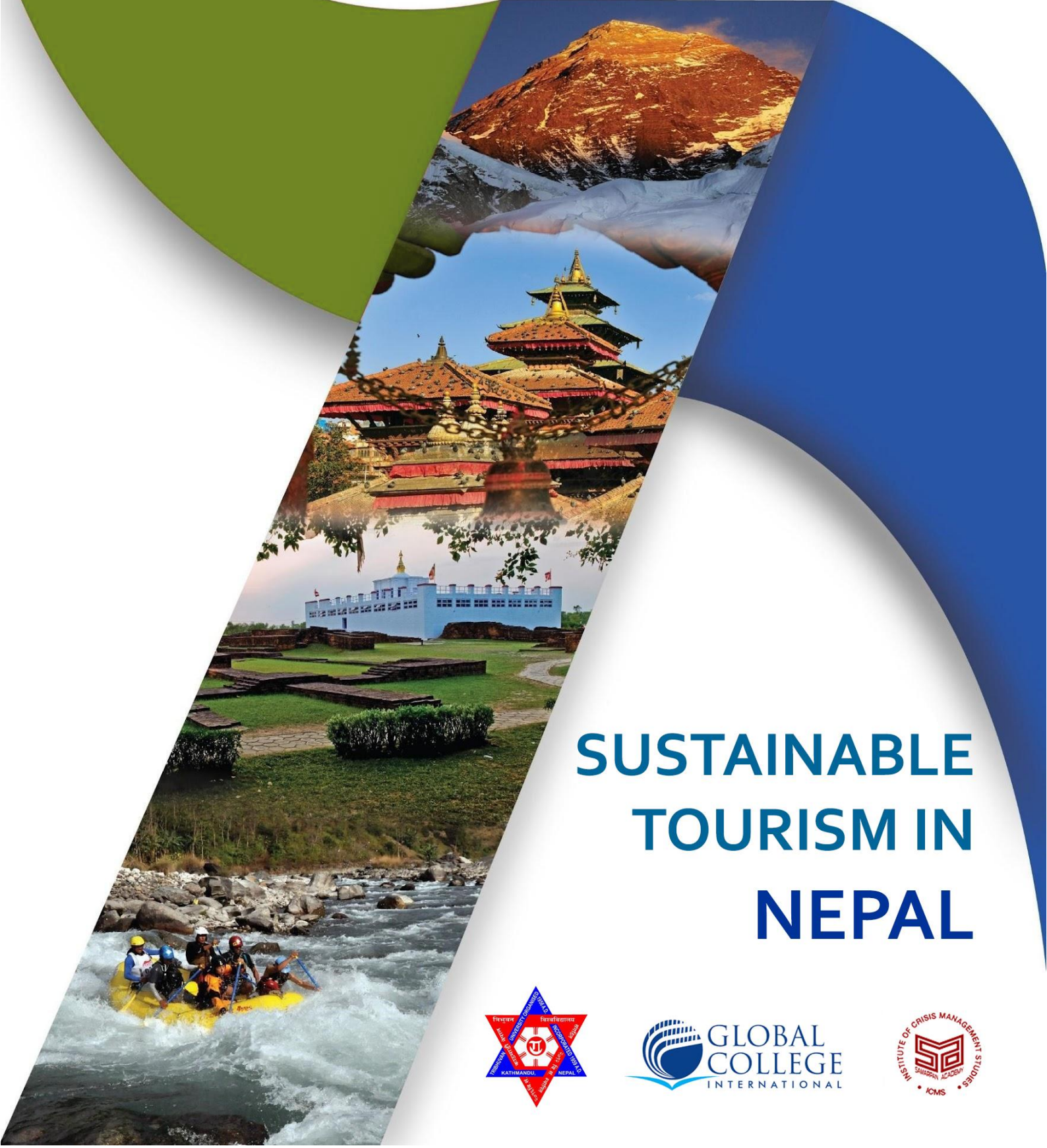




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CESTOUR
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STATUS-QUO REPORT



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN NEPAL





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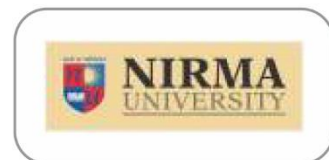
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Executive Summary

For years, the tourism sector has been significant globally, contributing immensely to the global economy. Nepal has been a tourist destination and is a home to ten UNESCO World Heritage sites which attracts tourists from all over the world yearly. In Nepal, Tourism is a crucial sector and contributes largely to the country's GDP. According to the World Data Atlas, in 2019 the tourism sector brought in \$700 million to Nepal, accounting for 8% of the country's GDP. The tourism sector contributes largely to the socio-economic growth in Nepal. Infrastructural development, job creation, and skill development, among other things, are some of the multiplier effects.

The purpose of this report is to provide an extensive insight into sustainable tourism development in the context of Nepal. Furthermore, it aims to identify the need-gap of sustainable tourism development in Nepal. The report will help the effective implementation of the 'Centres of Excellence in Sustainable Tourism to boost economic development and enhance university-business cooperation in Southern Asia' (CESTour) project.

The structure of the report is divided into several sections. The first presents the discussion on understanding sustainable tourism. Next, small case studies that reflect Nepal's good practices and initiatives discussed the UNWTO's perspective, global trends, and challenges. An extensive literature review was conducted to better understand sustainable tourism in Nepal, followed by in-depth discussions with an expert group to identify the needs and gaps in sustainable tourism

The report's conclusions are followed by discussing the prospects and potential of sustainable tourism development. This report reveals Nepal's sustainable tourism initiatives and implementation opportunities, challenges, issues, and best practices.

Overall, the report provides an in-depth look at the current state of sustainable tourism in Nepal and development priorities, issues, challenges, and opportunities to help guide the CESTour project's implementation.

Acknowledgement

The Status-quo report on Sustainable Tourism is a collective effort of three project teams from the Tribhuvan University- Department of Hotel Management and Hospitality, Institute of Crisis Management Studies (ICMS), and Global College International (GCI). As convener of the Work Package –I, the team, Tribhuvan University, and partner Institutes would like to thank all individuals and institutions who participated in several stakeholder meetings for their valuable contributions and input in drawing up recommendations and actions while preparing this report. We are extremely indebted to the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Department of Tourism, Nepal Tourism Board, Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Supplies. Along with private sector representatives, umbrella organizations such as Nepal Association of Tours and Travel Agency (NATTA), Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal (TAAN), Nepal Association of Rafting Agencies (NARA), Nepal Mountaineering Association, and Homestay Association of Nepal (HOSAN) for taking up the important task of convening the Focus Group discussion. We, as a team, express our deepest sincere gratitude towards Ms. Pushpa Bhushal, Hon. member of Parliament of Nepal, Rudra Singh Tamang, Former Director General of Department of Tourism, Government of Nepal, Narayan Prasad Duwadi, Joint Secretary of Ministry of industries, Mr. Pradip Kumar Koirala, Joint Secretary of Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Government of Nepal and Mr. Laxman Gautam, Officiating Head of Tourism Marketing and Promotion Department of Nepal Tourism Board for their extraordinary commitment and valuable input during the focus group discussions.

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STATUS-QUO REPORT

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN NEPAL



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



Tourism has proven a major source of modern foreign exchange and investment, generating employment and business opportunities. Such opportunities have been significant for developing nations. The cross-cutting nature of tourism fosters links with many other economic sectors, positioning it as a valuable resource for economic growth, national and per capita GDP, and wider development strategy. However, without proper caution, planning, and consideration of the bigger picture, tourism can create long-term detrimental effects in environmental and ecological devastation, exploitation of the host destinations and its people, and appropriation of those qualities that made them first appealing. Damaging prospects not just in tourism but also undermining a country's sustainable development.

Nepal is considered an ideal destination for authentic and mesmerizing tourism experiences. The country's diverse geography, ethnic and socio-cultural aspects make it the perfect destination for adventure lovers, nature-based tourists and cultural tourists. The country's diversity ranges from steamy jungle to the icy peaks of the world's highest mountains, encompassing various activities such as trekking, mountaineering, visiting cultural and heritage sites, and skiing in some of the limited areas. Tourists can also engage in mountain flight, rafting, kayaking, canoeing, elephant polo, and jungle safari. Other activities include adventure tourism such as bungee jumping, paragliding, ultra-light aircraft, mountain biking, rock climbing, bird watching, and hot air ballooning. Moreover, its unique flavours of Nepalese cuisine from diverse ethnic communities and year-round festivals have certainly added value to the country's tourism industry.

