the festival. Although Major Zia has since passed away, one of his fellow colleagues, Khokon, spoke of the importance of the humanitarian principles:
I have been visiting Sundarbans since 1984. I experienced that Hindu pilgrimage usually gives goat, chicken, money to the sea as a part of their devotion. Muslim people take those away for eating. So, I think there should be a committee to save the minority. I thought humanity is the first thing to consider beyond Hindu and Muslim. Now, the festival is well organised than before (Host_Dublar Char_09).

In the case of the Chila Rush Mela, the sacred freshwater pond united both Hindus and Muslims as the pond provides water for agriculture and drinking purposes. The Hindu families in the village started organising Rush Mela and also invited Muslim community to take part in the festival. The social harmony between Hindu and Muslim emphasises the social empowerment of the host community in Chila. One of the hosts from Chila expressed regarding social empowerment.

The unique of this Mela is about social harmony between Hindu and Muslim express through the festival. I think this is the main advantage of the festival. (Host_Chila_06).

Some of the hosts, particularly in Dublar Char, also perceived that the social bonding driven by the Rush Mela Festival and related tourism also created awareness among the community for the conservation of the natural mangrove forests, which provide a livelihood opportunity for this region. Therefore, these messages are transmitted during the cultural festival in the hope that others will support and save the forest from degradation and the further deterioration of their livelihoods. The guests and other participants therefore also come to understand how important the Sundarbans are to these forest-dependent communities. It also offers an opportunity to increase the awareness of the cultural beliefs of the Sundarbans people for the conservation of Sundarbans. One of the hosts (tour operator) noted the interaction of the community with the forest:
Rush Mela has a long tradition of celebration, especially among the fishermen. The forest-dependent community has a very straggling life to earn their livelihood. Their economic condition is not well enough to manage the day to day life. This forest is like God to them as it provides food for them. They have hardly any recreation opportunity. So, they arrange this festival for the wellbeing of the forest. At the same time, it reflects their struggle to collect from the forest. For example, beside Lord Krishna, they do the worship of Bonobibi wishing they will be safe from any danger from tiger or other animals in the forest (Host_Dublar Char_37).

The previous discussion highlights that most of the hosts perceive the Rush Mela Festival plays a role in the social empowerment of the community through increased social cohesion and integrity (Scheyvens, 1999, 2009) among the diverse community (e.g. between Hindu and Muslim). Tourism during the Rush Mela have also helped to change perceptions of the host community which facilitated the social cohesion. A recent study in the Amazon by Stronza and Gordillo (2008) found that tourism could divide the community rather than bringing together. In case of Rush Mela Festival, as mentioned by some hosts in Dublar Char suggests that mutual respect between the different religious groups was not initially evident, but later the community came together with the help of the local committee to organize Rush Mela Festival that fostered social cohesion in the community.

5.3.1.4 Political empowerment

Political empowerment involves capacity for the host community to take control of the decision-making processes (Sofield, 2003) of the Rush Mela Festival and related social and economic activities. The study found that, over the past decades, a formal local committee was formed for organising the Rush Mela Festival in both Dublar Char and Chila. The organising committee in the Dublar Char collaborates with the Forest officials and security agencies (e.g. Coast guard, and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB)) to
organise the festival. The organising committee in Dublar Char have no financial support from the government and collect money from committee members to cover the costs of the sculpture and related management. Collaboration between the organising committee and the Forest Department ensure the political empowerment of the host community. One of the hosts in Dublar Char quoted below regarding potential political empowerment:

*There is a main committee for arranging this festival which includes political leaders, government officials, and local people. And, also some volunteer committee for this festival containing the local people. I am not engaged with the arranging committee. But I think they should also include the tour operator in the organising committee as a stakeholder (Host_Dublar Char_39).*

Some of the hosts in Dublar Char stated that the majority of the committee comprised of fishermen, as they were a significant representation of the occupational groups of the host community in Sundarbans. Although the shopkeepers and the tour operators are important stakeholders, they have no formal role in the organising committee. Some of the tour operators claimed that political empowerment would be strengthened if the organising committee included tour operators and shopkeepers. Two hosts offered the following responses in relation to political empowerment of the community.

*Actually, the existing committee has a representation of fishermen group. It should include other occupational groups like honey collector, wood collector, tour operator to engage themselves in Rush Mela tourism.*

*So far, I understand, that there should be a stakeholder committee depend on the norms and nature of the job. In the present committee, there are people only from fishermen, security, forest official which hinder the scope of other occupation like woodcutter, honey collector. So, the stakeholder committee should widen the scope for engaging local based on the benefit (Host_Dublar Char_33).*

Also, the study observed that the Rush Mela in Dublar Char provides an opportunity for the host community to connect with high level government officials and political leaders.
For instance, in 2017, the festival was inaugurated by the Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh. This was possible because of the engagement of ministerial level of Bangladesh government to participate in the inauguration ceremony. The involvement of high-level government officials at the festival was highlighted in national electronic and print media. Thus, the host community perceived special importance and identity through the Rush Mela Festival. Furthermore, the organising committee, as a local institution, could establish their role in political domain. Several respondents urged for the political engagement of the local community through the Rush Mela in Dublar Char:

*People from the Minister Level, police administration, and Indian high commissioner inaugurated the festival this year. I think the organising committee had a get together with this high official which is important for political* (*Host_Dublar Char_38*)

*High-level political leaders are also engaged in this festival which makes in highlighted in the media* (*Host_Dublar Char_42*).

In case of Chila Rush Mela, the research found that the organising committee, mostly represented by local Hindu community, included villagers, shop keepers, and local government council members allowing these groups a greater role in the organisation of the festival. The committee however, did not have collaboration with Government agencies and did not receive funding support, leaving the host community having to plan and implement the festival independently. The local government (Upazilla) council members are included in the committee creating links between social integrity and the political empowerment for the community. Several respondents commented on these issues:

*Since most of the member in the organising committee are from the village, they got a chance to be a decision maker which enhance political empowerment* (*Host_Chila_09*).
Upazilla members are included in the committee to celebrate the festival. So, it links the social integrity to political empowerment of the community (Host_Chila_14).

There are actually 463 families in this union and among them 66 families are Hindu. Those Hindu community actually arrange this Rush Mela and they invite their kit and kin to join this Rush Mela. Although the Hindu community invites their relatives, Muslim also participate to share the festival (Host_Chila_10).

Respondents also argued that since participation in Dublar Char was expensive, people could participate in Chila as an alternative. It was seen that this enhanced participation in Chila may help achieve greater interaction with high-level government and political leaders to provide opportunities for political empowerment within the host community. A number of people from the host community urged for government assistance to initiate formal tourism in Chila, as quoted below:

I think we need aid from the government and other national/international donor to engage more local in tourism. At the same time, some publicity with the tour operator is needed to highlight Chila Rush Mela (Host_Chila_10).

I think if we can include the tour operator to extend the tourism business then we can generate some alternative earning opportunity for the local. From this standpoint, I find to develop a tourism committee to explore more opportunity for the local (Host_Chila_15).

There is no formal tour operator to operate the tourist here. Now the situation is very informal. We need to set us a tourism committee to operate the tourist here (Host_Chila_12).

The above findings of the study suggest that the Rush Mela Festival has influenced the host community to develop local committees as well as collaborate with government agencies depending on the local conditions and tourist demand. The host community in
Dublar Char Rush Mela has the opportunity for high level political engagement at the national level, whereas the Chila Rush Mela has less influence with government agencies. Overall, most of the hosts perceived that the Rush Mela Festival has empowered the community politically through institutional development and decision making at the local level which has supported them in organising the festival and tourism (Strzelecka & Wicks, 2010), and making connection with national level politics and government. However, some of the hosts have urged that the local organising committee could include participants from occupational groups such as shop keepers and tours operators, which is not the case at present. This would ensure wider participation of the community in decision making process, which is considered essential for the sustainability of the festival and tourism (Cole, 2006).

5.3.2 Guests perception of the role of the Rush Mela Festival in relation to community empowerment

The study also captured the tourists or guests’ perceptions on the role of Rush Mela in community empowerment in the context of Scheyvens’ (2009) four dimensions of community empowerment (economic, psychological, social, and political dimensions), which are illustrated in the following sections.

5.3.2.1 Psychological empowerment

Most of the guests perceived that the religious rituals were important for the psychological satisfaction of both the local community and guests who visit mainly for religious purposes. Most of the guests who are Hindu mentioned that God Lord Krishna is very awake in the region and will listen. They see worshipping at the Rush Mela as an expression of their faith and that good things will come from their faith. Some of the guests also saw connections between economic benefits and religious satisfaction, as local
businessman attended for not only economic benefits but also to participate in the worship ceremony in Dublar Char. Some guest interviewees perceived that the host community would come to the worship through the business and have the chance to pray for good sales and associated wellbeing and are cited below:

Local people get some economic and religious benefit from here. Because there is some connection between religious and economic side (Guest_Dublar Char_25).

Basically, the local get the economic benefit. As the tourist come from home and abroad so local people can earn money from selling products. At the same time, they can enable their religious morality (Guest_Dublar Char_38).

At the Chila Rush Mela, most of the guests, who were mainly from neighbouring towns, perceived that the worship ceremony and cultural functions were the main things the community offered. They believe that religious observances provide psychological satisfaction for the community as well as the guests. There seems to be consensus that there is little economic benefit especially as the host community supports the event financially. However, some guests mentioned that there were social and religious benefits from festival participation for the community, through donating money for the festival and increasing their knowledge through the religious program. Some of the guests in Chila are quoted below:

Yes, they (hosts) get some benefits. Religious program increases the knowledge of the people. It also increases the relation and unity of the local people (Guest_Chila_14).

Yes, local people get some social and religious benefits from the Mela. (Guest_Chila_03).
Actually, religious matter is main here. Some people do business and earn a good amount of money. Moreover, everyone become very excited about the Mela. Everyone comes here and does lots of fun which makes the social bond stronger (Guest_Chila_15).

The data suggests that the guests’ perception on the role of the Rush Mela Festival in psychological empowerment of the community is similar to the hosts perception. Most of the guests perceived that religious rituals at the festival ensured the psychological empowerment of the host community (Scheyvens, 1999). Also, some of the guests perceived that the economic benefits could give the hosts (shop owners) the mental satisfaction of earning their living, which could be linked to the psychological empowerment of the community.

5.3.2.2 Economic empowerment

Guest perceptions of the economic empowerment of the host community through the Rush Mela Festival mainly evolves around the sale of craft items, dried fish, the income of the trawler operators, government revenue, and the purchase of food and worship items during the pilgrimage. Most of the guests perceived the economic empowerment of the host community through engagement in the economic exchange of goods and services with various hosts. Some of the guests reported that they have bought craft items and dried fish from the Dublar Char Rush Mela Festival. Guests also urged that since the local fishermen and small businessmen could directly sell items to tourist without having middleman or dealers, they were likely to receive a high profit from selling products in the festival. However, some of the guests perceptions was that while some benefit may go to the local community from the sale of food and dried fish, the main economic benefit likely went to those outside the local community such as the sellers of craft items, brass
crockery, and jewellery which were imported from other towns, and are evidenced in the statements below:

*Pilgrimage usually buy products, food from the shop to sacrifice it in the river during the holy bath. So, the shop owner gets economically benefited. It brings a festive image among the fishermen community (Guest_Dublar Char_33).*

*By selling dry fish (sutki) local people earn from here. Except this, other shop owner are not from Sundarbans area (Guest_Dublar Char_21).*

*The fishermen usually dry the fish in the Dublar Char and then trade across the marketing network of the country. However, they got the opportunity to sell the dry fish to the tourist directly within a short time period. They earn handsome money compare to the local market (Guest_Dublar Char_13).*

*The local people get some social and economic benefit from this Rush Mela. By this, their social bonding and interaction increases and it’s an opportunity for the local people and fisherman to buy and sell different types of products which give them economic benefit (Guest_Dublar Char_20).*

Most of the guests to Dublar Char also perceived that the Government received good earnings via the Permit fees required from trawlers, tour operators, and individuals attending the Rush Mela Festival. Usually, people participate in the festival in a group on a trawler or a tour operator. The tour operator and the trawler drivers can earn considerable income from the Rush Mela packages. While it is recognised that tour and trawler operators can make good profit from the festival, some of the guests claimed that facilities on the vessels could be improved to earn more money, especially given there were no other options for festival attendance in Dublar Char. Respondents quoted below discuss their perceptions of economic empowerment:

*The government also earn huge revenue both from tourist and fishermen during this period (Guest_Dublar Char_13)*
Lots of visitors come by trawler. So, the trawler owner and the driver also earn money. It enhances the potentiality of river business associate with other benefits. It’s a local identity. There is no political benefit (Guest_Dublar Char_27).

People can be benefited economically besides the tourist agency become benefited by branding their agency. Travel agency should develop their facilities (Guest_Dublar Char_43).

Most of the guests in Chila perceived that economic empowerment of the local community was limited as there was less economic activities in the festival compared to Dublar Char. The gests reported that there were only a few shops, mainly selling cosmetic items imported from other towns such as Mongla and Dhaka. Subsequently, there was no real perception of economic benefit from the Rush Mela in Chila as cited by guests below:

Yes, local people get some benefit. Through worship they get self-satisfaction and some economic benefit through donation, selling products and others (Guest_Chila_12).

I don’t find any economic benefit to the organisers rather they economic difficulties since they pay the money from their own pocket. But some people who make stalls here they get little economic benefits (Guest_Chila_03).

Guests to both the Dublar Char and Chila Rush Mela, were very interested to buy local products like Sundarbans’ honey and locally made craft items which they could have as souvenirs. They could then easily relate the role of festival with local community empowerment.

In summary, the study findings suggest that while most of the guests perceived the economic empowerment of the local community through the Rush Mela Festival both in Dublar Char and Chila, some of the guests have perceived limited economic
empowerment of the community as there was less availability of locally made products sold in the festival. The perception of the guests indicates that there is more opportunity to enhance economic empowerment of the community through the development of local products that would create local business entrepreneurship and employment of the youth and women (Scheyvens, 1999).

5.3.2.3 Social empowerment

The guests’ perception regarding social empowerment of the community through Rush Mela Festival was similar to those of the hosts. Most of the guests understood the social importance of Rush Mela for the local community, particularly for the fishermen of the Dublar Char who were often away at sea during the fishing season. Some of the guests perceived that the Rush Mela Festival also provided an opportunity to meet with family and friends, which increased the relationship and brotherhood among the local people in relation to social empowerment. One guest quoted below in relation to social empowerment:

*This festival is one scope for the local people to get together among them. People invite their relatives from other parts of the country to come this time and to enjoy the festival. These increase the relationship and the brotherhood among the local people (Guest_Dublar Char_31).*

Guests also viewed the festival in Dublar Char as an opportunity for shopkeepers to interact with each other. This allows the forest-dependent community, particularly the fishermen, an opportunity to exchange their culture with other hosts while buying products from them. In addition, some guests urged that hosts and guests could exchange culture during the festivals providing psychological satisfaction and developing social cohesion. Several guest interviewees quoted below in relation to social cohesion:
Yes, local people get some social benefit. As they all together arrange this Rush Mela, they enjoy a lot, perform worship, they came all together to know each other better during this time. It increases social cohesion and identity of the Sundarbans’ periphery. Some people get some economic benefit from selling products (Guest_Chila_10).

Hindu Muslim are gathering here, social bonding is booming, and they are donating. I think more time is necessary to give in this purpose (Guest_Dublar Char_21).

Being located in the remote this festival gives the local people a chance to entertain and exchange with other culture. Thus, enhance their social cohesion (Guest_Dublar Char_15).

In Chila, most of the guests perceived that social bonding within the local community became stronger because of the Rush Mela Festival and was related to the freshwater pond in the site. Other perspectives of social cohesion through meeting people and cultural exchange in Chila were similar to guests’ perceptions in Dublar Char.

In summary, it appears that the guests, being the outsiders of the community, but having a similar cultural background, have recognised the role of Rush Mela in bringing social cohesion and integrity within the community and has led to enhanced social empowerment (Scheyvens, 1999). Some guests appreciated the hospitality of the host community, which could be linked to the existence of social cohesion, tolerance, and harmony in the local community that allowed the welcoming of tourists during the Rush Mela Festival.

5.3.2.4 Political empowerment

Most of the guests recognised the political empowerment of the local community through the Rush Mela Festival in Dublar Char and Chila as they saw the presence of local
organising committee for the festival supporting the participants including tourists. Some of the guests in Dublar Char also mentioned the involvement of the Forest Department and security forces, and, above all, presence of the state Minister of the Bangladesh Government and the Indian High Commissioner who inaugurated the festival demonstrate political engagement. Some guests who visited the Rush Mela in Dublar Char several times offered that the festival had improved significantly due to involvement of the committee and government agencies. The guests also emphasised that the capacity of the local community provides a positive outlook for the political parties when they engage in the Rush Mela. Local people in the festival could meet the political leaders directly and have an opportunity to express their views and needs. Direct contact with the political figures thereby represents a form of political empowerment. Several guest interviewees from Dublar Char offered comment regarding the capacity of the local people for decision making and are quoted below:

*Security is quite good here. The locals are also doing voluntary service with the government to organise the festival which in turn influence the political empowerment. The volunteer committee mainly looks after the tourist and the shopkeepers who take part in the festival. The making of the sculpture, organising the shop and monitoring the anchoring of the tourist vessel and the trawler. They also inform any incident to the police and RAB to take care. (Guest_ Dublar Char_15).*

*High political leaders for example Minister inaugurate the festival which highlights the political representation of this remote periphery community. This is particularly evident for the Rush Mela in Sundarbans where the Indian High Commissioner joins the inauguration ceremony. The participation of such high profile international representative represents the capacity of the organiser especially the local fisherman of the organising committee. The local people can meet with such high profile diplomats to enhance their political empowerment (Guest_ Dublar Char_11).*

*Different political leaders are also involved in organising this festival. So general people get the scope to come in touch with their political leaders and express their demands. Thus, enhance their political awareness to empower through the*
festival. This is particularly important to take leadership of the festival. The political awareness is not only about the Rush Mela but also wider political participation in the national election to represent Sundarbans community (Guest_Dublar Char_28).

Similar to Dublar Char, most of the guests in Chila also found that the direct interaction of villagers with the organising committee enhances political empowerment. One guest interviewee in Chila commented on political empowerment and is quoted below:

The organising committee takes the lead from the planning and the implementation of the festival. The involvement of the organising committee from planning to implementation enhance their decision-making capacity for political empowerment. Additionally, the direct interaction with the village community widens the scope of greater political participation (Guest_Chila_03).

Also, extension of formal tourism in Chila with the help of government agencies and tour operators was suggested by some guests which could enhance political empowerment of the community by involving greater community and engaging other government agencies.

Overall, the guest perceptions on the role of the Rush Mela in political empowerment of the local community was similar to the host perceptions. Both hosts and guest have identified the existence of local committee and government involvement as a sign of political empowerment (Strzelecka & Wicks, 2010) for organising the festival and supporting the tourists. Most of the guests perceived the importance of the Rush Mela Festival in political empowerment of the community (Scheyvens, 1999). However, the guests, being the outsider, perhaps did not anticipate the internal strength of political empowerment within the community as they had less understanding of the role of the institutions in the short time they were there.
5.4 Summary

This chapter has illustrated the findings and presented a discussion on host and guest perceptions in relation to the role of Rush Mela Festival in community empowerment. The study found that the major elements of the Rush Mela Festival including the religious worship ceremony, cultural programmes, economic activities, tourism, and institutional involvement were related to the four dimensions of community empowerment, namely psychological, economic, social, and political (Scheyvens, 1999, 2009). The study identified perceptions of the hosts and guests on how the Rush Mela plays an important role along the four dimensions of community empowerment. As discussed in Section 4.3.1, most of the hosts perceived that the Rush Mela has a positive influence on psychological, economic, social and political empowerment of the community. Some variations of perceptions were observed among the hosts in the Dublar Char and the Chila Rush Mela. For instance, economic empowerment in the Dublar Char was largely recognised due to the involvement of formal tour operators and greater economic activities in comparison with Chila. Also, political empowerment in Dublar Char was enhanced due to the involvement of government agencies and high officials, which were not present in Chila. Some hosts expressed concerned at the lack of participation of different groups (e.g. shop owners and tour operators) in the local organising committee, particularly in Dublar Char, which could be addressed to enhance political empowerment.

Regarding guest perceptions on the role of the Rush Mela in community empowerment, as discussed in Section 4.3.2, the interview data suggests that most of the guests, both in Dublar Char and Chila, have perceived that the festival plays a positive role in achieving the four dimensions of community empowerment and reflected the host perceptions. However, some of the guests urged that the economic empowerment of the community could be enhanced further if the hosts sold more locally made products, rather than selling
imported goods. Both host and guest perceptions on the role of the Rush Mela in community empowerment have been further linked with mutual authentication and are presented in the following chapter.
Chapter 6: Findings and Discussion on Authenticity of ICH (Rush Mela) and Community Empowerment

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents results concerning two research questions; the factors affecting the authentic experience of host and guest in ICH (Rush Mela Festival) (RQ 2), and how the mutual authentication of ICH (Rush Mela Festival) links to community empowerment (RQ 3). Several factors that influence the authentic experience of both host and guest in ICH (Rush Mela Festival) are described in Section 5.2 and 5.4 (RQ2). The data indicated that the authentic experience of hosts is influenced by attitude, motivation, economic benefit, psychological benefit, individual, and institutional involvement. The authentic experience of the guests is influenced by attitude, motivation, finding authentic objects, and the experience of the event. These factors are explained from the perspective of host and guest experiences at the Rush Mela Festival. Section 5.3 and 5.5 discusses how the host and guest support Rush Mela tourism. The mutual authentication process of the Rush Mela Festival is discussed in section 5.6, linking with the host-guest perception of authentic experience and support for tourism. Section 5.7 addresses the role of mutual authentication (host-guest) of ICH (Rush Mela) for sustainable community empowerment (RQ3). This final section focuses on how mutual authentication can influence community empowerment in social, economic, psychological, and political domains.

6.2 Factors determining the authentic experience of guests (domestic tourists) at the Rush Mela Festival

The century-old traditional Rush Mela Festival in Bangladesh Sundarbans (as ICH) attracts many tourists, most of whom are from Bangladesh. This study examined factors
that determine the authentic experience of the guests (domestic tourists) at the Rush Mela. For a clear understanding it should be recalled here that the tourists/guests’ interviewees are comprised of both Hindu and Muslim religious background. The purpose of attendance for the Hindu tourist is to participate in the worship ceremony and enjoy the cultural programmes and natural environment of the Sundarbans. Muslim tourists’ visit to observe the traditional rituals and enjoy the cultural programmes and natural environment of the Sundarbans. Views of both tourist groups are presented here.

6.2.1 Guests’ attitudes

Domestic tourists (guests) to the Rush Mela Festival expressed different feelings about the festival, local community, and the environment. Key themes emerging in the data show guests’ attitudes to the spiritual activities (worship, holy bath), hosts’ hospitality, local livelihood, natural beauty of the Sundarbans, cultural programmes (folk song, religious song) as well as touristic facilities during the Rush Mela Festival, influence their perception of both the objective and existential authenticity of the Rush Mela. The following paragraphs explain how the tourist attitudes are expressed in these themes.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.5, the cognitive component of an attitude consists of beliefs, opinions, knowledge, or information held by a person towards an object or experience (Zhou et al., 2013). Therefore, interview prompts in relation to attitude aimed to identify guests’ level of understanding of, and preference for religious activity and their understanding of the historical and cultural background behind it. Usually, the tourists (Hindus) believed that a holy bath during Rush Mela would help with the fulfilment of their prayers to God Krishna. The tourists (Hindu) often donate money to the temple as they believe the God Krishna is very awake here. Spiritual attachment to the destination influences religious tourists’ attitudes to perceive existential authenticity by engaging in
the holy bath and associated religious activities. The festival was closely linked with historical events and cultural stories performed through folk song and drama, which also influence the perception of existential authenticity. The religious tourists are optimistic regarding the spiritual nourishment which influences their satisfaction. Several religious tourists (the Hindus) commented on their spiritual attachment:

*The main reason of this Rush festival visit is religious. That’s why if religious programmers and enjoying opportunities increase then it will be better. New cultural program like folk songs (Pot gan, Baul gan) etc need to be added and the enjoying opportunities for the adult and children (Guest_Chila_01).*

*Religious programs are the main attraction of this place. For example, the religious songs (vogobat gita, kirtan gan, kobi gan and religious jatra gan). This is actually enjoyable and informative. If these type of programs increases, then everyone will be happy (Guest_Chila_05).*

*For the Hindu religious people, here, worship activities (kitton, puja) is performed. There is no modernism and it can be shown by the large monitor or projector. I have some desire to see the puja, take the prosad (food) and donate some money, because here radha krisna is awakened (Guest_Dublar Char_05).*

The religious tourists’ attitude to spiritual religious activities in Chila were similar to the tourists in Dublar Char, although at the Rush Mela in Chila, the holy bath is not practiced due to the scarcity of fresh water.

The majority of tourists were Muslims, both in Dublar Char and Chila. These tourists (Muslim) were particularly respectful toward the culture of the Hindu community. The direct interaction with the host community and the Hindu religious tourists helped the Muslim tourists understand the historical and cultural atmosphere and perceive higher existential authenticity during the Rush Mela Festival. Two Muslim tourists commented on their attitudes towards the traditional culture of the Rush Mela:
Actually, I am interested to know the tradition of Rush Mela, how Hindu people start this and the ending activities. Beside this, I have some strong desire to see the bathing (punno snan) and the Fanush flying activities (Guest_Dublar Char_04).

I come here to explore the century old tradition of Rush festival. Beside this, I am interested in the holy bath setting with candle ritual and others. I am a Muslim, that’s why I come here to know about the Hindu people’s tradition (Guest_Dublar Char_25).

The data suggests that the tourists (both Hindu and Muslim) attitudes towards the hospitality of the host community was positive, as the hosts were welcoming the tourists irrespective of their race and religion. One tourist quoted below regarding the hospitality:

Yes, local people are very friendly, hospitable and after coming to this festival I met with a lot of new people. The host community is very welcoming to receive the tourist from diversifies background. They don’t separate between Hindu and Muslim. They like to meet people since they have located very remote area. They find positive and optimistic when the guest recognises their culture and want to enjoy with them. I am very satisfied with them and I want to visit the Dublar Char again (Guest_Dublar Char_01).

The majority of tourists were also keen to explore the historical and cultural background of the Rush Mela and the hospitality of the local hosts increases tourist curiosity towards local tradition and extend the authenticity of the experience. This is particularly evident where tourists wished to learn about craft making techniques, food preparation, and the costume of the local people. For example, one tourist responded as quoted below:

We feel the host community are very proud to share their culture especially the worship ceremony, religious song, and performance. They talk with us, want to know about us. The fisherman is especially very happy to see the guest as they were in the sea for a long time. So, they don’t have any contact with the family. In that case, they treat the guest as family. The tour operator organised the trip very short time for the Rush Mela. We experienced that the way they advertised about Rush Mela did not give us enough time to enjoy the hospitality and culture of the host (Guest_Dublar Char_17).
Tourists who have an interest in the natural landscape, wildlife habitats, environmental conservation, and ecotourism, tended to link nature with the cultural background of the host community. The tourists felt that pristine nature of Dublar Char island depicts the sacredness of the place and linked to spirit of Rush Mela Festival. One respondent quoted below in relation to their attitudes towards the natural landscape and the cultural programme:

There is a sacred relationship between the pristine nature and the cultural importance of the festival. I think it's a knowledge gathering opportunity about Sundarbans and I am looking forward to getting some good knowledge about Sundarbans. The honey of Sundarbans and another cultural program like folk song (Jatra, Pala gan), puppet show is also in my expectation list. Besides, a museum in the Dublar Char could be an interesting thing (Guest_Dublar Char_24).

The Sundarbans is natural heritage site listed by UNESCO and for some respondents the Rush Mela cultural festival added a unique cultural dimension to the forest tourism experience and provide an authentic experience. Tourists showed interest in the cultural programmes (folk songs, drama) and objects like crafts and clay made items, which suggests a positive attitude towards the Rush Mela Festival. One guest expressed their attitudes towards the cultural functions of the Rush Mela Festival as quoted below.

I want to see the handicraft and other beautiful clay made things. Beside this different cultural program like folk songs (Baul song) and cultural events (nagor dola, Basi, Photka) and other enjoyable things at the festival (Guest_Dublar Char_20).

Overall, guests’ positive attitudes towards the Rush Mela Festival were expressed by their beliefs, feelings and interest in the worship ceremony, the hospitality of the host community, the natural setting of the festival, as well as interest in the cultural programmes, crafts and foods. The attitudes of the tourists demonstrate their beliefs and
feelings (Zanna & Rempel, 2008) and predisposition (McDougal & Munro, 1987) towards the various elements related to the Rush Mela Festival. A positive attitude indicates that the guests perceive the authenticity of the Rush Mela.

6.2.2 Guests’ motivations

Motivation is an important psychological factor that influences tourist perceptions of the objective and existential authenticity of ICH. Tourist motivation is the primary driver to interpret tourist behaviour when participating in ICH tourism activities (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013). In this study, tourist motivations were examined through identifying the key interest that led them to attend the Rush Mela Festival. In the interviews, tourists were asked to specify what motivated them to visit the Rush Mela Festival. A majority of the tourists mentioned several motivational aspects, such as participating in the worship ceremony and holy bath, enjoying the cultural programmes, exploring the local culture, food, and crafts, enjoying natural beauty and wildlife of the forest, and meeting family and friends. These motivational aspects varied between Hindu and Muslim tourists, particularly those related to religious aspects. Tourists’ views in relation to these motivation aspects are explained below.

The Hindu tourists were mainly motivated by their spiritual belief to visit the Rush Mela Festival and seek fulfilment of their wishes. Hindu tourists also wished to participate in the holy bath in the sea, which they believe purifies their soul. In Chila, the motivation of Hindu tourists was to take part in religious activities as well. For instance, two tourists quoted below about the spirituality and natural attributes of the Dublar Char as motivation for participating in the festival.

*Due to religious feelings, I have come here. If the people vow here actually fulfills the wish of the mind. This place is thought to be a holy place of the God Krishna.*
That’s why people come here every year to fulfill their wish. Mainly the religious activities have influenced me to come here and the also the beauty of the Sundarbans (Guest_Dublar Char_31).

Religious program is the main attraction here. If the Range of the fair increase, number of program increase, like kobi gan, Jatra gan and pot gan etc. that will be better (Guest_Chila_09).

Motivations for Muslim tourists regarding the religious ceremony, both in Dublar Char and Chila, was not to participate in the worship activities, but to observe how the Hindu community performs the religious rituals including the holy bath in the sea, and to gain direct knowledge of the religious activity of the Hindu people. One Muslim tourist quoted below comments on the motivation to observe the religious practices in Rush Mela:

I am interested in the enjoyable tour here. Although I am Muslim but interested to know hosts’ religious activities in Rush Mela. Actually, I have some desire to see the Rush Mela Festival all night long because it will give me a good chance to know about their culture and food. (Guest_Dublar Char_12).

Other motivational aspects such as enjoying cultural programmes, exploration of local culture, food, and crafts, enjoying natural beauty and wildlife in the forest, and meeting family and friends were expressed by both Hindu and Muslim tourists. As the cultural programmes are organised in both Dublar Char and Chila Rush Mela, all the tourists, informed by the tour operators and/or friends and relatives, had some motivation to enjoy the cultural programmes like folk songs (pot gan, kobi gan) and drama (jatra pala). Two guests below commented on their motivation for enjoying cultural programme:

Mainly the religious program is very appealing. Besides this beautiful environment, enjoying opportunities is very nice. Enjoying the roaming space, nice pond, nice decoration and most importantly cultural program like folk songs (kobi gan), drama (jatra pala) etc. is very attractive. I didn’t find anything repelling in here (Guest_Chila_04).
Worshipping ceremony of Hindu community is the main attraction to me. I am also interested in the intangible heritage including lifestyle, folk song, and craft. It is a pleasure trip. I am basically interested to see how the festival was arranged in such a remote island in the forest. My particular attraction was how the discussion to explore local culture (Guest_Dublar Char_03).

Also, majority of the tourists were interested to explore the local culture, food, crafts, and see local livelihoods during their visit to the Rush Mela Festival in Dublar Char and Chila. In particular in Dublar Char, the tourists were interested to see fishing, the drying fish process, boat making, and the honey collection techniques of the forest dependent people. For instance, three respondents expressed their motivation to experience local cultural practices and objects as stated below:

Among cultural attraction, I want to see pottery, wooden craft in the festival. Other than those, fishing and boat making technique is a special attraction to me (Guest_DublarChar_02).

It's a pleasure trip to see the festival and Sundarbans together. My expectation was to see village puppet show, swing (Nagor dola), local craft, honey shop, fish processing and how they do perform their holy bath (Guest_Dublar Char_04).

Another major motivational aspect for many tourists that visited the Rush Mela Festival, particularly in Dublar Char, was opportunity to enjoy the natural environment of the Sundarbans mangrove forest and watching wildlife. These tourists were from the larger cities like Dhaka, Khulna and who wanted to have a holiday in Sundarbans. In Chila, the tourist did not share the motivation to enjoy the natural landscape as they knew there was no such scope at the Rush Mela Festival site. Some examples of the interest in the natural environment are presented below.
As this festival is arranged in the deep forest so besides seeing the festival, we can also see the birds, animals and other things. Watching tiger was main attraction to me. There is nothing in this festival which can repel me. All the activities and the cultural program are very much attractive and enjoyable (Guest_Dublar Char_01).

Further, some of the tourists, mostly in Chila, were motivated to meet family and friends living in or near the Rush Mela Festival site. In Dublar Char, the tourists were motivated to spend time with their family and friends during the holiday trip. Examples of these motivations are as follows:

My main interest was to meet with relative and hang out with friends during the festival (Guest_Chila_12).
Mainly for enjoyment with family. The family bonding is becoming stronger because of this tour and it was an unseen popular festival. Although the way I want to watch this festival that is still unaccomplished (Guest_Dublar Char_02).

Overall, the data suggested that the motivation of the guests to visit Rush Mela Festival varied according to their interest in the worship ceremony, cultural programmes, local culture, food and crafts, enjoying the natural landscape, or meeting family and friends. It seems the tourists are pushed by the attributes of the destination (Uysal & Jurowski, 1994), which motivated them to visit the festival. Expectations of the tourists were affected by their motivation (Gnoth, 1997), as there was a variation in expectations between the Hindu and Muslim tourists in the Rush Mela tourism experience. Zhou et al. (2013) and Kolar and Zabkar (2010) found that tourists’ motivation affected the objective and existential authenticity of cultural heritage. Similar findings of this study could be drawn, as despite some variation, there is a strong motivation to visit the festival, the strength of this motivation tends to influence the visitors’ perception of authenticity in relation to the festival.
6.2.3 Finding authentic objects by the guests

While guests’ attitudes and motivations are important drivers of participation in the ICH tourism, data also suggested that guests’ perceptions about the objects they see and the cultural events they enjoy during the visit are important as well. The objects associated with the cultural events (e.g. special design of the statues used for worship in religious festivals, the taste and quality of local foods, the design and construction of local crafts) represent the identity of the particular ICH (Stein & Anderson, 1999). This section explains how the tourists perceive the authenticity of the objects found at the Rush Mela Festival.

The tourists in Rush Mela Festival, interviewed both in Dublar Char and Chila, were enthusiastic to see and/or buy the local products such as a sculpture of Hindu God and Goddess, temple, dried fish, local sweets, brass crockery (plates and pots), seashell puppets and ornaments, and other handicrafts (made of clay and wood). The tourists were asked whether they found objects that were authentic and unique to the festival and the local area. All tourists agreed that the sculptures of the Hindu God and Goddess and the temple were an integral part of the festival because of the religious nature of the event. These objects are used for the religious worshiping ceremony. Tourist tended to buy the small sculptures of Hindu God and Goddess that were sold in the shops. As an example, one respondent expressed the authenticity of the sculpture as quoted below:

"Brass products are quite unique and attractive things of this fair specially the sculpture of Hindu God and Goddess. I brought some of those for home (Guest_Dublar Char_16)."

Other than the religious objects, most of the respondents mentioned that the dried fish, local sweets, brass crockery (plates and pots), seashell puppets and ornaments, and other
handicrafts (made of clay and wood) were also available to the festival. Among these objects, the dried fish and local sweets were unique to the festival. Dried was found only in Dublar Char, as there are no dried fish shops in Chila. The taste of dried fish from Dublar Char is famous in Bangladesh and attracts tourists to visit the festival. When buying the dried fish, it was for both personal consumption and as a gift for family and friends as a souvenir. As the quote below suggests the guests were highly satisfied with the quality of the dried fish.