Amid this abundance of tourism products, it is no exaggeration to say that the greatest asset of the Nepalese tourism industry is its people. The culture, tradition, and hospitality of its

people remain one of the primary factors that make Nepal a desirable tourist destination. Regardless of the geographical locations, the hospitality of Nepalese people has come a long way and is a major part of their culture. The way Nepalese people perceive and treat tourists has been consistent over time despite changes in the political, social, economic, and technical accessibility. The culture of the Nepalese people is influenced by the Sanskrit quote "Atithi Devo Bhava," which means the guest is equivalent to god. It generally describes how a guest has to be treated with hospitality and respected with all of the heart.



Figure 1: Kumari - Living Goddess of Nepal

Sustainable tourism's potential as a realistic approach to sustainable development is why nations are now recognizing it and prioritizing it in their economic and conservation strategies. However, it is high time to acknowledge that there needs to be a fair balance between revenue generation, cultural exchange, and environmental preservation

through a participatory community engagement.¹

In line with the above discussion, nations like Nepal should adopt sustainable tourism as a major tool to achieve sustainable development goals.² More specifically, sustainable tourism can help Nepal conserve the natural resources, culture, traditional values, and inter-cultural heritages within local communities. Nepal is continuously working on adopting sustainable tourism where participants respect the culture, richness of anthropology, and environment. Adopting sustainable tourism will help the economic upliftment of the communities.

1.1. IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Tourism's effects and importance on economic growth and sustainable development have piqued public interest in recent decades. Indeed, sustainable tourism has demonstrated its contemporary importance in modern human and economic development globally. Both developed and developing nations now consider it a major entity of sustainable development. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism is the fastest-growing economic sector despite many challenges such as natural disasters, regional political instability, security, etc. However, COVID-19 harmed the sector's short-term prospects, affecting revenue generation and job creation.³ In 2019, the global tourism sector experienced a growth rate of 3.5%, surpassing that of the whole global economy



Figure 2: Kathmandu Durbar Square

by 2.5% for a ninth consecutive year. Among the nations within the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), tourism contributes to 4.4% of GDP, 6.9% of employment, and 21.5% of service exports⁴.

In least developed countries (LDCs) especially, tourism has been a crucial growth sector. As of 2015, the world's forty-eight then-LDCs earned some \$21 billion from international tourism, receiving 29 million international tourist arrivals that year - nearly three times as many as decades ago. The tourism sector represented 7% of LDCs total exports of goods and services (among non-oil exporters, this rose to 10%). Though the role and scale of tourism differ across countries, the growth of the sector has been a resounding success. The graduation of Cabo Verde, the Maldives, and

¹ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Defining Sustainable Tourism, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

² Yogi, H. (2010) '*Eco-tourism and Sustainability - Opportunities and Challenges in The Case of Nepal*', Department of Sustainable Development, University of Uppsala, Sweden

³ Ranjan, A. (n.d.) '*Basic Concepts of Tourism*', Jamia Millia Islamia

⁴ León-Gómez, A., Ruiz-Palomo, D., Fernández-Gámez, M. and García-Revilla, M.R. (2021). 'Sustainable Tourism Development and Economic Growth: Bibliometric Review and Analysis', *Sustainability* 13:2270, p.1. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13042270>

Samoa from LDC to developing country status was attributed to their growing tourism⁵.



Fig 3. The Cultural Lakhey Parade

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, identifies tourism as a powerful vehicle to build on, promote and achieve the Millennium sustainable development goals (SDGs), calling for inclusive and sustainable growth, consumption and production within the sector, especially regarding natural resources. Similarly, 2017 was declared the Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, putting the spotlight on its contemporary importance. These SDGs, and tourism with them, embody the three pillars of sustainable development - economic, social, and environmental balance and integration.

Tourism has thus become an important tool of economic growth for developing nations and those with emerging tourism sectors, such as Nepal. Assets of enormous value to the tourism sector, such as culture, art, landscape, wildlife, climate, etc., are well-positioned to develop tourism as a key sector contributing to economic growth, looking at both present and future scenarios of the nation. It is worth saying that 'sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'⁶

However, at the same time, the negative impacts of unsustainable tourism must be

⁵ World Tourism Organization, International Trade Centre and Enhanced Integrated Framework (2017), *Tourism for Sustainable Development in the Least Developed Countries – Leveraging Resources for Sustainable Tourism with the Enhanced Integrated Framework*, UNWTO, Madrid, and ITC and EIF, Geneva, p. 10.

⁶ Kostić, M., & Tončev, M. (2014) 'Importance of Sustainable Tourism', P.722, *Global Political Consensus on Sustainable Development*, para. 2, line no. 1, DOI: 10.15308/SinteZa-2014-722-725, SINTEZA, E-Business in tourism and hospitality industry, Singidunum University, Belgrade, Serbia

fledgling destinations must also be wary of the long-term negative impacts that unsustainable tourism can bring. The short-sighted use of resources, culture, and rituals at present may lead to the destruction and the future generation may not get an opportunity to use such resources or witness such experiences. For example, the decline of hippie culture in Nepal, particularly in Kathmandu, and uncontrolled development within the city and the exacerbation of the negative traits of backpacker culture can be considered a cautious example of unsustainability.⁷ Future generations may not get the opportunity to explore the vibrant hippie culture and ancient architecture and traditions that Nepal was famous for in the past decades. It also helps to strengthen the earth's biodiversity by saving various wildlife habitats by minimizing the use of anti-environment materials.



Fig 4: Rice fields

Though tourism is observed as the main entity to strengthen the development of any nation, it has numerous harmful traits that could affect the environmental and ecological system. Sustainability has been widely viewed as

⁷ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainability and culture, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁸ Liu, Z. (2003) 'Sustainable Tourism Development: A Critique', P.460, the Concept of Sustainable Development, Para. 5, line nos. 1-3, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 11, No. 6

holding considerable promise as a vehicle for addressing the problems of negative tourism impacts and maintaining its long-term viability.⁸ Sustainable tourism brings awareness to stakeholders to buy services from the responsible companies which support local communities and environment, rather than just from five-star hotels and multinational companies.

1.2. BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN TOURISM

There are numerous benefits of sustainable tourism as it has been one of the major income sources and opportunities. Sustainable tourism can be seen in socio-economic aspects of the host community and the nation in general. The socio-cultural influences on tourists can be observed in many host communities that have primary or secondary forms of relationship with tourists as well as the tourism industry in Nepal.

To get the most out of Nepal's tourism, it is necessary for us to know four phases of sustainability which are very weak sustainability, weak sustainability, strong sustainability and very strong sustainability which determine the level of sustainability.⁹ Each level of sustainability plays an important role according to resources and national tourism policy. Although Nepal aims to create bio-ethical surroundings with the conservation of all kinds of natural resources available within its geographical territory without disturbing the trend of using those natural resources in minimal amount, the policy of

⁹ Leaniz, G., & Bosque, I (2015) "Sustainability: A Competitive Advantage in The Tourism Industry" P.44, para 2, line no. 14, Handbook on Tourism Development and Management, ISBN: 978-1-63463-646-9, University of Cantabria, Nova Science Publishers, Inc, Spain

government has not yet been able to create strong enough executive path in the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry in Nepal.

Similarly, sustainable tourism also helps bring positive changes in values and human behaviour by strengthening the indigenous identity among people. Nepal can have numerous progressive impacts in various development-based fields only with the help of sustainable tourism if it can operate its policy and laws effectively. Nepal is one of the best destinations in the world in terms of ecotourism. 80% of the tourism activities of Nepal consist of ecology, wildlife, and mountain climbing, which are all part of ecotourism. Nepal has played a significant role in developing sustainable tourism through ecotourism by protecting its wildlife, environment, local resources, and other ecology-based beings that are important for any nation to create sustainable tourism and achieve the 2030 agenda.