_The dried fish of this place is unique but all other things are available in other places because all the products except dried fish of this festival come from different part of the country. Every year I bought dried fish for my family from this festival (Guest_Dublar Char_42)._ 

However, not all tourists enjoyed the dried fish due mostly to personal preference, as the following examples suggest:

_The odour of dry fishes is something that repels me (Guest_Dublar Char_07)._ 

_This location is very beautiful, the journey by boat, odour of dried fish and the food shop was not very satisfying. (Guest_Dublar Char_7)._ 

Although design and making of the brass crockery, seashell puppets and ornaments, and other handicrafts were attractive to the tourists, some of them urged that the seashell puppets and ornaments, and other handicrafts were not unique to the locality as those objects were available in other parts of Bangladesh. The stall owners agreed with the tourists’ view since they imported those products from the different parts of the country, especially from Chittagong, Khulna, Dhaka, and Cox’s Bazar. The tourist expected something very unique and local to collect as a souvenir from the Rush Mela Festival.
For instance, one tourist from Dublar Char gave the following comment about the objects found in the festival:

*I found the ornaments made of the sea shell is special among other. I found that those are available in other parts of the country. So, I personally did not buy anything from here (Guest_Dublar Char_13).*

Data also suggests that some tourists were expecting other local objects such as local dresses, paintings, cultural information, and books, which they did not found in the festival, as demonstrated in the following quote:

*I expect more local culture oriented dresses, boat, paintings, music (CD), religious book, cultural information book (Guest_Dublar Char_29).*

In summary, the data suggests that most of the tourists found some objects that were unique to the Rush Mela Festival such as the sculptures of Hindu God and Goddess, and temple, the dried fish, and local sweets. The study shows that limited unique objects are in place to be observed by the tourists in the remote location of the festival. Nevertheless, the tourists found some authentic objects in the Rush Mela that may influence their perception of the objective authenticity (Asplet & Cooper, 2000) of the festival. The tourist perceived the authenticity of Rush Mela by observing unique objects in the festival, and thus emphasised that identification of authentic objects is an important factor for authentication within the Rush Mela Festival.

**6.2.4 Finding authentic experiences by the guests**

Guests’ perception of the authenticity of the ICH is dependent on how they perceive the authenticity of the experiences they have during the ICH tourism experience (Wang,
1999; Zhou et al., 2013). In this study, the tourists were asked of their perceptions about the authenticity of their experiences at the Rush Mela Festival. Most of the tourists suggested that they had the opportunity to experience religious ceremonies, cultural programmes, and the natural environment during their visit to the Rush Mela Festival in Dublar Char and Chila. Some tourists, mainly Hindus, participated in the rituals and holy bath in the sea (at Dublar char), and offered the following observations:

*I think the most unique and attracting thing of this rush Mela is the religious worship. Among them religious song (vogobat gita, kirton gan, kobi gan) is very special to me* (Guest_Chila_02).

*Mainly holy bath gave me the pleasure; many people go together for the holy bath which I have enjoyed during the festival.* (Guest_Dublar Char_32).

*Religious program is very important and main attraction of this festival. The main reason to come here is to enjoy the Rush Mela Festival* (Guest_Chila_4).

The tourists (both Hindu and Muslim) also experienced cultural programmes (folk songs and drama (*Jatra, palagan*), performed by local artists and were able to see the traditional practices of the local communities (for example fishing techniques and local costumes). Tourists also learned about the history, legends, and traditions of the century-old festival. In particular in Dublar Char, one of the major attractions the tourists enjoyed was the sky lantern on the full moon night. Quotes from some tourists reflect these views.

*I also enjoy the cultural programme especially folk songs which present the history of Rush Mela. Such folk song easily attracts the tourist to experience the history of Rush Mela Festival* (Guest_Dublar Char_32).

*I saw the special fishing gears and fish catching technique, the boat making technique, local costume, and musical instruments* (Guest_Dublar Char_13).
Religious song like vogobat gita, kirton gan, kobi gan is very special to me (Guest_Chila_02).

The majority of the respondents mentioned that they were overwhelmed by the hospitality of the host community in Dublar Char and Chila. The local volunteers assisted tourists during their visit to the festival. Tourists mentioned that Rush Mela was the only festival to run the whole night and people could roam around freely without any security concerns, which is unthinkable in other tourist destinations in Bangladesh, especially for women. Also, the social cohesion between different religious groups (e.g. Hindu and Muslim) was also experienced by the tourist as the festival is seen as a combined effort by the whole community. Some respondents are quoted below in relation to the hospitality of, and respect for the host community:

The visit is very interesting and attending the religious festival is a privilege for me. I did not find any negative side of this rush festival. But I think the environment of the Rush Mela is very much favourable for the tourists. The hosts and the organising committee are very responsible to give the security even at night. Although the fair runs the whole night but there is no evidence of any harassment (Guest_Chila_01).

Here, we can enjoy a lot, Hindu people do worship and some people set up small shop in this Rush Mela to earn some good money. As they arrange this festival altogether, they chat, enjoy in a good friendly environment (Guest_Chila_8).

The social cohesion between Hindu, Muslim and Christian community is most appealing to me. I found the sincerity of people to help each other as there is no disturbance even the festival took place the whole night. Overall, it was a relaxing tour as there is no mobile network (Guest_Dublar Char_12).

During visit to the Dublar Char, the tourists had the opportunity to experience the natural landscape of the world’s largest mangrove forest-Sundarbans. The majority of the tourists were fascinated and enjoyed the moonlit night in the deep forest. It was very charming
when they saw the reflection of the moon on the river. Tourists particularly mentioned that there is no mobile networks or electricity, which provided mental peace and allowed the visitor to forget their busy lives and enjoy nature. One of the tourists expressed his experience as follows:

*The night boat journey in the full moon is really very enjoying. I never see such a big moon in the city. We have limited scope to enjoy the full moon in the city area due to light and high-rise building. I never think in my imagination that I could spend the night in the forest and be able to see the moonlit night.* (Guest_Dublar Char_05).

Most of the tourists in Dublar Char also felt proud to visit the world’s largest mangrove forest. They were eager to see the famous Royal Bengal Tiger in the Sundarbans, but they were not fortunate on this particular trip. The tourists were also amazed at the natural beach and the many different birds. Being situated near the river, sea, and the forest gave the visitors a unique opportunity to experience a natural estuarine ecosystem. The boat-based tourism also provided an opportunity to gain an authentic experience close to nature, as quoted by one respondent.

*I found very refreshing and peace of mind after coming here. The natural beauty of the Sundarbans specially this time is really fascinating and fabulous.* (Guest_Dublar Char_32).

In summary, most of the tourists had unique experiences while visiting the Rush Mela Festival, particularly the experience of performing and/ or observing the religious ceremonies and traditional cultural events in both Dublar Char and Chila, and, especially, enjoying the full moon light in a pristine natural forest in the Dublar Char. The tourists perceived these experiences as authentic in relation to the location and existence of the Rush Mela Festival. The tourist could determine the authenticity of the ICH by experiencing or observing closely or participating directly in some of the cultural
practices (Chhabra et al., 2003; Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Zhou et al., 2013). Thus, as suggested by the data, tourist recognised the existential authenticity (Zhou et al., 2013) of the festival through practical experience of the religious and cultural events as well as enjoying the natural environment during their Rush Mela tourism experience.

6.3 Guest satisfaction and loyalty for Rush Mela tourism

This section illustrates how the guests express their satisfaction and loyalty for Rush Mela tourism. The data suggests that most of the guests expressed satisfaction in various aspects of the Rush Mela tourism experience and demonstrated a willingness to revisit the festival. Most of the tourists informed that the religious rituals, cultural programmes, and natural landscape satisfied their expectations. As discussed in the previous section, the tourists found authentic objects and experiences as per their motivation to visit the festival, which fulfilled their expectations and ultimately influenced their perception of satisfaction (Fornell et al., 1996 in Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Nevertheless, most of the tourists, mainly in Dublar Char, also expressed their concerns about inadequate facilities for tourists. The tourists urged for improvement through the provision of facilities such as accommodation, toilets, drinking water, security, medical services, and a jetty in Dublar Char. Further, some tourists urged for improved wildlife watching facilities in Sundarbans. Some of these issues are explained in the following quotes from some tourists:

The facility for any medical emergency needs to be provided by the authority of the Sundarbans. The boat landing facility of the Dublar Char is very poor which can cause accidental risk during the heavy traffic. We did not receive help from the coast guard when our boat got problem in the midnight (Guest_Dublar Char_13)
There is not enough facility inside the Sundarbans to see the wild life. I hope to visit again if the facility of the wild life watching improve (Guest_Dublar Char_38)

Despite having some concerns in relation to tourist facilities, most of the tourists expressed a willingness to revisit the Rush Mela Festival when they were asked whether they would come again. They also suggested they would recommend the experience to friends and family. Some tourists wanted to stay longer as one day/night (as organised by the tour operators) was not enough to explore the local culture and programmes in the Rush Mela at Dublar Char. In Chila, most tourists stayed as long as they wanted because most of them came by their own arrangements without the need for tour operators. The authentic objects and experiences of the festival attracted the tourists to such an extent that they expressed a willingness to revisit and reflects loyalty (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010) towards Rush Mela Festival. Some of the tourists expressed their loyalty as follows:

Yes, I will definitely come here because of religious purpose. Other than this, I want to explore the culture of the periphery of the Sundarbans. I particularly interested to see their daily life, resource collection from the forest, music and dance on different festival (Guest_Dublar Char_39)

I want to come this festival for my spiritual attachment with the religious festival and the nature of the Sundarbans (Guest_Dublar Char_31)

Yes, obviously I want to come here and want to attend and enjoy the full 3 days of this festival (Guest_Dublar Char_08).

However, some tourists showed conditional loyalty as they expressed, they would only visit again if the tourist facilities were improved in Dublar Char.
Overall the study found that, despite some shortcomings in tourism facilities, the majority of the tourists expressed their satisfaction and loyalty towards Rush Mela tourism based on a perception of authenticity of the festival. Data indicated that guests’ attitudes towards the Rush Mela, their motivation for visiting the festival, and the availability of authentic objects and experiences have cumulatively formed a perception of authenticity of the Rush Mela Festival. This in turn influenced their satisfaction and loyalty (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013) for Rush Mela tourism. In other words, guests’ positive expression of satisfaction and loyalty towards the tourist destination could reflect how they perceived the authenticity of Rush Mela Festival.

6.4 Factors determining the authentic experience of the host at the Rush Mela Festival

The traditional Rush Mela Festival in the Sundarbans region (Dublar Char and Chila) has been organised by the host community over the past century. The host community includes fishermen, small shop owners, organising committee members, tour operators, and forest officials. These groups within the host community have their own perspectives and interests in relation to the Rush Mela Festival. While the fishermen, small shop owners and organising committee members expressed their individual perceptions, the tour operators and forest officials expressed institutional perceptions in relation to the perceived authenticity of the Rush Mela Festival. This study examined six factors such attitude, motivation, economic benefits, emotional benefits, individual participation, and institutional involvement of the host community to determine their perceptions regarding the authenticity of the Rush Mela Festival.
6.4.1 Hosts’ attitudes

Host attitudes towards traditional cultural practices may show level of understandings and the degree of preference of the community (Qi, Yang, & Zhang, 2013). Also, host attitude shows how the host community feels to adhere to those traditional cultural events and preserve their authenticity (Zhou et al., 2015). The Rush Mela Festival has become an integral part of the traditional culture of the host community in the Sundarbans region. To understand hosts’ attitudes towards the Rush Mela Festival, the respondents of the host community were asked why the Rush Mela Festival was important to them, why they organise and participate in the festival, and how they felt about tourists attending the festival. The responses are summarised here.

The hosts who have a long family tradition of participating in the Rush Mela had a positive attitude towards the festival. Most of the hosts (mainly the organisers, fishermen, and traders) who participated in the festival have more than one purpose; they want to perform the worshiping ceremony as well as doing business during the festival. These activities have become a part of a family tradition. Data suggests that the majority of the hosts have a belief in the religious practice performed through this festival and is reflected in their attitudes, which helps determine the authenticity of the festival. The hosts feel a stronger sense of identity when they able to celebrate the festival and maintain the traditional way of life. Most of the host also recognises that it is important to transmit the heritage to the younger generation so that they can follow an established family heritage, and is reflected in the following response:

*It is considered important to join Mela every year. Along with religious importance, this Rush Mela acts as a media for entertaining the relatives with local people. We nurture the young generation through the festival to pass the value in the next generation. The rituals and practice associated with the festival*
needs to transfer to the young generation to adhere the spiritual attachment of the festival (Host_Chila_06).

The continuity of the intangible cultural heritage enhances the younger generations commitment as a social obligation to participate in the Rush Mela. The transmission of heritage may also influence the behavioural attitudes of the younger generation (Park, 2013) to perceive high existential authenticity as some of the hosts observed in case of the Rush Mela Festival.

Apart from religious and traditional ancestral points of view, the hosts feel that the festival provides an opportunity to meet family, friends, and others, especially the fishermen who stay away from their family for a long time. Also, the fishermen and traders see this festival as a source of earning by selling dried fish and other products. The hosts have the opportunity to showcase their traditional crafts, food, and local costumes, as one host quoted below. These views demonstrate a positive attitude towards the Rush Mela Festival:

We got a chance to meet other people. At the same time, we get chance to exchange culture with people from different parts of the country. We bring different unique products to the fair to sell (Host_Dublar Char_11).

Majority of the hosts showed a positive attitude towards tourism in the Rush Mela Festival. The publicity for the Rush Mela Festival in national and international media gave the hosts a sense of the importance of their culture. Also, the economic benefits to the hosts through the sale of products to the tourists develops a positive attitude towards tourism. The hosts perceive high existential authenticity of the festival when they share the cultural experience with the tourists. The hosts realise that the tourists provide economic and psychological benefits. Being in the remote area, it is very hard for the
hosts, especially in Dublar Char, to present themselves to the outside community. So, the hosts take the opportunity to meet with people from different backgrounds and show their culture with pride. One of the hosts explained his views as follows:

Tourist respect and appreciate our culture very much. It makes us proud of our cultural heritage. We can exchange our culture. They like the cultural programme in the festival. (Host_Chila_14).

Some hosts reported that the norms and events of the Rush Mela Festival have been changed and modernised over the recent years. Particularly in Dublar Char, with the flying sky lantern event, cultural programmes with invited artists from other cities, and spiritual talks by religious scholars being added to the traditional worship and cultural events. The hosts understand that changes to the festival norms and cultural programme have been essential to attract the tourist. Regarding the changes to the festival, two hosts reported their views as follows:

The festival is modernised a bit. The temple is renovated. The norm and nature are changed due to publicity. Lot of tourist are arriving due to the change of the nature and norms of the cultural programme. Now, the religious scholar is coming to discuss the night long spiritual talk. Apart from this, dance and music are the modern addition in the programme (Host_Dublar Char_08).

Actually, the worship ceremony takes more modern outlook than before. The lighting and the arrangements of the shop are changing the outlook of the worship ceremony. As the tourist increasing the festival is changing based on tourist demand. For example, the product items of the shop are mostly from outside the local area to attract the tourist. The cultural programmes are no more related to the worship ritual only. The outsider artist is performing modern dance and song. I think local people are positive to this change (Host_Dublar Char_36).

Due to improvements in the tourist facilities on the island, the host community has a positive attitude to the changes of the festival. Although the guests perceived less authenticity with the non-local artists, the hosts found it was a source of recreation. Some
of the hosts mentioned that being remote and often at sea this was the only occasion they could enjoy this type of entertainment. The perception of existential authenticity is greater with the addition of the religious song ‘Joggo’ to the cultural programme. Quotes from some respondents regarding changes to the cultural programme are given below:

*Now the festival is better organised compared to before. Previously the Hindu pilgrimage gives goat, chicken, money in the sea as a part of worship. Now they don’t give those anymore. Among the religious activity, religious song ‘Joggo’ is the new addition (Host_Dublar Char_09).*

*Earlier the temple was made up off straw but now it is made up off steel sheet. Some trees were also planted there. A pond was dug for the fishermen to drink water. Previously only religious song (Kirton) was performed. But nowadays different cultural performance was also organised to entertain the tourist (Host_Dublar Char_04).*

However, some of the hosts are concerned about the negative impacts of tourism as well, expressing a negative attitude towards tourism as they felt their traditional ceremony was being disturbed by the tourists and the region was becoming overcrowded.

In summary, the majority of the hosts expressed a positive attitude towards the Rush Mela Festival because of their attachment to the religious and traditional cultural background of the festival. They recognised the Rush Mela as an identity of the community (UNESCO, 2003) which makes them proud and there is a desire to transmit the tradition to coming generations. Some hosts, mainly traders, see the festival as an opportunity for earning money, whereas, some hosts like the fishermen, view this festival as a chance to meet with family and friends in a remote place like Dublar Char. As such, most of the hosts have an welcoming attitude towards tourists visiting the Rush Mela, despite some concerns at negative impacts of excess visitors on the forest and Dublar Char. These
positive attitudes help to construct a positive perception of objective and existential authenticity (Zhou et al., 2015) of the Rush Mela Festival.

6.4.2 Hosts’ motivations

Hosts’ motivation to practice traditional culture is important to determine their perception of ICH. Hosts’ motivation for ICH can be related to the performance of their cultural practices, religious beliefs, economic benefits, and socio-political benefits from the practice of cultural traditions (Uysal, Gahn, & Martin, 1993; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Cho, 2012). In case of the Rush Mela Festival, the motivations of the host community were revealed by asking what motivated them to organise the festival and why the festival is important to the host community. Most of the hosts at the cultural festival sites have more than one purpose, they want to perform the religious rituals as well as conducting business activities. Some fishermen who live on the sea for a long time, were motivated to participate in the festival because of the opportunity to meet family and friends. Also, few hosts, particularly small business owners in Dublar Char who travelled from neighbouring towns, were also motivated to participate in Rush Mela to enjoy the natural environmental of Sundarbans. Some respondents quoted below support these views:

My purpose of participating in Rush Mela is mainly religious and economic activities, selling fish and seashell ornaments. (Host_Dublar Char_19).

I am mainly involved with the committee, worked as organiser for the Rush Mela. My intention to participation in the festival is religious as well as performing responsibility as committee member (Host_Dublar Char_18).

I participate in Dublar Char Rush Mela to sell the products. I sell products like ornaments of seashells. At the same time, I am able to enjoy the natural beauty of Sundarbans (Host_Dublar Char_03).
Some of the hosts, mainly the organising committee members reported that their motivation was to organise the festival, continuing their traditional religious practice as it has happened for the last century and benefited the community.