Analysing the above, it is known that sustainable tourism greatly relates to Nepalese citizens' behaviour. However, Nepal is facing numerous challenges concerning wildlife conservation and an eco-friendly and ecological environment which is the greatest strength of the Nepalese tourism industry. Moreover, since the adoption of a new constitution in 2007, this has been the greatest struggle for the tourism stakeholders as the new constitution has conflicting laws between economic development and natural resources conservation. Therefore, the absence of sustainability in tourism due to different circumstances, such as negligence of citizens, lack of implementation of national laws, and the failure to adapt to the current situation and

circumstances, has damaged the environment. Alongside this, sustainability in tourism strengthens our domestic activities by not damaging the resources that are found in the tourism-based societies by any kind of tourist.

Workers irrespective of their sexual and sexuality get fair pay off, along with the inclusion of indigenous and vulnerable groups of people, creating equality in the working environment in the sector of our tourism industry. Sustainable tourism helps nations like Nepal not only to overcome their socio-economic problems, but it also helps manage the country's natural resources and learn more about the utilizations of those resources at an advanced level for the betterment of local people residing in that tourist-based area.

According to the Ninth Plan of Development of the National Planning Commission, quality in tourism has become tremendously essential for Nepal to establish it as a nation with the best destination on the global map of tourism. Therefore, there have been efforts made from the side of both the tourism-based organization and the ministry of government.

However, the limitations of Nepalese tourism to certain areas of nations like 'Kathmandu-Pokhara-Chitwan' have blocked the path in the development of sustainable tourism in different parts of the country that could be the best destination for tourists. Therefore, many

dimensions of tourism in Nepal are still waiting to be discovered and explored. However, the government, academia, and tourism professionals agree that the quality of tourism determines the nation's future economic, socio-cultural, and environmental aspects.



Fig 5. The Dance for the gods "Aarti Darsan"

1.3. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN NEPAL

Carbon emission has been an important topic of discussion in the Nepalese tourism industry. The temperature of Nepal is slowly increasing at the annual rate of 0.04 - 0.06 °C per year, which is more than the global rate due to different kinds of carbon emission activities.¹⁰

¹⁰. KC, A. (2017) 'Climate Change and its Impact on Tourism in Nepal', P.26, Climate Change in Nepal, Para. 2, line no. 1, Journal of Tourism and

This has been directly affecting the Nepalese tourism industry. Sustainable tourism can't exist without good climatic conditions, even if the country has every kind of technical facility and is based on a gender-inclusive tourism policy. In other words, the climate is regarded

Hospitality Education, Vol.7, Tribhuvan University Central Library, Kathmandu Nepal (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/jthe.v7i0.17688>)

as the backbone of sustainable tourism industries, especially in nations like Nepal, where ecotourism and wildlife tourism are considered major identities of tourism.

Wildlife tourism is one of the adventure tourism activities and the number of adventure tourists is still high. However, due to the increase in global warming, different recreational activities based on mountain tourism like skiing, snow-skating, etc., are being impacted greatly. This has directly reduced the incoming number of adventure tourists in Nepal. Similarly, the low number of health workers and health institutions in mountain regions have made adventure tourism less attractive to tourists.

It is quite a challenge to maintain sustainable tourism in Nepal. Tourism has both beneficial and negative environmental consequences. The government, as well as professionals participating in tourism, should be aware of the necessity for high-quality services and facilities in order to foster sustainable tourism, which can only be accomplished with adequate transportation. Unfortunately, unsustainable means of transportation contribute to high carbon emissions that hamper the environment, weakening the path to sustainable development. These negative impacts lead to a 'vicious circle of unsustainability' that the Nepalese tourism sector faces. These problems are linked to general infrastructures such as roads and airports, hydropower, and tourism facilities, including resorts, hotels, restaurants, golf courses, and marinas. Although Nepal has

changed its governing system, problems regarding infrastructure, accommodation, and transportation facilities have remained the same. With its varied ethnicity, diverse environment, and topography, Nepal needs to implement sustainable tourism to boost its economy and livelihood.

Mountain communities in several parts of Nepal are heavily reliant on tourism. The most crucial factor is that the host community is aware of the target of sustainable tourism. There should also be a balanced relationship between the industry, the interest of tourists and visitors, host communities, and the environment of that community to create a suitable environment for sustainable tourism.¹¹

Although widely employed in policies and management research, the usefulness of the model of sustainable tourism has been questioned due to cases of destinations struggling to meet the threshold of long-term or even medium-term sustainability.¹² Weak policies, inadequate infrastructure, poor transportation channels, unskilled human resources, and lack of safety measures in the face of crisis and political instability challenges in embracing sustainable tourism.

The tourism industry in the 1940's concentrated more on land-use zoning, catering provision, and performance standards. Today, these need to be augmented for adventure travel with strategies to manage cultural interaction and minimize ecological effects that may create conflict between tourism industries and local people.¹³ There is

¹¹. Øian , et.al (2018) 'Tourism, Nature and Sustainability: A Review of POLICY INSTRUMENTS IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES' , C.1, Sustainable and Unsustainable Tourism, P.14, Para.3, line nos. 3 & 4, ISBN 978-92-893-5623-7 (PDF), Nordic Council of Ministers, Denmark

¹² .Ibid: Øian , et.al (2018) 'Tourism, Nature and Sustainability: A Review of Policy Instruments in

The NORDIC Countries' ,C.4, Instruments involved in sustainable tourism management, p.47, para.1, line nos. 9-11, Nordic Council of Ministers, Denmark

¹³. Zurick, D. (1992) 'Adventure Travel and Sustainable Tourism in the Peripheral Economy of Nepal', P. 615, Maintenance of Adventure Tourism Places, para. 1, line nos. 1-5, Department of Geography and Planning, Eastern Kentucky

a gap within the chain of interaction between the community and professionals working in tourism. This can cause huge pressure for tourists to sustain at that specific community as all the information

that they had gained about that community was far different from what they were experiencing during the time of their travel period. Similarly, local people haven't benefited as there was no system of homestay. With the change in Nepalese politics and the

increased flow of tourists in Nepal, the government felt the need of its citizens to uplift its tourism industries. For the first time in 1997, the government granted open access to homestays as a part of the village or rural tourism programs.¹⁴ After the end of the monarchy system in 2007 along with the comprehensive peace agreement between the Maoists armed forces and the government, 'home stay' started to show its influence as a fundamental part of sustainable tourism in Nepal.



Fig 6 Mt. Everest (Sagarmatha) Base camp trek

Moreover, the government of Nepal formally announced the homestay tourism program as an integral part of Nepalese tourism industries. Consequently, the 'Home-stay Regulation 2010' was formulated on the 17th of August

2010.¹⁵ This regulation brought home-stay businesses into the legal framework. However, due to the ten-year Maoist insurgency from 1996 to 2007¹⁶, among other conflicts within Nepali communities, homestays were riskier to

University, Richmond, KY 40475, Association of American Geographers

¹⁴. Lama, M. (2013) 'Community Homestay Programmes as a Form of Sustainable Tourism Development in Nepal', p.1, Introduction, para. 1, line no. 6, Centria University of Applied Sciences, Finland

¹⁵.Ibid: Lama, M. (2013) 'Community Homestay Programmes as a Form of Sustainable Tourism

Development in Nepal', p.1, Introduction, para. 1, line no. 7, Centria University of Applied Sciences, Finland

¹⁶. Böker, U., Upadhayaya, P., & Sharma, S. (ed. 2011) 'Tourism Amidst Armed Conflict: Consequences, Copings, and Creativity for Peace-Building Through Tourism in Nepal', The Journal of Tourism and Peace Research, Vol.1, no. 2

both domestic and international tourists than hotels. Although a handful of tourists visited Nepal during this period, it was challenging to provide homestay services. Additionally, there was no marketing of homestays during this period which became a significant obstacle to developing sustainable tourism in Nepal. Political instability, issues of human security, and the risk of civil unrest threatened the safety of incoming tourists.