Data also suggested that other hosts like tour operators and the Forest department were also motivated to organise the festival. The tour operators, one of the important hosts of Rush Mela tourism, was motivated by the potential economic benefits from tourism during the festival. Also, the Forest Department supported the continued traditional religious practice of the Hindu community within the forest and also earned revenue through the sale of entry permits to visitors to the Sundarbans.

Overall, host motivation facilitated the community to organise and participate in the Rush Mela Festival over the last century. As such, a high level of motivation by the host community towards the festival may represent that the host community perceives the existential authenticity (Zhou et al., 2015) of the Rush Mela Festival.

6.4.3 Hosts’ emotional benefit from objects and events

The host community can receive psychological or emotional benefit from traditional cultural festivals and related tourism (Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002). From the Rush Mela Festival, data suggests that most of the hosts have perceived psychological or emotional benefits through the performance of the worship ceremony, holy bath, enjoying the cultural programmes, and meeting friends and family. This is particularly so for the Hindu community, the religious rituals are very important to their beliefs and provide mental satisfaction when experiencing these activities with family and friends. The majority of the hosts perceive emotional benefits when their family has a strong belief in the spiritual attachment of the Rush Mela. In some instances, the younger generation
follow the faith from their family and continue the intangible practices. The continuity of the festival brings them together, displaying and re-interpreting a cultural legacy and may thus be considered as historical heritage and as intangible cultural heritage, as one host in Dublar Char quoted below:

*Actually, my father used to come here to do the worship ceremony. My family has a strong belief in the Puja of Rush Purnima (Ritual in full moon night). This is psychologically very important to us. We believe that whatever wish we do that is fulfilling in Rush Mela. I used to come Rush Mela for last 17 years. I have the same faith as my father do. That is why I find it very important to come to Rush Mela (Host_Dublar Char_35).*

The Rush Mela Festival brings opportunity to the host community for enjoying cultural programmes and meeting their family and friends, especially for the fishermen who live on remote islands away from their family and friends. For instance, one respondent quoted below regarding their psychological benefit from Rush Mela Festival.

*I take part in the worshiping ceremony and enjoy the festival. During the Rush Mela we invite friend and families to take part in this festival. The main objective is to pray for peace for everyone. The family usually exchange gift this time to tie their social bonding. (Host_Chila_09)*

Also, most of the hosts have mentioned their feelings of pride for hosting the Rush Mela Festival and showcasing their traditional culture to the outsiders, as outlined by one host:

*There is a positive effect on emotional benefit when tourist from other parts of the come to visit the festival. I feel proud to my ancestors who initiate the festival (Host_Dublar Char_01).*

Further, some of the hosts reported that they perceive mental peace in terms of social security and good relationships among the diverse groups of people (mainly Hindu and
Muslim), which has been established through organising the Rush Mela Festival, integrating Muslim legendary figures with the Hindu Goddess in worship ceremonies, as well as including Muslim members in the organising committee.

The members of the Rush Mela organising committee, who mainly work as volunteers perceive emotional benefit through their contributions to the festival. Interviews suggest that the organising committee members are aware of the intangible value of the festival. They usually donate money themselves to make the sculpture and associated arrangements without assistance from the Government. They perceive self-satisfaction when they feel that they are serving for the good of the community. They have developed tourist’s facilities at the Dublar Char and undertake voluntary services to maintain security and safe anchoring of vessels. Two committee members quoted the following in relation to emotional benefits:

*As per Hindu mythology, Lord Sri Krishna had once put his foot on this holy place that's why people of come here for worshipping to fulfill their wishes. That's point is important for arranging Rush Mela here. Since people come here for long we feel to protect this holy place. Most of the time we paid from ourselves to make the sculpture so that the worshipping continues (Host_Dublar Char_25).*

*Rush Mela is a significant religious heritage in Hindu Community. The worship of Lord Krishna has a long tradition to keep peace in the community. They make the temple of Lord Krishna in front of the pond. It symbolises the pond as an authentic cultural identity of the Chila community to do the worship ceremony. I am mainly associated with the arrangement of this fair. All the equipment that is necessary for worship, cleaning and to look after the guests is my responsibility. (Host_Chila_12).*

The study revealed that the host community received various psychological or emotional benefits from Rush Mela Festival. Religious practices along with the enjoyment of the cultural programmes and through the interaction with family, friends and others. The hosts also perceive emotional benefits by interacting with the broader society and through
sharing ideas (Besculides et al., 2002), gaining pride from the sharing of their cultural traditions with tourists (Cole, 2007). The Rush Mela appears to increase a sense of pride, identity, and social cohesion (Stein & Anderson, 1999) within the host community. The emotional benefits may also enhance the feeling of ownership of the Rush Mela Festival, which affects their perception of the authenticity of the festival.

6.4.4 Hosts’ economic benefits

Economic benefits from traditional cultural festivals are one of the important factors that determine how the host community perceive authenticity of ICH (Besculides et al., 2002; Zhou et al., 2015). As discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.1), the host community receives economic benefits in many ways from the Rush Mela Festival in addition to other cultural benefits. The shop owners who sell various products like handicrafts, dried fish, local foods, ornaments, and crockery are the main groups who receive an economic benefit. The boatman, fisherman, and transport workers who are engaged in the transportation of people to the festival also receive a significant share of the economic benefit. In addition, the tour operators who transport the tourists from other cities (e.g. Dhaka, Khulna) receive significant earnings from tourism during this festival. Some shopkeepers have a long tradition of undertaking business during the festival. Mostly it is the local people who run businesses during the festival in Chila, whereas shop owners from the neighbouring towns at Khulna, Bagerhat, Paikghacha Upazila (sub-district) conduct business at Dublar Char. Some respondents quoted the following in relation to economic benefits:

"Buying and selling products are the main issue to visit there. I sell products like ornaments of seashells. As I am a businessman, business is the main aim as well as enjoyment pleasure is also another factor to visit there (Host_Dublar Char_03)."
I am mainly a shopkeeper and a fisherman. I join this fair every year with my betel leaf shop to do some business and to attend the religious program. Also, I enjoy the nice enjoyable environment of this place (Host_Chila_13).

Artist mainly craft people show unique products to the fair like brass, sea shell and clay products. Tourists are very much interested to buy this product. We earned a handsome money when people and the fishermen buy for their grandchildren and family (Host_Dublar Char_08).

Most of the products such as seashell puppets, ornaments, brass crockery, and clothing are imported by the shop owners from other parts of the country to sell in the Rush Mela, as there is no local manufacturing industry for these products in both Chila and Dublar Char. Only a few handicrafts and the dried fish and foods are produced by the local people, which have a high attraction value for tourists. The dried fish sellers in Dublar Char make good earnings during the Rush Mela Festival, as the product is considered highly authentic by the tourists. However, in Chila, dried fish selling is not a prominent business during the festival. However, other products including the cosmetics and ornaments are sold in most shops. Some respondents quoted the following regarding the economic benefits of selling different products:

*I think Rush Mela is a good platform where tourist can meet with the host. The fisherman is one of the main stakeholders of this festival. They can sell the fish directly to the tourist. They get a good price if they can sell directly to the tourist. So, this festival is very important from the economic point of view (Host_Dublar Char_43).*

*I am selling food in the Rush Mela. I earn handsome money by selling the food. I find very enthusiastic when tourist from other area appreciate taste of my food (Host_Chila_01).*

For tour operators such as Guide Tours and Bengal Tours receive significant economic benefit bringing tourists in the Rush Mela Festival on large tourist vessels, especially in
Dublar Char, Sundarbans. Also, some trawler and launch owners bring tourists to Dublar Char. In Chila, informal tour operators like the boat owners and other transporters receive economic benefits from the tourists visiting Rush Mela making their own private arrangements. Rush Mela tourism also provides seasonal employment for local people. One respondent quoted below regarding the economic benefit of the tour operator and transport workers:

_Trawler and Launch owner earn a lot from the tourist and pilgrimage. It also creates earning opportunity from the shop owner. Government earns a lot of revenue from the festival. Such a huge gathering highlights the cultural importance of Sundarbans. The disadvantage is sometimes the huge crowd distract the spirituality of the worshiping ceremony (Host_Dublar Char_27)._ 

The economic activities of the Rush Mela Festival show how the host community gets benefits from this event, as well as interaction with the guests (Heuman, 2005). The existence of this traditional cultural festival gives an opportunity to the host community to achieve economic benefits. Although this is a seasonal event, the local economic activities are greatly influenced by this event. For some hosts, the economic benefits often the primary concern as one host stated as:

_the advantage is that the festival is getting bigger since the number of tourists increasing. It is needed to arrange Rush Mela every year for our business (Host_Dublar Char_04)._

As such, the hosts community is receiving economic benefits from the festival and related tourism either by running family owned businesses or by having a seasonal job with tour operators and other businesses (Ko & Stewart, 2002). These opportunities demonstrate the attachment of the hosts to this traditional festival and determines hosts perception towards the existential authenticity (Zhou et al., 2015) of the Rush Mela Festival.
6.4.5  *Hosts’ individual participation*

An individual’s participation as a host in traditional cultural practices demonstrates devotion and attachment to their community (Theodori & Luloff, 1998). In the case of the Rush Mela Festival, individual participation of the host community is evaluated to determine how they perceived authenticity of the Rush Mela Festival through actual participation over the past years. Hosts’ individual participation in the Rush Mela Festival takes place voluntarily by performing in the worship ceremony and conducting business, which are related to emotional and economic benefits as discussed in earlier sections. Some of the hosts expressed their devotion and attachment to the traditional Rush Mela Festival with participation in the event for many years, as quoted below:

*I am involved with Rush Mela for the last 10-12 years. I came here to sell the products and perform the worship ceremony as well I feel it’s a family obligation to involve in the worshipping ceremony. I pray for the family and business to have a good start. I feel good to have the festival as my family tradition (Host_Dublar Char_08).*

*I mainly come here with my shop, in order to do some business. I am coming for last 5 or 6 years in the Chila Rush Mela. also enjoy the beautiful enjoyable environment of this Rush Mela (Host_Chila_02).*

Voluntary participation of the individual hosts has helped the festival to grow over the past century and to be recognised as intangible cultural heritage of the community, which gives them a unique identity (Stein & Anderson, 1999). The findings of this study suggest that long term individual participation of the hosts creates emotional attachment to the place and the cultural heritage (Derret, 2003) related to Rush Mela Festival, which in turn influences their positive perception of the existential authenticity of the festival.
6.4.6 Hosts’ institutional involvement

Community institutions managing the ICH can provide a sense of its importance to the community. A formal community organisation based on the common interests of the community provides an opportunity to nurture traditional culture over generations and preserve it for the future. Community institutions can even promote the cultural events to the larger society, involving political power and recognition by the state (del Barrio et al., 2012). It is observed that the Rush Mela Festival in Dublar Char and Chila is organised by a local community institution, known as the ‘Rush Mela Organising Committee’ with support from the Forest Department, the local security agency (RAB), and tour operators. The organising committee plays a role in planning and organising the Rush Mela Festival. Some of the committee members indicated that the local organising committee was formed to manage the festival properly as it has expanded over past years in terms of host and tourist participation. One of the committee members, as for example, expressed such views:

At the beginning, there was no committee to perform the worshipping ceremony. Security was the main challenge to maintain this huge crowd. So, I took the initiative to form a committee, to ensure the safety of tourist and proper organisation of the worship ceremony (Host_Dublar Char_25).

In recent years, as the festival drew the attention of a large number of tourists in Dublar Char, the Forest Department and security agencies (RAB) were involved to support the local organising committee. The organising committee perceives ownership although they share the decision-making capacity with the forest officials. The members are proud to be part of the committee and participate in the festival. This is particularly evident when the committee looks after the making of sculptures of God and Goddess, prepares the stage and cultural activities, supports the shop owners, and helps the tourists. Some
of the committee members are quoted below regarding the responsibility of committee members:

_I am a member of the committee. I look after the making of sculpture, preparation of the stage and cultural activity as well I am also involved liaison with the security agency to protect tourist and the host from any kind of encroachment (Host_Dublar Char_09)._ 

_My main duty is to invite people and take them to the Mela. I am involved to sort out the shopkeeper to take part in the festival. I encourage and invite them to participate in the Rush Mela (Host_Dublar Char_17)._ 

_I attend the meeting and distribute the poster. I perform the committee responsibility and religious activities at the same time. I collect money from the committee member. I feel it’s a social obligation to collect funding to organise the festival (Host_Dublar Char_28)._ 

In addition, the tour operators arrange different tour packages, mainly in the Sundarbans, during the Rush Mela Festival to deliver authentic experiences for the guests. They attract the tourists through advertising on mass media, information bulletins, etc. The institutional role of tour operators in presenting the traditional Rush Mela may influence how the guests perceive the authenticity of the event.

Further, the officials of the Forest Department, as one of host institutions, participate in the Rush Mela Festival by arranging security for all participants at Dublar Char. The involvement of the Forest Department within the Rush Mela Festival shows the importance of this traditional festival within the region. This role plays an important part in creating a peaceful environment for an authentic experience during the festival for the host and guest.
Overall, the development of community institutions as well as engagement of other government and private organisations indicates that the host community are likely to perceive the authenticity of this traditional festival. It appears that the development of community institutions has facilitated the delivery of cultural services and the promotion of traditional culture (del Barrio et al., 2012) as well as ensuring participation of local community within the decision-making processes (Zhou et al., 2015). This is important for community empowerment and the development of sustainable ICH tourism.

6.5 Hosts’ support for Rush Mela tourism

The study has revealed that the hosts’ positive attitudes, enthusiastic motivation, economic benefits, as well as individual and institutional involvement has resulted in a positive perception of authenticity of the Rush Mela Festival and positive support for tourism. Most of the hosts, including the shop owners and the organising committee welcome tourists as they receive psychological and economic benefits through Rush Mela tourism. Some of the hosts urged to extend the duration of the festival so that they could have more interaction with the tourist and have good business. Zhou et al. (2015) also found a similar perception in host support for tourism. Provision of additional infrastructure in Dublar Char also lead to improved facilities for tourists which further enhanced support for tourism by the hosts.

The tour operators including large companies and the informal local operators (boat and other transport owners) support tourism activities primarily because of the economic benefit received through cultural tourism. The tour operator involved in this research suggested that they wanted to have more tourism within the region and continue tour operations in the Sundarbans as they had positive feedback from tourists. The tour
operators through publicity have increased the number of tourists that visit the festival. It was mentioned that if the tourists perceive higher authenticity within the festival that it would encourage them to revisit the festival, leading to an expansion of tourism businesses. One tour operator stated the following in relation to support for Rush Mela tourism:

Yes, I invite my family and friends. For the publicity of the travel agency, I invite friends and other people every year. My family is involved with tourism business. Because it is now a universal festival. So, people from different religion can come here and enjoy this festival. If people come more than it will increase the publicity of this festival and government also get a huge amount of revenue (Host_Dublar Char_33).

While Rush Mela tourism is well accepted by most of the hosts, some hosts raised issues like the negative impacts of tourism due to overcrowding in Dublar Char. Some hosts were also concerned about tourists’ behaviour such as the tourists including the vessels dumping waste in the water and forest, others attempting to hunt animals (deer, tiger) and posing security risks. Some examples of negative impacts are presented below:

There is also some negative side. There is a negative effect on the Sundarbans. A number of deer are hunted illegally at that time. The hidden hunter also hunts tiger at this time. Some people come only for the purpose of hunting at that time. Ecological balance also becomes hampering due to huge number of people coming in this festival (Host_Dublar Char_37).

I think uncontrolled tourism during Rush Mela is a risk of security. It is difficult to give security too many people at a time. The space of the fair is not big enough to accommodate this huge crowd. The anchoring facility of the ship is not good too. They are throwing the garbage and sanitation waste in the river which is not good. Many tourist vessels are trying to throw the extra food to feed the monkey which is a harassment. This concern should be taken care of by the organising committee to limit the tourist number (Host_Dublar Char_34).

Further, the Forest Department and security agencies were supportive to the tourists during Rush Mela Festival as they were concerned about the security of the participants.
in the Sundarbans. Particularly, the engagement of high officials (e.g. Minister or High Commissioner) in the festival has raised institutional responsibility and engagement of the government officials.

In general, the majority of hosts including individuals, the organising committee, and tour operators have shown their willingness to support the traditional Rush Mela Festival as a cultural attraction in the area (Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002) as well as supporting associated tourism (Ko & Stewart, 2002). Despite some potential negative impacts, most of the hosts expressed their intention to continue to organise the festival and support tourism during the Rush Mela Festival, which could be related to hosts’ high perception of authenticity (Zhou et al., 2015) of the festival. Some of the committee members urged that the festival and the tourist facilities could be improved with the help of government and similar suggestions were also made by the tour operators and the Forest department.

**6.6 Mutual authentication (host-guest) process of the Rush Mela Festival (ICH)**

Based on the findings presented in the previous sections, it seems the data from the Rush Mela Festival supports the conceptual model for the mutual authentication of ICH, described in Section 2.7. Both guest and host factors, as presented in Section 5.2 and 5.4 and summarised in Figure 5.1, are used to define the mutual authentication process and influences on the loyalty/ support for Rush Mela tourism and community empowerment. The following paragraphs discuss the mutual authentication of Rush Mela (ICH) and its relation to tourism and community empowerment, which is summarized in Figure 5.1.

The Rush Mela Festival, as an ICH, includes objects of cultural significance to the community and the existence of traditional cultural practice. The objects of cultural significance found in the Rush Mela Festival are the statues of God and Goddess (Lord
Krishna and Radha), the specially designed temple used for the worship ceremony, local products sold in the shops (dried fish and local sweets, which are famous for their taste), and crafts made of sea shells and wood. Both the hosts’ and guests’ have recognised some of the objects such as statues of God and Goddess, the temple, dried fish and local sweets as unique and authentic to Rush Mela Festival (Fig. 5.1). Availability of authentic objects varied depending on the place of Rush Mela for example, dried fish was unique to Dublar Char and not available at Chila. The hosts from both Dublar Char and Chila informed that the crafts were not locally produced because the materials were not available in the area. The guests from both Dublar Char and Chila also perceived that the crafts were not unique because the same type of crafts could be found in other parts of the country.
Figure 5.1: Mutual authentication of ICH (Rush Mela Festival)

Host
- **Attitude** [e.g. spiritual belief, positive to tourist]
- **Motivation** [e.g. performing rituals, business opportunity, see family and friends]
- **Psychological benefit** [e.g. satisfaction for performing rituals, earning from business, meeting family and friends]
- **Economic benefit** [e.g. seasonal employment, selling local products (dry fish, crafts, food), tourism business, boat/transport]
- **Individual participation** [e.g. participate in rituals, selling products, enjoy cultural programmes]
- **Institutional involvement** [e.g. organizing committee, tour operator, security, forest department]

Authenticity of ICH (Rush Mela)

**Objective authenticity**
[Objects identified as authentic and unique to the Rush mela:]
- By both host and guest:
  - Statues of God and Goddess, temple, dried fish and local sweets
  - Exceptions:
    - By Host: -
    - By Guest: Honey

**Existential authenticity**
[Existence of events and environment identified as authentic and unique to the Rush mela:]
- By both host and guest:
  - Religious rituals, holy bath, cultural programme, natural beauty of Sundarbans, meeting family and friends
  - Exceptions:
    - By Host: Business
    - By Guest: Hospitality of local people

Satisfaction /Loyalty and support for tourism
[Host: Local people welcome tourists, sharing local culture with tourists, increasing sales of products, increase tourism business and facilities, wish to extend the duration of the festival.]
[Guest: Willingness to visit the Rush Mela Festival again, satisfaction of local hospitality, wish to stay longer period.]