It is understood that the tourism industry of any nation should know whether they are able to bear ideal indicators of development in order to call its tourism industry sustainable or not. Nepal cannot be a separate entity if it wants to strengthen its sustainability in the changing scenario of world tourism. This is only possible if the tourism industry of Nepal can respond to global changes that are currently ongoing in the field of tourism. The following ideal indicators of sustainable development can help us to know the level of sustainable tourism in Nepal. These indicators are given below.¹⁷

- The government should be sensitive to these changes and describe them in understandable mechanisms to its citizens.
- People or organizations, government or private, including the host communities of tourism destinations, should continue to increase their respect for the high cultural, socio-political, as well as economic values of a nation. Only then can they teach those cultures to tourists from other nations or communities (in the case of domestic tourism).
- Similarly, the government should prioritize responding to changes and be unambiguous.
- It should be significant for the functioning of ecosystems that are found in that nation.
- Tourism industry of that nation should have a high cultural, socio-political as well as economical values and should have respect for these entities.

¹⁷. Konakoglu, S. Kurdoglu, B., Heřdak, M., & Wysmuřek, J. (ed. 2019) 'Evaluation of Sustainable Development of Tourism in Selected Cities in

Turkey and Poland', P.2, para. 6, point nos. 1-4, doi:10.3390/su11092552

CHAPTER 2

THE CURRENT STATE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN NEPAL

Nepal, with its diverse culture, geography, landscape, languages, and population, is a place that attracts tourists from a global spectrum every year. It offers activities in different sectors and is able to offer its visitors all kinds of different experiences they are looking for. The number of tourists in a widespread range of possibilities calls for a structured approach to unify all operators in the field and to maximise the outcomes of the industry as well as to focus on combining the prospect of sustainability into the goals of expanding the well running sector of tourism for the country. The following chapter will focus on the existing governance framework on tourism that determines all actions and regulates the sector. Furthermore, aspects of governmental initiatives to promote sustainability in the tourism sector will be addressed and combined with existing initiatives and their results.

The term 'sustainable' refers to being able to sustain by meeting our needs. Similarly, 'tourism' refers to processes of spending time away from home for recreation and refreshment. Furthermore, UNWTO¹⁸ defines tourism as a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or professional

purposes.¹⁹ Analysing these definitions of 'sustainable' and 'tourism', we can portray sustainable tourism as a process of traveling activities that is executed without hampering the culture, values, dignity as well as economic aspects of the nation. However, the government of Nepal has failed to take quick response to changes occurring in the field of tourism in the global scenario, despite the high respect for Nepalese cultural values from both the Nepal government and the tourism industry. Although Nepal has huge potential to implement all these indicators, lack of proper investors along with the lack of trained manpower, problems of pollution, a lack of quality hotels, inadequate advertisement at the national as well as international level, and the lack of proper security have been obstacles for Nepalese tourism even in modern days.²⁰ Additionally, political instabilities and a lack in the functioning of labor and trade unions are further challenges the industry faces. Despite all these problems, the government of Nepal always focuses on the inadequate population of trained human resources and the low budget of that specific ministry department for advertising Nepalese tourism on an international level. Similarly, private organizations working in tourism mention a gap in delivering current working mechanisms quickly. The enactment of good policies can aid

¹⁸ UNWTO: United Nation World Tourism Organization

¹⁹ Westcott, M. (ed.2019). 'Introduction to Tourism and Hospitality in B.C.', C.1, History and Overview, Definition of Tourism, Victoria, B.C., BC campus

²⁰ Badal, B., & Kharel, S. (ed. 2019) 'Opportunities and Challenges of Tourism Industry in the Context of Visit Nepal 2020', *Tribhuvan University Journal Centre for Research*, Vol. 33, Issue No. 1: pp. 67-80, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

the collaboration of government and private organizations to strengthen sustainability in the Nepalese tourism sector.

The Nepal tourism sector has helped strengthen Nepal's soft power and diplomacy by glorifying the image of Nepal by exchanging its art and culture with foreign tourists. Therefore, Nepal can increase employment opportunities for people, especially those living in the mountain and Himalaya regions of Nepal.²¹ After the political instability in Nepal, sustainable tourism has increased government revenue through different tourism-based entrepreneurial works based on the cottage and small-scale industries created, with a particular focus on foreign tourists visiting Nepal. Since implementing the SDGs in 2015, Nepal has implemented several activities and policies to uplift the tourism sector, like creating jobs for all. Before the COVID-19 pandemic and the disruption of international travel, twenty-eight international airlines from fourteen countries operated flights to and



Fig 7. Boudhanath Stupa

2.1. TOURISM GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK IN NEPAL

Experts advise the need for an effective amendment to the tourism governance framework. First, the government should make a framework looking after the product line. In the case of Nepal, a crucial problem is a

²¹. Badal, B. (ed.2019). 'Tourism: Visit Nepal 2020', Discussion, P.18, para. 4, line nos. 8-11, *Research Nepal Journal of Development Studies*, vol.2, Issue no. 2 (site: <https://doi.org/10.3126/rnjds.v2i2.29274>)

from Nepal. However, inadequate international airports have made it hard to manage air traffic in Nepal. Nepal currently has only one international airport, Tribhuvan International Airport, with a second currently under construction in Pokhara, a major tourist destination in the western region of Nepal.

To manage this air traffic and create a flexible environment for international tourists traveling to Nepal, in 2015 the Government of Nepal proposed an alternative international airport. This airport would be built on an eighty square kilometre plot of land in Nijgad, Bara district. This project was also focused on fulfilling the tourist-based goals of sustainable development by 2030.²² However, due to contradictory goals of environment and wildlife protection which is also a major part of ecotourism, this project of managing the flow of international tourists by operating two international airports is still not successful enough.

lack of a product line based on the 'Go local' strategy from the government's side where tourists can directly experience local food, culture, people, and lifestyle through increased ethnological interactions. More importantly, in the digital era, many of the core necessities of information technology are largely missing in many parts of

the country. Inadequate and un-updated websites, scattered, fragmented information, lack of information system regarding ecology, biodiversity, and lack of integration of effective communication mechanisms of private, public, and community are all noted problems.

In order to address such issues, the proposal of ICT (Information and Communication

²²-Report (2019) 'Development of Nijgad International Airport at Bara', P.1, Background of the Project, para. 2, line nos. 3 &4, Pradhan & Associates, Maitri Marg, Bakhundole – 3, Lalitpur, Nepal

Technology) framework for the Nepal Tourism Industry has been made to address the current demands and future needs.