Community empowerment
- **Economic empowerment** [increasing business (tourism and goods) and employment, regular economic activities]
- **Psychological empowerment** [spiritual satisfaction, pride and identity of community and place]
- **Social empowerment** [strengthening cohesion of multicultural community (Hindu, Muslim and others), consensus on preserving cultural tradition and natural resources]
- **Political empowerment** [community institutions (organizing committee) is empowered with support from Local Government and Forest Department]

Guest
- **Attitude** [e.g. spiritual belief, sacred place, positive to host]
- **Motivation** [e.g. expect to enjoy cultural events, rituals, natural beauty, meet family and friends]
- **Finding authentic object** [e.g. statue of Lord Krishna and Radha, crafts, dried fish, honey]
- **Finding authentic experience of event or environment** [e.g. experiencing cultural events (holy bath, sky lantern), performing rituals, visiting Sundarbans]

158
Some of the guests identified ‘honey’ as a unique item in the Sundarbans region and they were expecting to find a honey shop at the festivals; but there were no shops selling honey as the hosts did not recognise ‘honey’ as a special item for the festival. This is because honey is available in all areas of the Sundarbans region, not exclusively in Dublar Char and Chila.

The traditional cultural practices in the Rush Mela Festival include religious rituals (worshiping of Lord Krishna and Radha and other legendary figures), the holy bath in the sea at dawn, cultural programmes (religious songs, plays), trade of goods, meeting family and friends, and the hospitality of the local people. Also, the natural environment of the venue of Rush Mela Festival (the forests and the sea views in Dublar Char, and the water reservoir pond in Chila) are an important part of the Rush Mela Festival, which provides facilities to the pilgrims for worshiping in a peaceful place. Both hosts and guests have recognised the religious rituals, holy bath, cultural programmes, meeting family and friends, and the natural beauty of the festival venue as elements of the authentic experience of the Rush Mela Festival. However, host and guests could not experience holy bath in Chila, as they did in Dublar Char. Further, hosts and guests identified different experiences in the Rush Mela depending on their personal perspectives. Some of the hosts identified businesses selling different goods as one of the important activities in the festival, i.e. the existence of business activities in the Rush Mela determined an authentic experience for the hosts. Whereas, some of the guests mentioned the hospitality of local people as one of the major authentic experience enjoyed during the Rush Mela Festival.

The data indicates that, despite differences in the perception of authenticity in some of the objects and events/ cultural practice, both hosts and guests have mutually identified many common objects and cultural practices as authentic. Host factors such attitude, motivation, economic benefit, psychological benefit, individual participation, and institutional involvement
influenced their perception of objective and existential authenticity of Rush Mela Festival, though the degree of influence of the factors varied depending on the personal socio-economic position of the different host groups. Zhou et al. (2015) found similar results in host authentication of cultural tourism, however, they did not consider individual participation and institutional involvement as factors within the host authentication process. In this study, as discussed earlier in section 2.7 of Chapter 2, individual participation (Theodori & Luloff, 1998) and institutional involvement (del Barrio et al., 2012) of hosts are considered important factors for the authentication of the Rush Mela and for defining linkages with hosts’ support for tourism and community empowerment. In the Rush Mela Festival, hosts’ individual voluntary participation in the festival over past years, as well as participation of the host institutions including the organising committee, tour operators, and other government agencies, indicates that the hosts recognise high authenticity within the festival.

On the other hand, perceptions of the authenticity of the Rush Mela Festival by the guests is also influenced by factors such as guests’ attitudes and motivations and finding authenticity in objects and or the experience within the event or environment. The influence of guest factors differs based on the place of the festival they visit as the objects and cultural events of Rush Mela are slightly different between Dublar Char and Chila. Most of the guests’ positive attitudes and motivations towards the Rush Mela Festival resulted in a positive perception of authenticity. These findings echo observations by Kolar and Zabkar (2010) and Cho (2012). Zhou et al. (2013) suggested that there was no impact of tourist motivation on existential authenticity of a tourist attraction. However, this study revealed close links between guests’ motivation towards experiencing traditional cultural events and influences their perceptions of existential authenticity of Rush Mela Festival. Other guest factors such as ‘finding authentic objects’ and ‘finding authentic experiences in an event or environment’ have more explicitly
defined the guests’ perception of authenticity of the Rush Mela. Guest’s exploration of authentic objects in the festival confirms their understanding of objective authenticity (Asplet & Cooper, 2000) of the festival, and guests’ authentic experiences in the festival confirms their perception of existential authenticity (Wang, 1999; Zhou et al., 2013) of the festival.

While defining the authenticity of the Rush Mela Festival, most of the hosts and guests have expressed their satisfaction, loyalty, and support for tourism during this festival. Most of the host community, both in Dublar Char and Chila, welcome the tourists and are happy to share their traditional local culture. The majority of the hosts believe that the participation of so many tourists not only ensures the success of the festival but will also economic benefits to business owners and tour operators. Some of the hosts are interested to extend the duration of the festival from 2 days to 3-4 days and to increase tourist facilities with the support of the government. These expressions demonstrate host support for tourism (Ko & Stewart, 2002). However, some of the hosts were also concerned about the negative impacts of excessive tourism on the forest. Similar to the hosts, most of the guests expressed their satisfaction and loyalty for Rush Mela tourism by expressing a willingness to visit the Rush Mela again, stating satisfaction with local hospitality, and declaring the intent to extend their stay during the festival. Some of the guests informed that they had visited the Rush Mela Festival almost every year over the past decades because they enjoyed the traditional festival and reflects loyalty towards the festival (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013). On the contrary, some guests, particularly in Dublar Char, indicated the intent to revisit was subject to the improvement of tourist facilities. Despite these differences, it can be urged that, because of these perceptions of an authentic experience, hosts and guests both express satisfaction, loyalty, and support for tourism.

Mutual (host-guest) authentication of the Rush Mela Festival and support for tourism can be linked to community empowerment in the Sundarbans region. As discussed in Chapter 4, the
hosts and guests perceive that the Rush Mela plays a significant role in various domains (economic, psychological, social and political) of community empowerment (Di Castri, 2004; Scheyvens, 1999). Mutual authentication of the Rush Mela and support for tourism is seen to enhance community empowerment. Strengthening community empowerment may influence the hosts’ and guests’ attitudes, motivations, and other factors that lead to authenticating Rush Mela Festival as their ICH as well as increasing loyalty and support for tourism. Further details on the role of mutual authentication of the Rush Mela and community empowerment is discussed in Section 5.7.

6.7 Role of mutual authentication (host-guest) of ICH (Rush Mela) for sustainable community empowerment

This section follows on from the discussion of the role of mutual authentication for sustainable community empowerment in relation to the case study of Rush Mela.

It has been established that host and guest factors influence the mutual authentication of objective and existential authenticity of Rush Mela Festival, which can subsequently enhance loyalty and support for tourism (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2015), and ultimately influence the main four elements of community empowerment (economic, psychological, social and political). Tourism related to the Rush Mela Festival has a major influence on the economic empowerment of the community (Mason, 2004; Scheyvens, 1999; Taylor, 2001). Some of the hosts, including shop owners and tour operators, earn considerable economic returns through the sale of physical artefacts, crafts, food, cloth, and the dried fish as well as providing services to tourists. In turn, they give high revenues to the government and donations to the organising committee to help organise the cultural programme. Also, seasonal local employment is created due to the festival. Most of the guests also perceived the economic benefits of the hosts while exchanging economic goods and services. Mutual authentication of
objects (e.g. dried fish) and experiences (e.g. rituals and sight-seeing) in Rush Mela Festival by the hosts and guests have tended to define the profitable economic goods and services that the hosts can offer and that the guests can expect during Rush Mela tourism. This trend is common in most tourist destinations where authentic goods and services are exchanged between hosts and guests at an economic value, which ultimately enhances economic empowerment of the community (Ko & Stewart, 2002). In the Rush Mela Festival, there is scope for increasing economic opportunities for the host community as some of the guests expect locally made crafts as souvenirs or others wished to stay longer in Dublar Char to see the holy bath. The hosts also see the potential for extending the duration of festival allowing more opportunity for economic exchange.

The impact of mutual authentication of Rush Mela Festival on the psychological empowerment of the community could be linked to the attitudes and motivations of the hosts and guests on the religious and cultural significance of the festival, despite some variation of perceptions among Hindu and Muslim groups. The host community is traditionally attached to the festival and they feel proud when large numbers of tourists visit the festival. Zhou et al. (2015) found the psychological benefit influences host perceptions of authenticity of traditional cultural attractions, which consequently enhances host understanding and confidence in recognising the value and uniqueness of their traditional cultural (Scheyvens, 1999). Mutual authentication of the Rush Mela Festival by both hosts and guests further strengthen the hosts community psychologically as the hosts understand that their pride and unique cultural traditions are also recognised by the tourists.

The study also found that mutual authentication of the Rush Mela Festival may have linkages with social empowerment as the majority of the hosts and guests perceived that the festival was helping to increase social cohesion and integrity of the multicultural host community and to
develop consensus on preserving cultural traditions and natural resources (Scheyvens, 1999) in the Sundarbans region. Continuous host support for, and guests’ loyalty to, Rush Mela tourism over the past years have enhanced social empowerment within the community. Nevertheless, there are also concerns of social disempowerment due to increasing crime and overcrowding (Mansperger, 1993) raised by some of the hosts and guests, which needs to be monitored to achieve sustainable tourism.

Continuous support by host and guest to the Rush Mela Festival has also led to political empowerment of the community through community institution development and engagement of other government agencies. Development of community institutions and leadership is vital for strengthening the political empowerment of the community (del Barrio et al., 2012; Scheyvens, 1999) and is already evident. Recognising the cultural significance given by hosts and guests, the Rush Mela organising committees were formed in Dublar Char and Chila to facilitate the programme. The host community are now more politically empowered since they have a local committee and particularly in Dublar Char, the committee is involved in collaboration with the Government and tour operators. High level government officials and foreign diplomats have also been involved in the festival in recent years, which represents political connection in the community through the festival. The hosts and guests could directly raise issues like inadequate tourist facilities and crime in the forest. Some of the hosts mentioned that the robbery/ crime problem has decreased during the Rush Mela Festival due to the involvement of the security agencies, which is an example of the impact of political empowerment within the community. Another mentionable point is that the Hindu minority are also politically empowered through the festival as they have major share of representatives in the organising committees. Some of the hosts suggested that the organising committee did not have fair representation of all groups within the community, especially in Dublar Char.
This issue should be resolved to mitigate potential political disempowerment of the community in the future (Scheyvens, 1999).

Further, although it was not included in conceptual model presented in Chapter 2 (Fig. 2.5), the findings from this case study suggests that community empowerment may also directly and indirectly influence host and guest factors for the mutual authentication of the festival, and loyalty and support for tourism (Fig. 5.1). Enhanced community empowerment (e.g. better organising committees, more economic activities) could encourage the host community to organise the festival in a better way, which could also improve the attraction and facilities for the tourists and thus influence the guest factors for authenticity and loyalty for tourism.

6.8 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings in relation to the host and guest factors that influenced their perceptions of the authenticity of the Rush Mela Festival as ICH, the mutual (Host – Guest) authentication of the festival, and its’ linkages with tourism and community empowerment. Interview data from the hosts group suggested that, depending on socio-economic and cultural positions, hosts’ attitudes, motivations, emotional benefits, economic benefits, individual participation and institutional involvement influence their perceptions of authenticity. While some of the hosts emphasised religious and cultural aspects of the festival, some were also interested in the economic aspects. Similarly, the guests’ interview data suggested that guests’ attitudes, motivations, finding authentic objects, and gaining authentic experiences has shaped their perception of the authenticity of the Rush Mela Festival. Being familiar with a similar cultural background, the guests (domestic tourists) identified elements of objective and existential authenticity within the festival based on their knowledge about similar objects and experience found in the other parts of the country (Bangladesh). Guests’
perceptions of authentic experience at the festival also deviated by their expectations and prior knowledge. This chapter also discussed the mutual authentication of the festival combining the perceptions of hosts and guests. Mutual authentication suggests that there were some common objects and experiences that were recognised as unique and authentic to the festival. Most of the hosts also showed their continual support for Rush Mela tourism, which is influenced by their perceptions of authenticity. However, some of the hosts were concerned about negative impacts of tourism in the Sundarbans. While majority of the guests have expressed satisfaction and loyalty towards Rush Mela tourism, some guests were sceptical to show loyalty as they expected improved tourist facility in the area. Finally, the chapter also presented the findings of how the mutual authentication of the Rush Mela Festival influences the four dimensions of community empowerment (psychological, economic, social and political). The findings suggest that the mutual authentication could have significant influence on community empowerment. At the same time, the enhanced community empowerment could also affect the host and guest factors as well as the authenticity of the festival directly or indirectly.
Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This study explored host and guest perspectives on mutual authentication of ICH and the relationship of this mutual authentication of ICH to community empowerment. To explore the ICH authentication process and how it helps to empower the community, a qualitative, single case study approach was followed in this research. The case study was Rush Mela, a traditional cultural festival organised annually in the Sundarbans, Bangladesh. The study involved in-depth interviews with retailers, fishermen, organising committee members, tour operators, and forest officials as hosts who are actively involved in organising the festival, and with domestic tourists from other parts of Bangladesh who visited the festival. The study investigated the following three research questions:

- How do hosts and guests perceive the role of ICH (Rush Mela Festival) in community empowerment?

- What factors lead to an authentic experience of ICH (Rush Mela Festival) by domestic tourists and hosts?

- How can mutual authentication (host-guest) of ICH (Rush Mela Festival) build and sustain community empowerment?

This chapter summarises the major findings from the three research questions and presents the theoretical and practical contributions of the research. Further, the limitations of this research and suggestions for future research are presented.
7.2 Summary of major findings

7.2.1 Host and guests’ perception on role of ICH in community empowerment

The research revealed host and guest perceptions of the role of ICH in community empowerment (RQ1), in relation to four major dimensions, specifically psychological, economic, social, and political empowerment as suggested by Scheyvens (1999). The Rush Mela Festival, as an ICH, encompasses elements of religious rituals, cultural functions, business in goods and services, tourism, and institutional engagements, which relate to these four dimensions of community empowerment. The findings suggest that most of the hosts and guests, regardless of religious background and the location of festival (i.e., Dublar Char or Chila), emphasised the role of the festival for psychological empowerment of the community. The worship ceremony during the Rush Mela Festival is the main attraction for the Hindu community, both hosts and guests, who gain spiritual satisfaction through performing the rituals. Whereas, the Muslim hosts and guests perceive psychological satisfaction from the cultural programmes, observing the Hindu rituals and enjoying the natural environment of the Sundarbans. Most of the hosts and guests recognise that, other than religious benefits, economic benefits give mental satisfaction to the host community. Thus, hosts and guests perceived the role of the Rush Mela in the psychological empowerment of the community.

The study also found that the Rush Mela Festival had a significant impact on the economic empowerment of the host community as perceived by most of the hosts and guests. The Rush Mela Festival provided economic opportunities to the local community and tour operators through business and employment, with some variations based on the place of festival. Although there is no permanent settlement in Dublar Char, local fishermen and businessmen from neighbouring towns participate in the festival as the host community and gain economic benefit through the sale of local items (e.g. dried fish, foods, crafts) and other goods imported
from other regions of Bangladesh. In Chila, only local people were involved in the business activities of the festival. Also, the tour operators play an important role in economic empowerment by bringing tourists to the festival. As reported in several studies (Ko & Stewart, 2002; Scheyvens, 1999), economic empowerment of the host community through a cultural event and tourism is a well-recognised concept. Similarly, the cultural event and economic activities in Rush Mela Festival have played a significant role in economic empowerment of the community.

Regarding social empowerment, the study found that the Rush Mela Festival has played a significant role in establishing social harmony among the religious community through the worship of both Hindu Gods and Muslim legends. Muslims and Hindus actively participate in the organising committee to arrange the festival. The guests found this social harmony to be a unique feature of the Rush Mela Festival in this region. The exchange of goods and cultural traditions during the festival enhances social cohesion. Thus, the local community has become socially empowered through the Rush Mela Festival.

In addition, the political empowerment of the local community has been enhanced through organising the Rush Mela Festival. Most of the hosts perceived that formation of the local organising committee was beneficial to the development of the festival. Also, the hosts now have the support of government agencies such as the Forest Department, the Police and the Rapid Action Battalion, and the local government offices, which has created opportunities for the local community to participate in decision-making. The organising committee includes local political leaders, who are influential persons in regional and national government and the national media. Although participation of hosts and guests in the festival in Dublar Char was controlled by Forest officials, as it was located inside the reserved forest area, there was no such control for participation of hosts and guest in Rush Mela in Chila. The hosts believed they
have gained political power through this festival. The guests also perceived the community benefited from political empowerment, as the organising committee ensured arrangements and security for the tourists. However, some of the host were concerned about the representation of wider community in organising committees, as currently the committee members are mainly from fishermen group (in Dublar Char) or the Hindu community (in Chila) without having representatives from tour operators and shop keepers. Both host and guest suggested the inclusion of representatives from the wider community to enhance political empowerment.

Overall, the study finds that the traditional Rush Mela Festival, being organised by the local community over the past years, has contributed to community empowerment. The festival has influence on the local economy, social stability, psychological enrichment, and political empowerment.

7.2.2 Host and guests’ factors affecting authentication of ICH

This research initially identified host and guest factors that influence the authenticity of ICH through an extensive literature review (Chapter 2). Existing guest authentication models considered guest attitudes and motivations were important factors for the authentication of tourist attractions (e.g., Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013). This study considered two other important guest factors which included finding authentic objects and finding authentic experiences for authentication of ICH, which were emphasised in some of the literature but not previously included in guest authentication models. In the case of host factors, the existing host authentication model considered host attitudes, economic, and emotional benefits from tourism to be important factors for the authentication of tourist attractions (Zhou et al., 2015). Some studies suggested that individual participation and institutional involvement of the host
community were also essential factors for tourism and community empowerment (del Barrio et al., 2012; Theodori & Luloff, 1998). As such, these two factors are considered in the mutual authentication of ICH within this study. In addition, the motivation factor, which was used in guest authentication models, was considered as a host factor in the mutual authentication of ICH in this study. A conceptual model for the mutual authentication of ICH and its linkage with ICH tourism and community empowerment was then developed (see Fig. 2.5. in Chapter 2) and was applied to assess mutual authentication of the Rush Mela Festival and its influence on tourism and community empowerment. The findings in relation to the mutual authentication of the Rush Mela Festival are presented in the next section (Section 6.2.3). The influence of host and guest factors on authentication of ICH (Rush Mela Festival) are presented in the following paragraphs.

To develop this work, 60 interviews were conducted with guests to Dublar Char and Chila, investigating the major factors that influenced authentication of ICH. The key factors were found to be attitude, motivation, finding authentic objects, and experience. The attitude of guests was found to be crucial to determine how they perceived objective and existential authenticity. The guests, especially the Hindus who visited the festival for religious purpose, demonstrated a positive attitude towards the festival. They have a strong belief that the Lord Krishna would fulfil their wishes if they perform worship and holy bath at the Rush Mela. Subsequently, the religious tourists perceived high existential authenticity of the Rush Mela. Muslim tourists also had a positive attitude to the festival as they had an opportunity to observe and understand the Hindu traditional ceremonies and cultural practices, which helped them to perceive authenticity within the festival.

Guests’ motivations to visit the Rush Mela Festival was another factor that determined how they authenticate the festival. The main guest motivations include participating in and/ or
observing the worship ceremony and holy bath, watching wildlife and enjoying the natural beauty of Sundarbans mangrove forest, meeting family and friends, and experiencing local traditional culture and lifestyles. The religious motivations of the guests, reinforced by their attitudes, was an important determinant of existential authenticity. All tourists, regardless of religion, were motivated to observe/participate in the festival, which reinforces the existential authenticity of the festival.

Other guest factors such as finding authentic objects and experiences influenced their perception of authenticity. Guests recognised several objects as unique to the festival, such as the statue of God and Goddess in the temple, dried fish, and the local foods. However, the availability of these objects was dependent on the location of the festival, as for example, the dried fish was found only in Dublar Char, not at the Chila Rush Mela. Most of the guests were interested to buy the dried fish as a souvenir because the taste of dried fish of Dublar Char area was believed to be delicious compared to dried fish of other regions. The guests were also interested to experience the traditional dried fish processing techniques of Dublar Char. In this way, the guests had the opportunity to experience the local livelihoods and culture of the fishermen during the Rush Mela Festival. Further, the guests were expecting to see and buy locally made craft products but those were not available in Dublar Char or Chila. The craft items imported from other parts of Bangladesh were sold in the festival. Concerning authentic experiences, the majority of the guests mentioned that the worship ceremony and cultural programmes (both in Dublar Char and Chila), and holy bath (only in Dublar Char) were a major attraction for them, which signifies existential authenticity of the festival. The natural landscape of the festival location, specifically the Sundarbans in Dublar Char was equally important as an attraction for most of the guests. The authentic experience of the hospitality of the local people and the social harmony between the Hindu and Muslim communities have led
to a positive perception towards the existential authenticity of the Rush Mela Festival. Satisfaction and loyalty of the guests was observed through expressions of interest to visit the festival again in the future and that they would recommend attending the Rush Mela to their family and friends.

The study also found that host factors such as attitudes, motivations, economic benefits, emotional benefits, individual participation, and institutional involvement influenced the authentication of the Rush Mela Festival. Host attitudes towards their traditional culture play a significant role in the host authentication process. Most of the host interviewees reported a positive attitude towards the festival, which they have experienced through a long family tradition. The main motivations for most of the hosts participating in the festival were not only the performance of worship or enjoying the cultural programmes, but also gaining economic benefits. Strong motivation within the host community has led them to continue to organise the festival over the past years, which reflects the perceived authentication of the festival by the hosts. Some of the hosts received economic benefits by selling crafts, dried fish, local foods, and though the provision of transportation and goods. Most of the hosts recognised that some of the local products (objects) like the dried fish (in Dublar Char), and local sweets (both in Dublar Char and Chila) were unique to the locality and attracts the tourists. Receiving economic benefits from this traditional cultural festival influenced the hosts’ feeling towards the authenticity of the festival. The hosts who are involved in economic activities in the festival recognised the festival as part of their livelihood. For many rural poor fishermen and traders, the income during this festival is vital for their family. The existence of the festival is crucial for receiving of economic benefits by some of the hosts. Further, the tour operators’ business rely on this festival during the October – November season. The tour operators showcase this festival to the tourist as traditional and authentic so that they can earn good money. Therefore,
the economic benefits from the festival plays a key role in objective and existential authentication of the festival by the host community.

The hosts’ emotional benefit was also an important determinant for authenticating the festival. During the Rush Mela Festival, the hosts had opportunities to gain psychological benefits, mainly by performing/observing the worship ceremony, meeting family and friends, enjoying cultural programmes, and sharing traditional culture with tourists. Good income opportunities also gave mental satisfaction to some of the hosts (the traders). Particular for fishermen of Dublar Char who live out at sea for most of the year, who experienced high emotional benefits during this festival as they could meet their family and friends and earn money, in addition to performing religious rituals practiced by some Hindu fishermen. Further, the majority of the hosts saw this festival as a means of enhancing social harmony between the Hindu and Muslim community through the worship of both Lord Krishna and the Muslim legendary figures Gazi and Kalu. This has brought social peace within the region. Since the Rush Mela Festival is the only large festival organised in the remote community at that time of year and the host community participate in the festival to satisfy their emotional needs.

The host’s individual participation and institutional involvement in the Rush Mela Festival were considered a major factor for the authentication of the festival by the hosts. The study also found that some of hosts mentioned that they have been participating voluntarily in the festival for many years, which demonstrates their interest in the festival. The reasons for participation were for not only psychological benefits but also for economic benefits. Although the ‘individual participation’ factor is related to attitudes and motivations of the hosts, it was considered separately because the regular active participation of individual hosts suggested their actual perception of authenticity of the festival. Also, hosts’ institutional involvement was determined by identifying the organizations involved in the festival. The host community
formed local organising committee for the Rush Mela Festival in Dublar Char and Chila. The structure of the committee was bit different in both places depending on how it was initiated in collaboration with other agencies. The organising committee in Dublar Char mainly involved the fishermen and local businessmen and the committee collaborated with the Forest department and local law enforcement agencies (the Police and RAB) who oversee the security and entrance to the site in the Sundarbans. One the other hand, mainly the Hindu community and members of the local government council are represented in the Chila Rush Mela committee, without any collaboration or support from other government agencies. Also, the tour operators were involved as one of the host institutions dealing with the tourist coming in the festival. In conclusion, existence of a local committee, tour operators as well as the involvement of government agencies reflects how the host community perceive the existential authenticity of the Rush Mela Festival. Hosts’ individual participation and institutional involvement in the festival determines their enthusiasm and ownership of the festival and justifies the authentication of the festival by them.

7.2.3 Mutual authentication of ICH (Rush Mela Festival) and relation to sustainable tourism and community empowerment

Authentication of tourist attractions like intangible cultural heritage is identified as a critical issue in tourism literature. Existing literature has proposed several authentication models that were developed either from host or guest perspectives (Cho, 2012; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013). Past models lack an integrated view of the roles of host and guest in authenticating an ICH, as well as defining the relationship of ICH to community empowerment. To overcome these gaps, this study proposed a conceptual model for the mutual authentication of ICH (Section 2.7, Fig. 2.5), which was developed based on an extensive literature review. Then the
model was applied to explain the mutual authentication of the Rush Mela Festival in Bangladesh.

Following the conceptual model, the study investigated the objects and experiences in the Rush Mela Festival that were commonly authenticated by hosts and guests and which constructed mutual authentication of the festival. The study found that most of the hosts and guests identified similar objects as unique to the festival such as the statues of the God and Goddess, the temple, the dried fish and local foods (sweets) (Chapter 5: Section 5.6, Fig. 5.1), which, although they varied between Dublar Char and Chila, could be related to the objective authenticity of the Rush Mela Festival. The statue of God and Goddess and the temple are religious objects, an integral part of the festival, and were perceived as unique by both hosts and guests in Dublar Char and Chila. Dried fish was authenticated by most of the guests as a unique product of the location of Dublar Char because of its delicious taste and as the tourists buy directly from the local fishermen. Most of the hosts of Dublar Char also perceived the authenticity of this product. However, there were no such local unique products, except some local foods (sweets), in Chila as perceived by most of the hosts and guests. Further, some of the tourists were expecting other authentic products like honey from the Sundarbans forest, but the hosts in Dublar Char did not recognise honey as a unique product to the locality as it was available in other places around the Sundarbans. As discussed in section 5.4 and in Chapter 5, the hosts factors such as hosts’ attitudes, motivations, and economic and emotional benefits could influence their perception of objective authenticity. Similarly, guests’ factors such as guests’ attitudes, motivations and finding authentic objects may have influenced guests’ perception of objective authenticity of the Rush Mela Festival.

The research also found that religious and cultural practices and experiences such as the worship ceremony, holy bath, cultural programmes, and meeting family and friends at the Rush
Mela Festival were mutually agreed to be authentic by most of the hosts and guests, which could be related to the existential authenticity of the festival. Most of the hosts and guests recognised the worship ceremony and holy bath events in Dublar Char as the main attraction for spiritual attachment to the festival. Although there was no opportunity for holy bath in Chila, the experience of the worship ceremony gave the hosts and guests the means to perceive existential authenticity within the festival. Most of the hosts perceived psychological/emotional benefits through organising and participating in the traditional events, whereas most of the guests perceived satisfaction by experiencing those events. Some of the hosts recognised the existence of business during the festival gave them economic and emotional benefits, which was possible due to existence of the festival. On the other hand, the guests recognised the hospitality of the local people as unique experience for them, which in turn influenced the guests’ perceptions of the authenticity of the festival. The findings of this study suggest that the mutual authentication of ICH depends on how hosts and guests perceive the authenticity of the objects and experiences related to ICH; the common understanding of authenticity is driven by the hosts and guests’ factors from their own interests and satisfaction. The traditional objects and experiences, mutually authenticated by hosts and guests, also determine what unique things of the ICH the hosts have that can reflect their identity, and that can attract the tourists.

The study found that the mutual authentication of the festival influenced guests’ loyalty and hosts’ support for Rush Mela tourism. Most of the guests expressed their satisfaction with their experience and were interested to revisit the festival and invite their family and friends, which shows their satisfaction and loyalty towards Rush Mela tourism. Some guests, mainly in Dublar Char, were concerned about inadequate tourist facilities and security issues in Sundarbans that might deter them from revisiting the festival in future if the conditions were not improved. Also, most of the hosts expressed their welcoming attitude towards tourists and a wish to
improve the events of the festival and facilities for tourists in future as they perceived the benefits of having tourists in the festival, although a few hosts were concerned about the impacts of overcrowding tourist on the Sundarbans. Mutual authentication and support for tourism ultimately enhances community’s psychological empowerment (i.e. spiritual satisfaction strengthen their belief in the traditional festival), economic empowerment (i.e. increasing economic benefits from business and tourism, employment), social empowerment (i.e. increasing social cohesion of multicultural community, consensus for preserving cultural tradition and natural resources), and political empowerment (i.e. gradual development of community institutions with support from government). Further, as reported by some of the hosts and guests, the study found that there has been greater participation by hosts and guests in the festival over the past years which led to the increasing involvement of government agencies with the local organisers. The findings suggest that community empowerment could also directly or indirectly influence the hosts and guests’ attitudes, motivations, and other factors for authenticating the Rush Mela Festival, as well as increasing loyalty and support for tourism, which might assist the development of sustainable tourism. This feedback relationship is shown in the diagram demonstrating the mutual authentication of the Rush Mela Festival in Figure 5.1 (Chapter 5), which was not demonstrated in the initial conceptual model of this study (Fig. 2.5 in Chapter 2).

7.3 Theoretical contributions

This section explains the theoretical contributions of this research. The findings of this research contributed into three main areas: (a) enhancing knowledge of the authentication of ICH through ICH tourism, (b) advancing an understanding of the role of the host and guest in ICH tourism and the authentication of ICH, and finally (c) enhancing an understanding of the relationship between authentication of ICH and community empowerment. These theoretical
contributions are explained in this section and are linked to the practical implications of the research as discussed in the following section (Section 6.4).

(a) Enhancing knowledge of the authentication of ICH through ICH tourism:

The authentication of ICH is a crucial issue for managing and preserving ICH in the face of commodification by the influence of modern trends of social change and commercialisation. Several studies emphasised that the role of the host and guest was important in the authentication of ICH (Farrelly et al. 2019; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013). However, none of these studies have explored a holistic view of authentication combining both host and guest perspectives. Recent studies have proposed several authentication models based on host and guest perspectives such as the tourists or consumer-based model of authentication (Cho, 2012; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013) and the host authentication model (Zhou et al., 2015). These models consider host or guest perspectives separately without establishing a combined perception of the authenticity of tourist attractions. Also, the process of authentication of ICH in a tourism context has been relatively unexplored. This research developed a conceptual model of mutual host-guest authentication of ICH through tourism, and empirically studied the mutual authentication process in the case of ICH tourism (Rush Mela Festival in Bangladesh). The findings of this research suggested that the mutual host-guest authentication of ICH could explicitly define the elements of ICH authenticity through tourism, which is important for preservation of ICH and development of tourism.

In this research, new host and guest factors are considered to establish authentication of ICH, which were not used in previous models. This study included host ‘motivation’, ‘individual participation’, and ‘institutional involvement’ as factors of determining authenticity of tourist attractions, in addition to host attitudes, ‘personal economic benefits’, and ‘personal emotional
benefits’ as proposed by Zhou et al. (2015). Also, some guests’ factors such as ‘finding authentic objects’ and ‘finding authentic experiences’ are considered in the authentication model, in addition to guest ‘attitudes’ and ‘motivations’ as proposed by previous guest authentication models (Cho, 2012; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Zhou et al., 2013). The influence of these new host and guest factors in mutual authentication of ICH were observed in the case study of the Rush Mela Festival.

Further, while strengthening community empowerment was suggested by many researchers to maintain the authenticity of ICH and to reduce modification (Mason 2004; Medina, 2003; Kato, 2006; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005), the relationship between authenticity of ICH and community empowerment is yet to be established through empirical studies (Moyle et al., 2010; Zhu, 2012). This research has developed the relationship between mutual authentication of ICH and community empowerment as shown in the conceptual model and found empirical evidence within the case of Rush Mela Festival tourism.

(b) Advancing the understanding of the role of hosts and guests in ICH tourism and the authentication of ICH:

Previous literature had limited focus on either host or guest perspectives in research of authenticity of ICH and ICH tourism, leaving gaps to a comprehensive understanding of their role in tourism and the authentication process. In most research, the tourists’ satisfaction from experiencing constructive and existential authenticity of ICH have been investigated (Cho, 2012; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Park et al., 2019), ignoring the hosts perspective of delivering authentic ICH. This research has contributed to an advanced understanding of the role of hosts and guests and their interaction in ICH tourism and the authentication of ICH, particularly in the context of a traditional cultural festival where interaction between hosts and guests are
prominent. The result of the study can be applied to ICH tourism where constructive authenticity can strongly contribute to the satisfaction of heritage tourists. This research may help to understand the varying level of perceptions of hosts on the mutual authentication of ICH and subsequent support for tourism, which is dependent on the socio-economic and cultural position of the hosts as individuals or institutions. Also, this research demonstrated how different groups within the host community interact with guests in ICH tourism, especially in case of a traditional festival.

Further, previous research has not focus on the role of domestic tourists from similar cultural backgrounds within the authentication process (Yeniyurt & Townsend, 2003). In this research, domestic tourists were considered as guests in the case of the mutual authentication of ICH (Rush Mela Festival). The findings suggest that the perceptions of domestic tourists could help to better understand the authentic objects and experiences related to ICH as they could differentiate the objects and experiences easily through their previous knowledge and understanding of objects and experiences found in similar cultural events in other parts of the country.

(c) Enhanced understanding of relationship between authentication of ICH, ICH tourism, and community empowerment:

This study has also contributed to a greater understanding of the relationships between authenticity of ICH, ICH tourism and community empowerment. The empirical findings from the case study suggests that the host and guest perceptions of community empowerment through the festival and related tourism were linked to the mutual authenticity of the festival. The guests’ understanding of the authenticity of the festival will likely enhance place attachment to the festival and the social identity of the host community, as it has been observed
by other studies (e.g. Cole, 2007; Karijaeger & Mykletun, 2013; Moscardo, 2007). Authentic experiences of the ICH by the hosts and guests have led to loyalty and support for ICH tourism and consequently influenced the psychological, economic, social, and political dimensions of community empowerment. The study also indicated that enhanced community empowerment could positively influence the host and guest perceptions of authentic experience of the ICH. The theoretical contributions of this study also have practical implications, as discussed in the following section.

7.4 Practical implications

There are several practical implications arising from this research for policymakers who play a role in protecting ICH, for those working in ICH based tourism and festivals, as well as specific implications for the organisation of the Rush Mela festival.

*Implications for policy makers:* One of the major challenges in ICH conservation and developing ICH based tourism is to define the authenticity of ICH and develop integrated policies linking with community empowerment through ICH tourism. Previous studies have provided a partial view of ICH authenticity (either from host or guest perspectives) and consequently, have offered limited information for policy makers. This research has integrated both host and guest perspectives into a conceptual model for mutual authentication of ICH and its linkage with community empowerment. National (e.g. tourism ministry or boards) and international agencies (e.g. UNESCO) working to safeguard ICH and ICH based tourism could use this mutual authentication model to establish a more holistic understanding of the dynamics of authenticity of ICH and linkages with community empowerment. Clearer understanding of authenticity of ICH will help ensure the effectiveness of policies to develop sustainable ICH tourism, including actions to preserve the authenticity of ICH and reduce commodification
while maximising community empowerment. National and regional tourism agencies working in developing countries can progress appropriate community-based tourism programmes which ensure the authenticity of ICH is protected. The host and guest authentication factors identified in this study will help policy makers to engage hosts and guests in ICH preservation and ICH tourism development. Governments (particularly local or regional governments) can facilitate ICH tourism development (particularly through festivals) by considering how the four dimensions of community empowerment (economic, psychological, social, and political) can be linked with preservation of the authenticity of ICH.