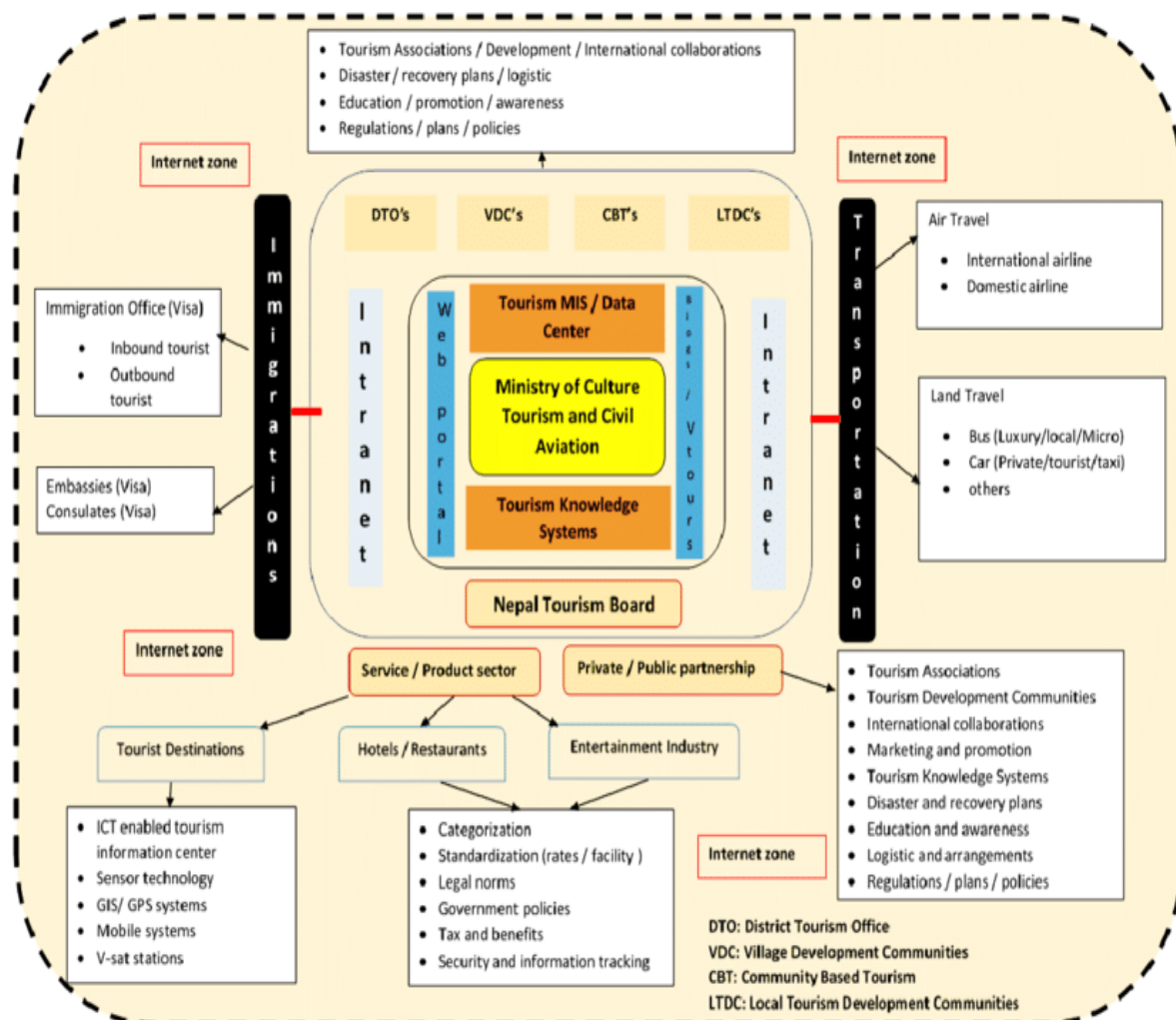


Fig 1: Planned ICT Governance Framework for Nepal Tourism Industry by Government of Nepal²³

This model focuses on supporting sustainable tourism through information and communication technology in Nepal. Moreover, it is part of a government project called 'Digital Nepal.' The Government of Nepal is flexible towards any project based on public/ private partnerships like tourism development communities to create an ICT-enabled tourism industry in Nepal. It has also created the plan to connect each tourist's destined place with a GPS/ GIS system to strengthen communication between local

people and service sectors and give homestay services to foreign tourists.

The proposal is connected with three layers of participation; the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Tourism MIS (Data Center), and Tourism Knowledge Systems. The implementation of this framework ensures visitors gather accurate and timely information.

Additionally, the visitors will be able to provide constructive feedback to the tourism industry.

²³ Shrestha, D. & Jeong, S. (ed. 2016) 'An ICT Framework for Tourism Industry of Nepal: Prospect and Challenges', P.118, Proposed ICT framework for Nepal Tourism Industry, *Journal of Internet Computing and Services (JICS)*, vol. 17, issue no. 6 (site: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Proposed-ICT-framework-for-Nepal-Tourism-Industry_fig2_314591767)

Since the model addresses the central elements such as cost, quality, security, and legal aspects, the model provides a holistic understanding of the Nepalese tourism industry. The tourism governance framework could be explained with the help of the organizational structure of the ministry of tourism. There are four main divisions under the ministry of tourism; the Administration and Planning Division, Tourism Division, Civil Aviation Division, and the Culture Division.

The cultural division encompasses the activities of archaeology, copyright, language commission, academy, museum, cultural cooperation, and trust and development committees.

Similarly, the tourism division includes Nepal Tourism Board, Nepal Mountain Academy, Tourist Police, Tourism committees, and homestay Nepal.

Further, Civil aviation includes Nepal Airline Corporation, Tribhuvan International Airport, international civil aviation organizations, and aircraft accident investigation reports. Finally, the administration and planning division encompasses personnel and financial administration, record keeping, store and procurement, office management, liaising with the world tourism organization and Nepal tourism board, policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, collection and analysis of data, and research and development and tourism infrastructure development.

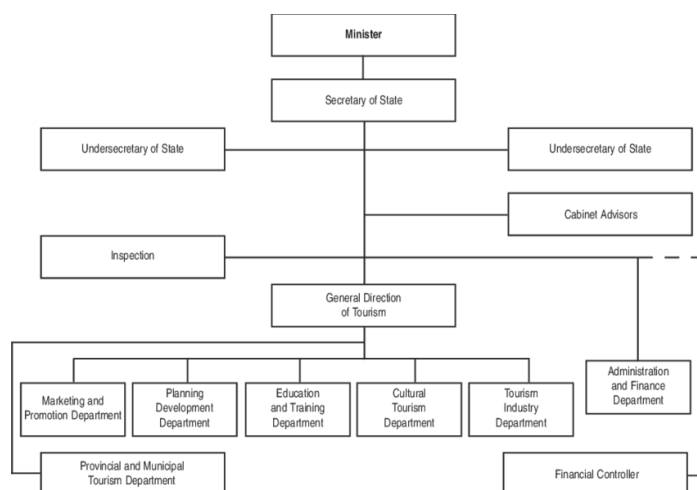


Fig 2: Organizational Structure of Ministry of Tourism²⁴

The specialized governance structure has been established to enhance the Nepalese tourism industry. Governmental Agencies in Nepal play a regulatory role. Furthermore, private business entrepreneurs handle operational functions and developmental functions with the collaboration of local and government agencies. The Nepal Tourism Board has a promotional function within the framework.

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA) is the primary

governmental body dedicated to organizing the sector and providing policies that lead to the improvement and development of tourism in Nepal. It also includes an autonomous body, the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), tasked with promoting and advertising tourism locally and globally. Promotional activities are done chiefly through different campaigns, such as the Tourism Vision Year 2020, which is held to attract many tourists from all over the world to maximize profits and promote Nepal as an

²⁴ Organizational Structure, Ministry of Tourism, Retrieved May 28, 2021 from <https://www.tourism.gov.np/pages/organizational-structure/103>

attractive destination. Different associations represent all the organizations providing services in the sector. Among those, there are the Nepal Association of Tour & Travel Agents (NATTA), Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN), and Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN). These associations are independent, non-profit, and representatives of specific tourism industries; HAN represents all hoteliers. Under them, more than 4,500

tourism organizations operate in travel, trekking, accommodation, and other more specific activities such as elements of adventure tourism. Together with the tourists themselves, government, associations, and service providers are the main stakeholders in the field (Sanjay Lama, 2019).