**Implications for those working in the ICH tourism/ festivals space:** There is a great concern about the commodification of ICH arising from unregulated and profit-oriented tourism development which ignores the socio-cultural values of ICH. Tourism companies and local communities can play an important role in reducing commodification and enhancing conservation of ICH if these groups are educated on the authenticity of ICH and management of ICH for tourism. For example, this study identified several host and guest factors (e.g. attitudes, motivations, economic benefits, emotional benefits, finding authentic objects and experiences) that influence perceptions of authenticity of objects and experiences in Rush Mela Festival (ICH). Organizations or local communities working with ICH management and ICH based tourism could use these factors as a starting point to analyse host and guest perspectives and identify the authentic objects and experiences of ICH they are dealing with. This could then influence their practice of ICH conservation and management efforts as well as improving ICH based tourism experiences.

Also, the study highlighted the significant role the organizing committees of the Rush Mela Festival in Dublar Char and Chila have played in sustaining a traditional festival that celebrates ICH, and which attracts tourists seeking to experience an authentic cultural festival. This
finding suggests that community institutions (e.g. the Rush Mela organizing committee) can play a significant role in preserving ICH and contributing to ICH based tourism. In the case of Rush Mela, this was because the community-based organisers were passionate about their role in organising the festival, as well as in promoting opportunities for others in their local community. Similar community institutions could be engaged (or where they do not exist, be developed) to promote conservation efforts for traditional festivals as well as for other forms of ICH (e.g. craft making, performing arts) and ICH based tourism in Bangladesh and other countries. Investing in such community institutions will enhance community ownership of ICH and reduce pressure on government agencies for managing those ICH.

Further, the research observed that much of the tourism to the Rush Mela Festival was connected (in packages by tour operators) to nature tourism in the Sundarbans mangrove forest. The tour operators organized combined tours to the Rush Mela Festival in Dublar Char and to other natural spots in the Sundarbans. Most of the tourists were attracted to the festival because of the dual tourism opportunities. This finding suggests that the potential for developing ICH as a tourist attraction could be sustainably exploited in places where nature-based tourism is also prominent. Tourism companies and government agencies could strategically explore the potential for synergies between ICH and nature-based tourism (where relevant) so that in combination these tourism-generating assets could be promoted with minimum resources. However, authenticity of the ICH and community empowerment through tourism should be ensured.

**Implications for the Rush Mela Festival:** There are some practical implications specific to the Rush Mela Festival. This research identified objects and cultural practices that were recognised by both hosts and guests as authentic to the festival. The Rush Mela organizing committee and
tour operators could highlight these in promotional material for the festival in order to attract more tourists.

In addition, as suggested by some of the hosts in this study, stakeholder engagement in the festival organisation could be enhanced through engaging host groups that are currently not involved. In particular, tour operators and retailers could be included, as both are important for community empowerment. The Rush Mela organizing committees (both in Dublar Char and Chila) can ensure the participation of tour operators and retailers via representation on the committee and in the activities of festival organization. Enhancing stakeholder engagement would ensure greater ownership of the Rush Mela festival within the host community.

The study also found that tourists to the Rush Mela Festival expected to be able to purchase more traditional, locally made products (e.g. crafts, honey) which they could buy as a souvenir. However, there were very few items available. This suggests a missed opportunity for economic empowerment of the community through the festival. The Rush Mela organising committee and retailers could use the research findings to understand and further showcase the authentic objects (e.g. dried fish, craft products) and experiences (e.g. cultural programmes) of the festival. The organizing committee could then use this information to decide how to best enhance the range of locally made products available (i.e., through deciding whether additional stall holders should be recruited to exhibit during the festival and/or through informing existing retailers about tourist expectations so they can improve their offerings). The benefit of meeting tourist’s expectation could be enhanced economic contributions as well as increased tourist satisfaction. In addition, the host community may be encouraged to take further initiatives such as establishing local cottage industries to produce local products (e.g. crafts) to fulfil tourist demands.
Local government agencies and non-government organizations (NGOs), including those already involved with Rush Mela and/or engaged in different community development programme in the Sundarbans region could provide training to interested locals on ICH tourism, in particular to Rush Mela festival, as well as on promoting craft making industries and business. This could generate employment and economic benefits for the host community and enhance community empowerment.

Further, the research revealed that tourists expected good quality tourist facilities (e.g. travel, accommodation, sanitation, and security) so that they could stay in Dublar Char and enjoy the festival. Tour operators (e.g. Bengal Tours, Guide Tours, Evergreen Tours) and the Forest Department could use the research findings to consider improving tourist facilities to attract more tourists and/or improve tourist satisfaction. Better tourism facilities could help support tourism operators in the area beyond the festival itself. Better facilities may also enable tour operators to organize longer tours (more than one day in Dublar Char) to Rush Mela with proper sanitation facilities in the festival area. Government agencies including the Forest Department and Police can improve security for the tourists. However, before improving tourism facilities and attracting more tourists, adequate regulatory measures should be in place to control excess tourists in the Sundarbans that could threaten the natural environment as well as the ICH of local community.

Overall, the study findings can be practically useful for the national and international community who are dealing with authentication of ICH, ICH based tourism development and community empowerment.
7.5 Limitations of the research

The limitations of this research are mainly related to the chosen research methodology and capacity for the generalisation of some findings. First, the research used a single qualitative case study approach, which limits the generalisability of the findings. However, generalisation of findings may not be the only outcome of research (Stake, 1998). As the literature in the research domain of mutual authentication of ICH was scarce, the study aimed to fill potential research gaps and used a single case study to empirically assess the mutual authentication process due to limitations in time and resources.

Second, the interviews with the participants were undertaken in the local Bengali language and then translated into English. The translation of the responses may not fully reflect the full sense of interviewee’s perceptions despite our best efforts to retain their core meaning. However, as the researcher has a similar language and cultural background, this limitation was minimised through crosschecking with the respondents if there were any doubts.

Third, the study was confined to a single case study - the Rush Mela Festival in the Sundarbans. While case study research can provide valuable insights into under explored phenomena, it is not possible to suggest that the research findings are generalisable however, case studies do provide opportunities for future research. In particular, a comparative study could be undertaken to examine the issue of mutual authentication of ICH in different contexts, and to verify the applicability of findings from this research. The time and budgetary limitations of doctoral research did not permit the current study to extend beyond the chosen case.

Finally, the study considered one ICH (Rush Mela) as a case study which was located in an area where natural tourism (Sundarbans mangrove forest) was dominant as well. This natural attraction may impact on the understanding of the level of interest of tourists in the festival.
itself. However, this factor was deemed to be overcome by also investigating a second Rush Mela Festival site close to the Sundarbans where natural tourism was less prominent. Data from two different sites helped to identify host and guest perceptions in a broader context. Also, the findings of the study were in context of Bangladesh where cultural tourism is yet to be developed. Therefore, further study is needed to justify the applicability of the findings of this research in other countries where ICH based cultural tourism is already established.

In summary, several limitations of the study have been discussed in this section. The discussion demonstrates that these limitations were minimised as much as possible through the methodological approach adopted, however they also create scope for future research to advance understanding of ICH authentication and tourism research.

7.6 Recommendations for future research

There is limited research in relation to the mutual authentication of ICH and ICH tourism as discussed in the literature review chapter. This leaves much scope for future research in this field with the following suggestions being identified through the course of this research.

7.6.1 Future research to enhance knowledge of authenticity and ICH tourism

Further detailed research is required to test and validate the conceptual model in various contexts of ICH-based tourism and other tourist attractions using qualitative and quantitative approaches. Application of the model in various geographical and societal contexts (urban / rural or modern/ traditional society) could also be explored. Further development of the mutual authentical model could be explored by incorporating the relationships of existing tourism and ICH management policies with the host and guest factors influencing authenticity of ICH as well as the major domains of community empowerment.
It is also important to further explore the role of different groups/stakeholders within host communities including those who participate directly or who do not wish to participate in the ICH and related tourism. Such research will help to understand how the community as a whole perceive the authenticity of ICH and whether there is potential for increasing support for ICH tourism development (and how such support may be garnered).

The relationship between individual participation and institutional involvement in ICH tourism could be investigated as well. Future research should focus on how individual participation influences institutional involvement and enhances community empowerment.

Also, further study could be undertaken to explore the role of local institutions in ICH conservation and reducing potential commodification. It could benefit the community if local organisations can flourish and take on a leadership role in developing suitable tourism ventures. Such leaderships will widen the capacity of the local community to be empowered politically. The outcome of such research could be a catalyst to empower communities in the management of cultural heritage.

The survival of the intangible heritage depends on the transformation of values and skills to the next generation. Modern tourism becomes a threat for the younger generation as it may devalue authenticity as the demand side tends to dominate the market. As the support for tourism directly influenced by the economic benefit received from tourism, concern must be given as to how the younger generation want to adhere to the traditional rituals and skills. Training of the younger generation could be an option to nurture skills from school level. Future research could develop a heritage education curriculum where specialisations can be given to the sustainability of the transformation of heritage. As such perceptions of the authenticity of ICH can change over time and there is a need for it to be documented. We
recommend the development of an ICH curriculum at the tertiary education level where the master of ICH holder directly contributes to academic knowledge.

7.6.2 Future research to enhance knowledge of Rush Mela tourism

Based on this research finding, there are future research opportunities in relation to Rush Mela Festival tourism. A detail investigation is required to determine how tourist facilities can be improved at the Rush Mela Festival. Also, of interest would be a greater understanding of the influence of tourist behaviour in maintaining authenticity and avoiding commodification of the ICH. Tourist facilities at the tourism sites remain a considerable issue for the delivery of an authentic experience for the tourist. Further research should explore collaboration between host and guest for investing in developing tourism facilities through co-financing and social business approach. As this study found, there is also high demand for local crafts for the tourists who want to purchase locally made products. There is the potential for the development of local craft industries in the area. Further research can explore how the craft industry can be developed in the region to meet the tourist demand.

There is also scope of studying potential for a community-based ICH tourism programme that can facilitate the preservation of authenticity of ICH and enhance community empowerment. Developing micro-enterprises/ social business for community-based ICH tourism could help the host community to be empowered economically and politically in Sundarbans area.

Preservation of traditional ICH requires continuation of traditional practices through the generations. In this regard, transferring knowledge from old to new generations is essential. However, there is no systematic learning practices to transfer traditional knowledge of ICH, particularly in developing countries like Bangladesh. In-depth research could be conducted to explore the modality of transferring knowledge of ICH to future generations.
In summary, the suggested future research will build on the outcomes of this study and will further contribute to knowledge of ICH authentication, ICH tourism, and community empowerment.
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204


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Appendix-A: Interview Prompt for Hosts and Guests

Interview prompt for host

Host Interview ID:

1. General information:

Name:

Address:

Age: Education: Gender: Occupation:

2. Description of your involvement with Rush Mela:

- Which way you are involved or connected with rush mela and why?

[The hosts were asked about their attitude, motivation, and involvement in the festival.]

3. What are your main activities in the festival (religious/economic/business/job/committee member)?

[The hosts were asked about what they actually performed during the festival.]

4. Why Rush mela is important? Why is this festival organized? (religious/economic/Social/political)?

[The hosts were asked about their attitude, motivation towards the festival, and benefits they received from the festival.]
5. Is it necessary to participate in Rush mela every year? If unable to join the Sundarbans Rush mela, then is there any alternative way to do this worship?

[The hosts were asked about their attitude, motivation towards the festival, perception of authenticity of the festival, and benefits they received from the festival (relating to community empowerment).]

6. Tourists / outsiders join this fair. Does it make any problem or benefit to you?

[The hosts were asked about their attitude towards the festival tourism, and benefits they received from tourism, problems from tourism.]

7. Do you invite your friends or relatives to join this fair who lives in another part the country?

[The hosts were asked about their psychological and social benefits they received from the festival (related to authenticity of the festival and community empowerment).]

8. In the last 5-10 years, do you see any kind of change in your locality because of Rush mela?

[The hosts were asked about authenticity of the festival, attitude towards tourism, commodification of the festival, and relation to community empowerment]

9. Is there any Rush mela organizing committee of local people? Are you associated with it? If yes, what is your main activity?

[The hosts were asked about role of community institutions and other agencies, and relations to community empowerment]
10. During Rush mela, do you or any of your family engage with tourist business?

[The hosts were asked about involvement with tourism and attitude towards the festival related tourism and support for tourism.]

11. What is your opinion about the following issues?

- Is it possible to arrange this fair in larger extent?

- How the local people can contribute and engage themselves more in this rush mela arrangement (Tourism Committee/institution/voluntary)?

- Do you think more tourist should come here?

[The hosts were asked about their support for festival and sustainable tourism.]

12. What is the source of the products which are available in this rush mela?

[The hosts were asked about their perception of authenticity of the objects in the festival.]

13. Is there any change in the traditional rush purnima worship than the past? If changed, is it acceptable to the local people?

[The hosts were asked about their perception of authenticity of the cultural experiences in the festival.]
Interview prompt for guest

Guest Interview ID:

1. General information:

Name:

Address:

Age: Education: Gender: Occupation:

2. What you want to see in rush festival visit?

[The guests were asked about their attitude and motivation for visiting the festival and what they wanted to see in the festival.]

3. Do you have any idea about this Rush mela festival and worship before this visit?

If yes, then…

How many times did you attend the festival before this visit?

Which features of the festival are unique and attractive?

Do you see any changes of the festival compare to the previous years?

Which characteristics of rush mela you find unique and attracting?

If no then….

Why have you been interested to come in the Rush mela festival? (religious/ pleasure trip/ business or economic/ institutional or political)

What are you expecting to see in Rush Mela?
4. From where have you got information about this festival and how have you got interested to join here? (tour operators/ friends/ newspaper/ TV etc.)

5. Various products are available in this festival. Among these, do you find anything attractive or interesting to you? Did you buy anything (or would you like to buy anything), which is not available in other places?

6. What do you think about the local people (organizer/ businessman/ worshiper etc.) who has also attended in this festival?
   - Did they show hospitality to tourists/ outsiders?
   - If you came here earlier, then do you find any behavioral change among the local people and the organizers of this festival?

7. Do you want to attend this festival again in future? Why? / Why not?

Which matters of this festival appeal you most and repel you most?
8. How did you interact with the local people / organizers? (worship/ shopping/ accommodation/ cultural programme/ discussion)

9. In your opinion, what is the relation between Rush mela festival and the local culture and conservation of Sundarban mangrove forest?

10. What types of benefit local people get from this Rush mela festival (religious/economic/social/political)? What can be added?

11. What types of arrangement can be done further for the improvement of service for the tourists?
Appendix-B: Example of Interview Scripts in Bengali language

Thesis title:
Co-lingual Hot Authentication of Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Rush Mela Festival in the Bangladesh Sundarbans

Host Interview

ID: Host_Dublar Char_36

1. সাধারণ বাণ্ডুক:
   নাম:
   ঠিকানা: দশখানা, বাংলাদেশ
   বয়স: ৬০

   শিক্ষা: S.S.C

   লিঙ্গ: পুরুষ
   পেশা: ব্যবসা

2. রাসমেলার সাথে সম্পৃক্ততার বিবরণ:
   -কি কি কার্যক্ষেত্র জাদুত ও কেন?
   দুর্বলার চরের রাস মেলা আয়োজনের যে কমিটি তার সাবেক সেক্রেটারী এবং বর্তমান সদস্য ঐ কমিটির।

3. কেনটি প্রধান কার্যক্ষেত্র? (ধর্মীয়/ অর্থনৈতিক/ ব্যবসা/ চাকুরি/ কমিটির সদস্য)
   ধর্মীয় এবং রাস মেলা আয়োজন কমিটির সদস্য। মেলা আয়োজন দেখাশোনা করি।

4. রাসমেলা কেন গুরুত্বপূর্ণ? কি উদ্দেশ্যে এ মেলার আয়োজন করা হয়? (ধর্মীয়/ অর্থনৈতিক/ রাজনৈতিক/ সামাজিক)
হিন্দু ধর্মের অনুসারীদের কাছে এই মেলা খুবই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কারণ ভগবান শ্রীকৃষ্ণ যে তিনি জায়গায় তার শীলা দেখান তার মধ্যে এই দুবার চর একটি। আর এখানে বনবিবির, গাজী কালু এদের ও পূজা করা হয়। হিন্দু এবং মুসলমান অনুসারীদের এক সাথে এই রকম পূজা অনুষ্ঠান আর কোথাও নাই।

৫. রাসমেলায় প্রতি বছর অংশগ্রহণ করা কি জরুরী? যদি সুপরিবন্ধন রাসমেলায় অংশ নিতে না পারেন তাহলে অন্য কোনভাবে এ পূজা কি করা যায়?

এটা মনের ব্যাপার। কেউ যদি আসতে চায় আসতে পারে কিন্তু কোন বাধ্যবাধকতা নেই। হ্যা, ব্যক্তিগত ভাবে করতে পারে।

৬. রাসমেলায় পর্যটক/ বহিরাগতদের অংশগ্রহণ কি কি সুবিধা/ অসুবিধা হয়?

কয়েক বছর আগে আলোকক কমিটি ও পর্যটকদের বিভিন্ন ধরনের নিরাপত্তার অসুবিধা হত। কিন্তু এখন এটি কঠোর নিরাপত্তার মাধ্যমে পালিত হয় বলে কোন ধরনের অসুবিধা হয় না। প্রত্যেক বছর প্রায় ৪০-৫০ হাজার লোকের সমাগম হয়। দিন দিন পর্যটকের সংখ্যা বাড়ছে।

একাধারে অনুষ্ঠান সফল হচ্ছে।

৭. রাসমেলায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য আপনি কি নিজ উদ্যোগে দূরের কোন বন্ধু/ আতিথী-বন্ধনকে আমন্ত্রণ জানান?

হ্যা, প্রত্যেক বছর নিজের আতিথী বন্ধনদেরকে আমন্ত্রন জানাই এবং প্রত্যেক বছরই কেউ না কেউ আসেই। কারণ এটি অভিজ্ঞ ও রক্ষিত ধর্মীয় অনুষ্ঠান।

৮. রাসমেলা উপলভ্ধ আপনার এলাকায় গত ৫-১০ বছরে কি কি পরিবর্তন হয়েছে? যেমন:-

- পরিবহন বাস বৃদ্ধি
- নতুন হোটেল/রেস্তোরার হয়েছে
- ট্রিলার/ লফ্টের সংখ্যা বেড়েছে
- কুটির শিশুর দোকান
- মাছ/ টটকি মাছের ব্যবসা বেড়েছে
- লোকগণের আসর
- স্বুত্র ঝণ কর্মসূচী
- স্থানীয় পর্ষ্টন কমিটি গঠন

৯. রাসমেলা আয়োজনে এই এলাকার জনগণের কোন কমিটি আছে কি? আপনি কি কমিটিতে সম্পৃক্ত?
থাকলে আপনি কি কাজ করেন?
পূজা রাস মেলা আয়োজনের জন্য একটাই কমিটি আছে। আমি গতবছর সেক্রেটারী ছিলাম এবং এই বছর কমিটির সদস্য হিসাবে কাজ করছি। আমার কাজ হলো দোকান, মন্দির ও সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠানের কার্যক্রম দেখাওনা করা।

১০. রাসমেলায় সময় আপনি যা আপনার পরিবারের কেউ কি পর্ষ্টন ব্যবসার সাথে জড়িত থাকেন?
না, আমার পরিবারের কেউই পর্ষ্টন ব্যবসার সাথে জড়িত না।

১১. নীচের বিষয়গুলো নিয়ে আপনার মতামত কি?
- ভবিষ্যতে আরো বড় পরিসরে রাসমেলা কি আয়োজন করা যায়?
হঠা যায়, যদি সরকার উদ্যোগ নেয়। করান প্রত্যেক বছর এই মেলার পরিধি বাড়তেছে। সরকার
শুধু তিন দিনের অনুমতি দেয়। কিন্তু যারা দূর থেকে আসে তাদের জন্য ইটা করে।
সেজন্য সরকার যদি ৫ দিনের অনুমতি দেয় তাহলে ভালোভাবে মেলা আয়োজন করা যাবে।

- স্থানীয় জনগণকে রাসমেলা আয়োজনে আরো সম্পৃক্ত করা যায় কিভাবে? (পর্ষ্টন কমিটি/
 সংগঠন/ বেছাসেবী দল)
স্থানীয় জনগণকে আরো উদ্যোগী হতে হবে অনুষ্ঠান সফল করার জন্য।
বেছাসেবী দল গঠনে তাদেরকে সম্পৃক্ত করা যায়। যদিও বেছাসেবী দল থাকে। তবে আরও
বেশি গঠন করতে হবে।

220
- আরা কোনো পর্বটক রাসমলায় অসা কি উচিত?

হ্যাঁ, আমি মনে করি অবশ্যই অসা উচিত এবং প্রতোক বছর আসেও। কারণ এটা এখন সবার জন্য উৎসব। তাই সব ধর্মের মানুষ এখানে আসতে পারে এবং অনুষ্ঠান উপভোগ করতে পারে। এবং তারা সুন্দরবনের প্রাকৃতিক সৌন্দর্য উপভোগ করতে পারে।

১২. রাসমলায় যে সব পণ্য কেনা-বেচা হয় সেগুলো কোথা থেকে তৈরি হয় অথবা কোথা থেকে আসে?

(স্থানীয় কারাখানা/অন্য শহর থেকে)

সবই বাইরে থেকে আসে। হয়তো শিল্পের জিনিষ আসে খুলনা থেকে, আর কাপড় ও প্লাস্টিকের জিনিষ আসে ঢাকা ও চীন থেকে। এখানকার পণ্য বলতে শুধু স্টক আর খাবার।

১৩. রাসপূর্ণমায় পূজার আচার অনুষ্ঠানে অন্তৰ্ভুক্তের তুলনায় কি কোন পরিবর্তন হয়েছে? যদি পরিবর্তন হয়ে থাকে সেটা কি স্থানীয় জনগণের কাছে সংগঠনীয়?

হ্যা, পূজার অনুষ্ঠানে আধুনিকতার ছোয়া লেগেছে। আলোকসজ্জা ও দোকানগুলোর সাত পরিবর্তন হয়েছে। পর্বটক বাড়ার সাথে মেলার পরিবর্তন হচ্ছে পর্বটকদের চাহিদা মেটানোর জন্য। যেমন দোকানে মেহবুব জিনিষ বিক্রি হয় সেগুলো বাইরে থেকে আনা হয় তাতে পর্বটকরা কিনতে পারে। সংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠান এখন শুধু আর ধর্মীয় বিষয়ে হয় না, অন্যান্য আয়োজনও থাকে।

বাইরে থেকে নাচ ও গানের শিল্পী এখানে অংশগ্রহণ করে।

হ্যাঁ, আর এই পরিবর্তন স্থানীয় জনগণ ভালো ভাবেই নিয়েছে।
Thesis title:
Co-lingual Hot Authentication of Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Rush Mela Festival in the Bangladesh Sundarbans

Guest Interview
ID: Guest_Dublar Char_33

1. General Question:
   Name:
   Address: Gopalganj
   Age: 35
   Qualification: B.E.
   Gender: Male
   Profession: Chakuri

2. How did you participate in the Rush Mela festivity and why?
   Natural beauty, cultural mela, natural cultural festival and religion.

3. What do you consider to be the main characteristics of the Rush Mela festivity?
   If yes then:
   - How do you participate in the Rush Mela festivity?
   - Have you participated in the Rush Mela festivity before?
   - Rush Mela's main event that is considered as a symbol of beauty and uniqueness?
   - Is this Rush Mela festivity held in comparison to other Rush Melas?
- আপনি কেন রাসমেলায় আসার জন্য আঘাত হলেন? (ধর্মীয়/ অনন্দ ভর্মণ/ অর্থনৈতিক/ রাজনৈতিক)

মূলত সুপরিশোধণ ধর্মীয় দেখার জন্যই রাসমেলায় আসা। সেই সাথে রাস মেলার অনুষ্ঠান উপভোগ করতে চাই।

- আপনি রাসমেলায় কি কি দেখার প্রত্যাশা করেন?

4. রাসমেলায় অংশগ্রহণে আপনি কার মাধ্যমে উত্তর হয়েছেন? (ট্যাব কোম্পানি/ স্থানীয় বন্ধু/ খবরের কাগজ/ টেলিভিশন)

স্থানীয় বন্ধু এবং ট্যাব কোম্পানির ট্যাব প্যাকেজের বিজ্ঞাপন।

5. রাসমেলায় কোন পণ্য কোন-বোচা হয় তার মধ্যে কোন কোন পণ্য আপনার কাছে আকর্ষণীয় মনে হয়? কোন সময় কি কি কিনেছেন মেটা অন্য জায়গায় পাওয়া যায় না?

নতুন কোন জিনিস দেখিনি। অনেক জিনিসই অন্য জায়গায় পাওয়া যায়। কিন্তু এই কারণে শুটকি মাছটাই মনে হল অন্যদেরকে। করেন কিন্তু কম আর ফেলতেও ভাল না কি। পর্যটকরা এই শুটকি মাছ কিনে লিয়ে যায়।

6. রাসমেলায় অংশগ্রহণকারী স্থানীয় জনগণ (আয়োজক/ ব্যবসায়ী/ পূজোরী) সম্পর্কে আপনার ধারণা কি?

- পর্যটক/ বহিরাগতদের প্রতি তারা কি অতিথিপ্রাপ্য?

হ্যাঁ। সাধারণ মানুষ ও আয়োজক কর্মীর ক্ষেত্রে অতিথিপ্রাপ্য ছিল না।

- যদি অতীতে রাসমেলায় অংশগ্রহণ করে থাকেন, তাহলে রাসমেলার আয়োজক ও স্থানীয় জনগণের পর্যটকদের প্রতি আচরণের কোন পরিবর্তন কি আপনার চেষ্টা ধরা পড়েছে?

এই প্রথম উনি অংশ গ্রহণ করেছেন রামসেলায়, তাই ধারণা নাই আগে কেমন ছিল।

223
৭. আপনি কি ভবিষ্যতে আবারও রাসমেলায় অংশগ্রহণ করতে চান? কেন? কেন নয়?
কোন বিষয় ভালো লেগেছে এবং কোনও ভালো লাগেনি?

হ্যা, সুখো গেলে আবার আসতে চাই কারন যদি আবার সুখো হয়।
হিন্দু ও মুসলমানের একসাথে পূজা করাটাই খুব ভালো লেগেছে যা আগে কোথাও দেখি নি।
গুটিকি মাঝের প্রথম ভালো লাগেনি এখানকার।

৮. রাসমেলায় সমস্ত আয়োজক বা স্থানীয় জনগণের সাথে আপনার কি কি ভাবে যোগাযোগ হয়েছে?
(পূজা/ পণ্যক্রয়/ বাকা বাড়া/ লোকসংগঠন উপভোগ/ আলোচনা)
পণ্য ক্রয় করতে গিয়ে কথা হয়েছে আর অনূর্ধ্ব দেখার সময় লোকজনের সাথেও কথা হয়েছে।

৯. আপনার মতে রাসমেলা ও পূজা অনুষ্ঠানের সাথে স্থানীয় লোকসংগঠন ও সুপরিচিত রাজতান্ত্রিক কি?
কিছুটা খারাপ দিক আছে। কারন বেশি বেশি লোকজন আসছে তায় তায় সুপরিচিত উপর একটা বিরূপ প্রভাব পড়ে। আর তাছাড়া হরিণও শিকার হয় অনেক পরিমান। আর গাছপালাও তো কাটে চুরি করে।

১০. আপনার মতে রাসমেলা থেকে স্থানীয় জনপোষণ কি কি সুবিধা পায়? কেন? আপনি কি কি সুবিধা পেতে পারে? (ধর্মীয়/ অর্থনৈতিক/ রাজনৈতিক/ সামাজিক)
পূর্ববাসী এর সময় লোকজন অনেক জিনিস ও থাবার নিদর্শন যাসা যেখানে মেলার দোকান
 থেকেই কিনে। ফলে লোকজন ধর্মীয় ভাবে অর্থনৈতিক দিক থেকে লাভবান হয়।
এখানকার জেলের মধ্যে একটা উৎসবের সৃষ্টি হয় এই রাসমেলার ফলে।
এখানে অনেক রাজনৈতিক নেতা এবং উচ্চ শিক্ষিত লোকজন আসে। তাই সবার মধ্যে একটা
মিলন মেলার সৃষ্টি হয়।
১১. পর্যটকদের জন্য রাসমেলা আয়োজকরা আর কি কি ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করতে পারে?

মেলার পরিধি ও সময় আরও বাড়াতে পারে। পাঁচ দিন হলে ভালো হয়।

নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থা জোরদার করতে পারে।
------- Forwarded message -------
From: simp@griffith.edu.au
Date: Thu, 10 Aug 2017 at 10:49 am
Subject: Full Research Ethics Clearance 2017/620
To: <b.moyle@griffith.edu.au>
Cc: <research-ethics@griffith.edu.au>, <k.madison@griffith.edu.au>

GRiffith University Human Research Ethics Review

Dear Dr Brent Moyle

I write further to the additional information provided in relation to the provisional approval granted to your application for ethical clearance for your project "Co-lingual Hot Authentication of Intangible Cultural Heritage, The Rush Mela Festival in the Bangladesh Sundarbans" (GU Ref No: 2017/620).

This is to confirm that this response has addressed the comments and concerns of the HREC.

The ethics reviewers resolved to grant your application a clearance status of "Fully Approved".

Consequently, you are authorised to immediately commence this research on this basis.

Regards

Kim Madison | Human Research Ethics
Office for Research
Griffith University | Nathan | QLD 4111 | Level 0, Bray Centre (N54)
T +61 7 373 58043 | email k.madison@griffith.edu.au
Appendix-D: Participants’ Information Sheet

Co-lingual Hot Authentication of Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Rush Mela Festival in the Bangladesh Sundarbans

(GU ref no. 2017/620)

INFORMATION SHEET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is conducting the research</th>
<th>Shahida Khanom, PhD Candidate, Department of Tourism Sport and Hotel Management, Griffith Institute for Tourism, Griffith University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Brent Moyle, Senior Research Fellow, Griffith Institute for Tourism, Griffith University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Millicent Kennelly, Senior Lecturer, Department of Tourism Sport and Hotel Management, Griffith Institute for Tourism, Griffith University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why is the research being conducted?

Tourism has been identified as a driving force for sustainable development. Ecotourism, as opposed to mass tourism, has been noted to have higher levels of community involvement. However, despite obvious benefits, such as increased employment, ecotourism has been noted to have a number of adverse impacts on host communities, such as degradation of natural resources and importantly for this research, loss of authenticity of intangible cultural heritage.
(ICH). The importance of authenticity of ICH has been well established from both the host and guest perspective. All the same, there are limited studies which explore the connection between ICH and community empowerment. This is especially true in the context of festivals and events, and perhaps even more so in regard to guests with similar cultural backgrounds.

Subsequently, the aim of this research is to explore the role of ICH in community empowerment. To achieve this objective this research will undertake a case study of the Rush Mela Festival in Bangladesh. The Rush Mela Festival is located in the Sundarbans in Bangladesh, which is recognised as a place of cultural importance due to unique ICH in the local community. The Rush Mela festival is an especially intriguing case study as a majority of visitors are domestic tourists from similar cultural backgrounds, relocating from the Sundarbans to more urbanised regions in Bangladesh. This presents a unique opportunity to explore the role of ICH in community empowerment by both hosts and guests with a similar cultural background. To achieve this objective this research will adopt an inductive approach, undertaking semi-structured interviews with domestic visitors and local community members during the Rush Mela festival. The core contribution of this research is the development of a conceptual model on host-guest authentication of ICH for subsequent testing and validation in other contexts.

**What you will be asked to do**

If you decide to participate you will be required to participate in an in-depth interview between 30-60 minutes in length.

**The basis by which participants will be selected or screened**

The Rush Mela festival takes place in the Dublar Char island of Sundarbans, Bangladesh. This research will apply purposive sampling to recruit 30 participants from local community who are engaged with Rush Mela festival. At the same, 30 tourists visiting the Rush Mela festival will be interviewed during the festival in November 2017.
Expected benefits of the research

The Rush Mela festival is the main cultural attraction of Sundarbans Mangrove Forest, Bangladesh. Outcomes of this research will be used to assist communities to become empowered in the tourism planning and development process, particularly related to festivals and events. As the research will also focus on authenticity of intangible cultural heritage, this research will benefit the community by providing best-practice guidelines. Another outcome of the research is unearthing how to maintain the authenticity of intangible cultural heritage, while ensuring economic benefits are derived for local communities. Benefits of this research will be increased empowerment of host communities designed to reduce the livelihood dependency and foster the conservation of the forest.

Risks to you

The risks of this research for participants is negligible.

Confidentiality

During the process of research, participants are required to record interview. In this experiment only the researcher will know your responses to protect privacy.

The data collected, will be safeguarded all the time and never disclosed to others without your consent. All research data (interview responses, secondary data, and analysis) will be retained in a locked cabinet and/or a password protected electronic file at Griffith University for a period of five years before being destroyed. De-identified data and analysis results will be used for research purposes.

Further information on the University’s Privacy Policy can be found at http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan or by telephoning (07) 3735 4375.

Your participation is voluntary

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may exit the study without penalty at any time.
Questions / further information

For any further inquiries about this research, you can contact the researchers listed at the top of this information sheet. In addition, research results will be reported in a PhD thesis and may also be disseminated via journal articles and / or conference presentations.

The ethical conduct of this research

This ethical conduct of this research complies with the Griffith University research code which is consistent with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. Any queries and complains, please contact the Manager of Research Ethics on 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Feedback to you

You may request a summary of the research findings once completed. If you wish to receive this, please provide your email address. This will be kept separate from the research data.

Privacy Statement – non disclosure

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan or telephone (07) 3735 4375.
Appendix-E: Participants’ Consent Form

Department of Tourism, Leisure, Hotel and Sport Management
Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus

Chief Investigator               Investigator
Dr. Brent D. Moyle               Shahida Khanom
Senior Research Fellow           PhD Candidate
Griffith University              Griffith University
Email: b.moyle@griffith.edu.au   Email: shahida.khanom@griffithuni.edu.au

Project Title: Co-lingual Hot Authentication of Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Rush Mela Festival in the Bangladesh Sundarbans

Why is the research being conducted?

Tourism has been identified as a driving force for sustainable development. Ecotourism, as opposed to mass tourism, has been noted to have higher levels of community involvement. However, despite obvious benefits, such as increased employment, ecotourism has been noted to have a number of adverse impacts on host communities, such as degradation of natural resources and importantly for this research, loss of authenticity of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). The importance of authenticity of ICH has been well established from both the host and guest perspective. All the same, there are limited studies which explore the connection between ICH and community empowerment. This is especially true in the context of festivals and events, and perhaps even more so in regard to guests with similar cultural backgrounds. Subsequently, the aim of this research is to explore the role of ICH in community empowerment. To achieve this objective this research will undertake a case study of the Rush
Mela Festival in Bangladesh. The Rush Mela Festival is located in the Sundarbans in Bangladesh, which is recognised as a place of cultural importance due to unique ICH in the local community. The Rush Mela festival is an especially intriguing case study as a majority of visitors are domestic tourists from similar cultural backgrounds, relocating from the Sundarbans to more urbanised regions in Bangladesh. This presents a unique opportunity to explore the role of ICH in community empowerment by both hosts and guests with a similar cultural background. To achieve this objective this research will adopt an inductive approach, undertaking semi-structured interviews with domestic visitors and local community members during the Rush Mela festival. The core contribution of this research is the development of a conceptual model on host-guest authentication of ICH for subsequent testing and validation in other contexts.

What you will be asked to do?

If you decide to participate you will be required to participate in an in-depth interview between 30-60 minutes in length.

Confidentiality and voluntary contribution

Your contribution is fully voluntary. You are able to withdraw from the interview at any time. Your answers to the question above will be tape recorded and analysed; the data will be stored at Griffith University in a secure location for five years and then destroyed. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent; except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements.

Questions/further information

Since the interview component is important for the development of the intangible cultural heritage policy, we would be interested in sending you a copy of the interview transcript to ensure you can review and further contribute to the information ascertained.
If you have any further questions please contact the Manager of Research Ethics on 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

**Providing informed consent**

Please sign the document in the space provided below to confirm you are willing to participate in this research.

Task for participant:

You will participate in a 45 minutes semi structured interview on Rush Mela festival.

By agreeing to participate, you will be confirming that:

- You understand what participation in this research entails;
- You have had any questions answered to your satisfaction;
- You understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.
- You understand that your participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty; and
- You understand that you can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 37354375 (research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project.

Name: ____________________________
Signature: ____________________________
Date: ____________________________
### Appendix-F: Participant Profile

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