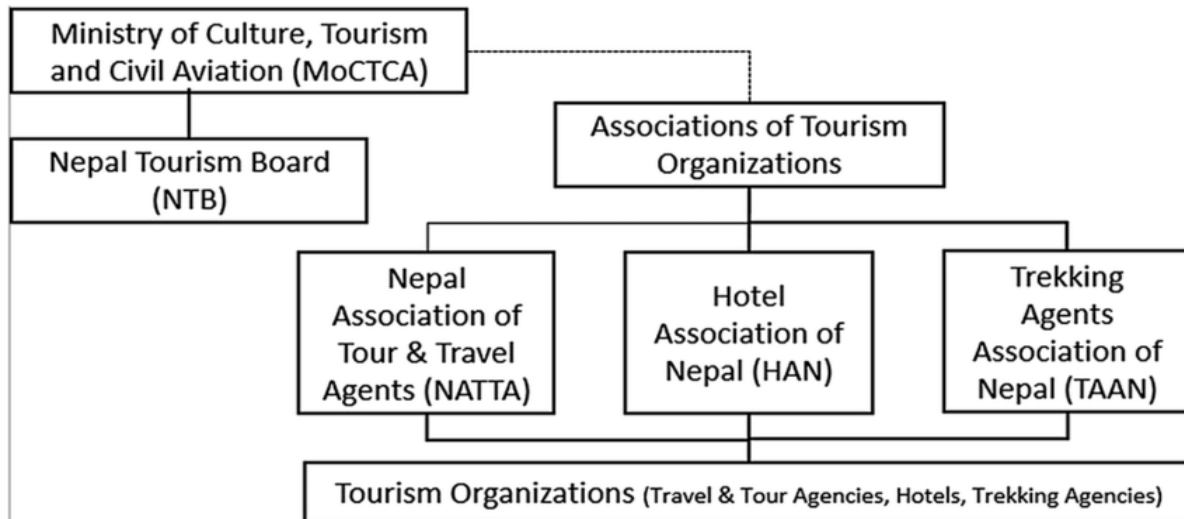


Fig 3: Nepal tourism governance structure²⁵

The Tourism Division of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MOCTCA) works in liaison with the Nepal Tourism Boards and the World Tourism Organization (WTO) to promote Tourism policy. MOCTCA is divided into two sections: research, and statistics, and tourism promotion. MOCTCA came into existence in 1978 as the Ministry of Tourism, merged with the Ministry of Culture and Civil Aviation in 2012. MOCTCA is dedicated to focusing on the aspects of tourism that affect Nepalese citizens directly or indirectly. Tourism generates income opportunities and supports promoting and conserving the country's art and culture. Its contribution to the national economy is high, and it is, therefore, a significant sector for the population and policymakers. The Government of Nepal promotes tourism and the involvement and participation of the

private sector. Furthermore, it highly values the conservation of natural, cultural, and human resources. The Department of Tourism operates more specifically in the sector of tourism. It operates in three sections: Internal Administration and Adventurous Tourism Section, Planning & Monitoring Section.

These key stakeholders are responsible for the sustainable delivery of tourism services. Tourism associations, Nepal Tourism Board, Travel and Tour organizations under the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation leadership need to work collaboratively to meet the expectations of sustainable development goals, tourists, local communities, and the private tourism organization businesses.

²⁵ Sanjay Lama, S. P. (2019). *An e-tourism Adoption Model & Its Implications for Tourism Industry in Nepal*.

2.2. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Nepal, a landlocked developing country, depends on income from the tourism sector. The 21st century offers chances as well as challenges to the industry. The increasing risk of natural disasters, human disasters, the high number of road and air accidents, climate change, and epidemics challenge the industry globally, especially in regions that contribute more to the GDP. On the other hand, globalization and digitization offer many opportunities to attract tourists, improve networks, and develop the required infrastructure in the field. Anyways, the impacts of all activities within the sector on the environment and resources must always be a major concern for policymaking and strategy development. The constitution also has several policies relating to tourism such as to develop eco-friendly tourism industries as an important base of national economy by way of identification, protection, promotion, and publicity of the ancient, cultural, religious, archaeological, and natural heritages of Nepal, to make environment and policy required for the development of tourism culture, and to accord priority to local people in the distribution of benefits of tourism industries.

2.2.1. Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Government formally announced the 'Visit Nepal 2020' program on the 1st of January 2020, campaigning to attract 2 million tourists to Nepal. The program was established under the parameters of the 15th Five Year Plan, where the government of Nepal had set its aspiring target of attracting 3.5 million tourists by 2025, generating US\$2 billion in national revenue from the industry.²⁶ However, due to various internal political issues in Nepal and the disruption caused by the COVID-19

pandemic, this campaign was ultimately unsuccessful. At the start of 2021, the cabinet of Nepalese ministers passed the resolution that tourists with a negative PCR test within 72 hours of travel can obtain a visa on arrival in Kathmandu.



Fig 8: Kayaking in Bhotekoshi River

2.2.2. The Fifteenth Five Year Plan

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation is devoted to conserving resources, nature, and sustainability. Beginning in 1956, the government implemented an initiative called the Five-Year Development Plan, of which Nepal is currently in its fifteenth, as coordinated by the National Planning Committee.

The plan aims to transform Nepal into an appealing, safe, and enticing tourism destination, propelling the country to the forefront of global tourism. To reach this goal, three major objectives were developed:

1. To develop Nepal as an attractive tourism destination by making it safe, quality-focused, and tourism-friendly.
2. To increase the contribution of tourism to the economy by diversifying tourism destinations and products.

²⁶ Shah, S. (2021) 'What Would the Growth in Nepal's Tourism Sector Mean for Creating Employment?' Para. 4, line no. 1, Nepal Economic Forum (NEF), Lalitpur, Nepal (site:

<https://nepaleconomicforum.org/neftake/what-would-the-growth-in-the-nepals-tourism-sector-mean-for-creating-employment/>)

3. To ensure the benefits of tourism are distributed equitably at the ordinary people's level.

While international 701,000 external tourists travelled to Nepal in the base year of 2015/16, by 2018/19, this number had increased by 71 percent to 1,197,000. Several factors played a major role in this achievement, including greater political stability, reconstruction, and restoration of tourism sites damaged by the 2015 earthquake. The expansion of international air services and an increase in the number of airports operable year-round and at night also played a significant role. Lessons from the implementation of previous plans emphasize the need to create a system that prioritizes the programs and projects based on the return of resources. Additionally, resources have to be developed to improve project management. Emphasis must be given to implementing infrastructure construction, governance reform, and fiscal federalism, focusing on development, prosperity, and gradual implementation of the constitution by prioritizing the plans and programs based on available resources and means. Development of the backward areas and communities, provincial balance, the building of self-reliance, rapid economic growth, and equitable distribution has to be taken forward. It is also necessary to pay attention to urban development, science and information technology, research and development, human resource development, and the development of agriculture, energy, minerals, and the tourism sector. (Commission, 2020)

Due to Nepal's unique nature, diversity, and cultural heritage, the sector has comparative advantages that could greatly benefit Nepal's economy. Mountain areas and religious sites, and cultural and archaeological heritage all have a high potential to attract tourists. The Constitution of Nepal incorporates policies for developing tourism as a key driver of the national economy by developing these sites as

tourist destinations. Those destinations, therefore, should be protected and diversified.

In 2018/19, the tourism sector accounted for 2.7 percent of Nepal's GDP, offering employment to 200,000 people. The goal is to prolong the average time of stay in Nepal from 12.7 days to 15 days and increase the daily expenditure of tourists to enhance their impact on the national economy. Given the large populations of its neighbouring countries, Nepal is likely to see an increase in tourists within the next few years.

The plan's challenges include a lack of poor development and diversification of tourism products and activities, the inability to promote tourism internationally effectively, underdeveloped infrastructure, and the failure to involve the private sector in heritage preservation. Furthermore, entrepreneurship is not adequately linked to tourism development. Tourism activities are yet to become more technology-friendly, and benefit distribution must become more equitable.



Fig 9. Nepali Khana Set

Significant challenges include improving air safety, security, reliability, and the expenditure on air services. In addition, the quality of tourism services and facilities must be enhanced, and new destinations shall be identified and diversified. Furthermore, the sector needs investments in a public-private partnership model and private investments for infrastructure. Nepal's vision of becoming a tourism-based economy must be clearly

defined. Also, climate change must be mitigated, and skilled human resources must be trained and managed.

In order to transform Nepal into a more attractive tourist destination, tourism services must become smart, tourist-friendly, secure, and reliable and enhance the use of modern technologies and tools. Encouraging environment for tourism created by all three levels of government under the federal structure: progress in the reconstruction of

cultural heritage damaged by the earthquake; development of new tourist destinations; progress in the construction of tourism infrastructure, including international airports; proximity to rapidly developing neighbours. Natural beauty, great feeling of peace and spirituality, the birthplace of ancient knowledge and philosophy, biodiversity, and the possibility of Nepal being a tourism hub because of unique tourism destinations and products, create opportunities for developing tourism as a river of prosperity.

2.2.3. Expected Results

“In the final year of this plan, the arrival of foreign tourists will have reached 3.5 million. In addition, the average length of stay of foreign tourists will have increased to 15 days, with average daily spending of USD 100 per person. As a result, an additional 382,000 direct jobs will have been created, and the contribution of tourism to GDP will have amounted to 10 percent.”²⁷

Strategies and Working Policies

Strategies	Working Policies
<p>1. To undertake extensive publicity and promotion of Nepali tourism in neighbouring countries and major tourism markets.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information, communication, and education (ICE) materials for recognition of Nepal will be developed, produced, and disseminated in international tourism markets to shape the perception and image of Nepal among international tourists. 2. Tourists who return to Nepal regularly will be recognized as "brand ambassadors" for the country. 3. Promotional programs such as "Visit Nepal 2020" will be carried out along with tourism publicity within the country and abroad using technologies, including ICTs 4. Domestic and international tourism will be promoted by identifying, developing, and promoting new tourist destinations with provincial balance. 5. A master plan will be prepared and implemented for the overall development of tourism in collaboration with all three levels of government, the private sector, and communities. 6. Tourism activities will be carried out with tourism being promoted as a high-yielding sector. The private sector will be encouraged to be involved in the development of human-

²⁷ National Planning Commission (2020). *The Fifteenth Plan (Fiscal Year 2019/20 - 2023/24)*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal

	<p>created tourism products/infrastructure, including hill stations targeted to tourists seeking entertainment, utilizing leisure time, and seeking to escape from the heat.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. To distribute the benefits of tourism equitably, tourism products and destinations focused on conventions, conferences, symposiums, and exhibitions will be diversified and beautified. 8. Modern tourism products such as cinema tourism, adventure tourism, amusement tourism, research tourism, trade tourism, eco-tourism, agriculture tourism, mountaineering, and trekking will be developed in collaboration with the private sector. 9. Sensitive tourism destinations and cultural heritages vulnerable to climate risks will be identified and protected. 10. Standards and criteria will be developed to regulate and control pollution and waste caused by tourism. 11. The quality of tourist services/facilities will be enhanced by diversifying, classifying, and effectively regulating them. 12. Adventure tourism trails will be identified and developed. 13. Policy discussion will be initiated to make tourism an environment-friendly, energy-saving, and climate-resilient industry.
<p>2. To promote integrated tourism development by bringing together other sectors with tourism potential, including education, health, and sports.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Timely reforms will be introduced in tourism policies and laws. 2. An integrated tourism development model will be developed, including the education, health, and sports sectors. 3. Tourism satellite account will be prepared for an accurate accounting of tourism's contribution to the national economy. 4. Tourism products and the tourism industry will be made sustainable by mitigating vulnerabilities induced by climate change. 5. Disasters will be managed by strengthening weather forecasting technologies. 6. Integrated health infrastructure will be developed in major tourism destinations. 7. Inter-governmental, inter-ministerial, and inter-agency collaboration will be encouraged for tourism development.
<p>3. To develop and promote modern tourism infrastructure in line with the public-private-</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initiatives will be undertaken to promote PPP and FDI in tourism.

<p>cooperative partnership concept while encouraging domestic and foreign investment.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. A partnership model will be developed for investment from provincial and local levels as well as from the private sector and communities in the development of tourism infrastructure. 3. Local and national infrastructure will be linked with the Buddha circuit, Shiva circuit, Ramayana circuit, the prehistoric Mithila culture, and other similar development projects in line with the concept of regional tourism network. 4. tourist-friendly infrastructure will be developed along main highways and other roads leading to tourist destinations. 5. Tourism heritage and tourism destinations will be made accessible and tourist friendly. 6. Modern amusement transport infrastructure will be developed for tourism development. 7. Nepal being home to the ancient civilization, heritages associated with peace and spirituality, knowledge and philosophy, and religion will be identified and developed. 8. Tourism activities will be promoted in and around protected areas of the country.
<p>4. To develop tourism as a driver of the economy. The provincial and local levels will coordinate with the private sector to identify, develop, and diversify tourism destinations.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Studies, research and statistics will be commissioned and managed for strategically increase tourism benefits. 2. All programs related to the tourism economy within a mountain economy model will be taken forward effectively. 3. Enterprises related to tourism will be encouraged to use renewable energy. 4. Enterprises related to tourism will be encouraged to use dimensions of a green economy. 5. Skilled human resources related to tourism will be developed. For this, a deemed tourism university will be established; the subject of tourism will be included in educational curricula, and training will be conducted against specific standards in collaboration with the private sector.
<p>5. To distribute benefits of the tourism sector to the local level by connecting tourism outputs to the value chain.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of local resources and products will be encouraged to develop tourism products. 2. Collaboration with provincial, local, and community levels will be secured for sustainable and effective management of the tourism sector. Furthermore, waste and pollution will be controlled in this sector.

	<p>3. Community-based rural and home-stay tourism will be expanded, and the benefits of this sector will be taken down to the community level. The development of tourism destinations and homestay arrangements reflecting local specialties will be carried out in collaboration with the local level.</p> <p>4. Himalayan trekking routes will be developed from Taplejung to Darchula, and infrastructure, including cable cars, will be developed in mountain areas.</p>
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*Table 1: Strategies and Working Policies*²⁸

Nepal is a nation with lots of forests with a high diversity of species in flora and fauna. Although deforestation was high during the last decades, today, the country is focusing on restoring and preserving the forest areas and is making efforts to reforestation. The monarchical system, through the ‘Mahendra Nature Protection Funds’ initiative, currently known as ‘Nepal Nature Protection Funds’, made efforts to promote tourism. The initiative aimed to protect the forest, wildlife, and indigenous wild. Additionally, the initiative aimed to help strengthen wildlife tourism and tourism related to jungle safari in Nepal. However, the current government plays a significantly lesser role in preserving national parks that are major sustainable tourism entities. Infrastructural development often leads to the cutting of forest areas to make space for new infrastructure. This leads to negative impacts on the environment and ecology and increases the risk of natural disasters such as landslides due to neglecting the sustainable development goals. This has caused an increase in the climatic temperature of mountains, directly weakening mountains and adventure tourism in Nepal.

Environmentalism is a critical component of sustainable tourism. However, due to current

political unrest, Nepal's government initiative to implement environmental conservation laws and policies is ineffective. The law of one sector in Nepal creates barriers for another. As a result, if one group promotes sustainable development for an environmentally friendly environment, another emerges with counter-laws and ideas for sustainable development under the guise of industrialization for economic development, in which they begin to destroy biodiversity to make space for industrial buildings. This also threatens the act of sustainable tourism in Nepal as about 70% of sustainable tourism is based on ecology and wildlife resources dependent on the forest resources of Nepal.²⁹



Fig 10. Himalayan Monal “Danfe”, the National Bird of Nepal

Presently, the Government of Nepal has partnered with the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB)

²⁸ National Planning Commission (2020). *The Fifteenth Plan (Fiscal Year 2019/20 - 2023/24)*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal

²⁹. *ibid*: Primary Data from ‘Focused Group Discussion’, FGD 2021, Impact on biodiversity found in tourist areas due to maximum visit of tourist’, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

and different tourism associations such as TAAN, HAN, and NATTA to create a flexible operative system like on arrival health check-ups of western tourists in Nepalese tourism.

Cooperation between government agencies and tourism service providers is another critical factor in promoting sustainable tourism in Nepal. Therefore, there is a vital need for proper communication, coordination, and collaboration in the flow of information between the two sectors and more effective

circulation of policy information to the private sector.

There are significant initiatives lately by the government, as demonstrated below. However, for effective implementation, the MoCTCA (Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation) will supervise the performance of various departments and agencies, while performance monitoring of all Divisions of the ministry will be made at Secretary Level.

Work	Activities	Expected Results
Improvement of TIA (Tribhuvan International Airport)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To operate TIA at least 21 hours every day to reduce the Air Traffic Congestion. To include a feasibility study of Domestic flights from other areas than TIA, including Thulichaur of Kavrepalanchowk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will have been a reduction in prevailing problems in TIA, and facilities will have been ensured for travelers and tourists.
Effective implementation of National Pride Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second International Airport To approve the Environmental Impact Analysis (EIA) report. To finalize a modality for construction of the airport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EIA report will have been approved Construction modality will have been finalized
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gautam Buddha International Airport: To complete 40% of the physical development of runway, tower and other civil construction work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40% of the progress shall be achieved in construction work
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pokhara Regional International Airport: To appoint Design Review and Supervision Consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointment of the consultant will have been done
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pashupati Area Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To produce and publicize a documentary film depicting religious importance of Lord Pashupatinath along with historical, archaeological and mythological importance of Pashupati area. To re-conduct the long obstructed Bagmati Jatra, which has great religious and cultural significance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A documentary film will be produced. Historical Jatra will have been Conducted
Reconstruction of Historical Heritages Damaged by Earthquake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To complete the conservation work of Manimandap and Krishna Mandir of Lalitpur. To complete the retrofitting of the outer wall and roof of Gaddibaitak in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 82 out of 753 heritage sites damaged by the earthquake have been reconstructed.

	<p>Hanumandhoka and the main structure and to complete the reconstruction of Laxmi Narayan Temple, Kageshwor, Saraswati and Mahadev Temple.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To complete the reconstruction work of Anantapur in Swayambhu and Kimdole Monastery and 80% of Anandakuti Vihar. • To complete the stone carving work for the reconstruction of Khokana Machhindranath. • To complete the reconstruction work of Balambu Shed (Paati) in Changunarayan and Chinnamasta Temple. · To prepare the architectural structure along with drawing/design for reconstruction of Angchhe in Hanumandhoka and Degutaleju Temple in Patan. • To complete the preservation work of Bhaktapur based Mahamanjushree Sattal, Taleju Temple, Mahalaxmi Dhonchhe, Suryabinayak Ganesh Aama Temple, Gopinath Temple, Dwimaju Chowk of Taleju. 	
<p>Policy and Legal Reforms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of a Think Tank Group of people with expertise in Culture, Tourism, and Aviation sectors to solicit suggestions and feedback regularly. • With a vision to establish a tourism university to ensure good human resource development and sustainable flow of such Human capital, a memo shall be sent to Nepal Government (Cabinet) to acquire approval for drafting a legal document. • Revision of Tourism Policy 2065 in compliance with the new constitution and the country's changed context (with Sunset Provision) • Signing of A Memorandum of Understanding between Government of Nepal and the Government of Thailand for cooperation in tourism promotion. Expediting the implementation of MoU between the Government of Nepal and the Government of Sri Lanka. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessary reforms will be seen on tourism policy and act by the present time. • A strategic document will have been made for tourism promotion in international markets • • Concept paper will be drafted on tourism attaché d at tourism source markets. •

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drafting a concept paper on deputing tourism attaché at five major tourism source markets for tourism promotion as envisioned in National Strategic Tourism Plan (2016-2025) • drafting an amendment to a Tourism Act 2035 by time. Submitting a memo to the Government of Nepal (cabinet) for acquiring approval to prepare casino Act 	
Reforms on working procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) at the offices of the Department of Tourism, Department of Archaeology, Civil Aviation Authority Nepal, Nepal Airlines Corporation, Nepal Tourism Board so as to increase work efficiency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service seekers will be benefited with the implementation of clear working procedures.
Preservation and promotion of culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision of National Culture Policy, 2067 (with the inclusion of Sunset provision) in compliance with new constitution and country's changed context. • Making documentaries of; Devghat during the celebration of Makar Sakranti, Barahakshetra Mela, Bull Fighting of Nuwakot District, and Saali Nadi during the celebration of Swasthani Puja. Publication of a calendar that depicts annual festivals of various 59 ethnic /indigenous groups of Nepal. • Documentation of study report on intangible cultural products of five different ethnic/indigenous groups and five different marginalized groups of Nepal. • Distribution of awards such as National and Provincial talent award, Puspala National Award, Mahakabi Devkota Award, Bhagat Sarbajit Rastriya Manav Maryada Award 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work of preservation and promotion of culture will have received major contributions. • Various National and Provincial talents will be encouraged by means of recognition through awards.
Preservation of heritages that are of Historical, Archaeological, and Religious significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To complete the preservation work of Ranimahal of Palpa and Bhairavsthan Sattal, Indrabhakteshwor Sattal of Pachali, Chataraghat and Ramdhuni Pokhari of Sunsari District, Kichak Vadh Archaeological site of Jhapa District, Rudrayani Pati of Khokana Lalitpur, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation work of 7 heritages of Historical/ Archaeological/ Religious significance will have been completed.

	<p>Kanaka Sundari Temple located at Jumla district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To complete the contract agreement for 14 projects, including Shiv Mandir in Sarlahi Murtiya, Kailash Ashram in Nawalparasi, Ambikeshwari temple in Dang etc. • To complete the excavation of archeological place Dohani and the Southern part of Tilaurakot of Kapilvastu. 	
Digitalization and consolidation of Archives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of 31,000 hand-written manuscripts on various topics collected in National Archives, 11,550 hand-written text, and 6,55,000 images will be cataloged, tagged, and uploaded. • Out of packets collected from Kumarichowk, 35 packets of archives containing five thousand pages will be digitized, and 3100 pages will be archived. • Digitalization of Gorkhapatra from 1958 (B.S) to 1968 (B.S) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digitization and record keeping of archives of national importance.
Management and construction of museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To build Madan Bhandari Museum in Morang, Gurung Museum in Ramkot, Syanja, Kavi Siromani Lekhnath Museum in Leknath Kaski and Majhi Museum in Sunsari. • To construct a building of Siddhicharan Museum in Okhaldhunga 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of construction and management of museum
Sustainable tourism management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NTB will research in cooperation with private sectors to find out the possibilities of alternative trails in order to compensate for the important trekking trails which were destroyed/damaged due to the construction of roads. • To prepare the parameters to make the environment of attractive touristic places clean and environment friendly. Also, to make the agencies concerned responsible for this effect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The construction of tourism-friendly infrastructures and management of sustainable tourism will be started.
Standardization of touristic services and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To analyze and review the current situation of hotels, resorts, restaurants, homestays, and online booking systems. To fix the new standard for conducting the hotels, restaurants, and resorts businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standardization Formulation process will have been initiated.

<p>Integrated tourism infrastructure development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prepare a detailed project report (DPR) to develop model tourist destinations in each of the seven provinces. (Province1: Ilam, Sandakpur, Province 2: Dhanusadam, Province 3: Indrasarovar, Makanpur, Province 4: Panchase, Province 5: Debadaha, Province 6: Rara, Province 7: Kailali, Bhadagaun) To prepare background for making a master plan of famous and religious tourist destination Muktinath. · To initiate the preparation of the Master Plan for the Swargadwari religious site. • To complete the construction of a view tower in Sailung, the border between Dolakha and Ramechhap. To initial record-keeping process of Manaslu, Khumbu, Annapurna Circuit, Dolakha Mude-Sailung foot trail. Similarly, completing 80% of the rebuilding process of the Helambu region, Langtang region, Makalu Barun region, and Doakha Lakhanpur foot trail. • To build at least 10 km each Guirella trail and Yarsa trail. • To complete 20 km each construction of the Jagat-TasinamDaldung-Bathing trail in Dolakha and Rasuwa's Parbati Kunda-Somdang trail of the Great Himalayan Trail (GHT). • To complete the construction of the Tourist Information Centre in Janakpur and Rara (Talcha). • Completing the under construction Bhanu Shikahar Kateri Ramayan Building in Tanahun. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning of the development of integrated tourism infrastructures in important touristic places will have been ensured. • A 40 km important trail will have been built and improved. • Two information Centre's building will have been finalized.
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Table 2: Key Government Initiatives³⁰

2.3. KEY INITIATIVES IN VARIOUS STATES

All the states of Nepal do have similar initiatives regarding sustainable tourism. Even

if the local governments have the authority to create their plans and laws, the core initiatives of each of these states of Nepal revolve around

³⁰ See reports on Government of Nepal, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Singhadurbar, Kathmandu, Unveiling of Main works to be performed within 100 days since the formation of this government

national initiatives passed through the national parliament. However, factors like pressure from competitors to adopt e-tourism because of other players adopting similar kinds of technologies, as well as other market forces like ‘market readiness and size’ for e-tourism adaptation, have strengthened the scope of e-tourism and the use of other technologies in the field of tourism in each state of Nepal. This also depends on the capacity and budget of that state. However, due to a lack of research from the governments of different states of Nepal about what areas of tourism are strong, every policy created from the top-down module from the government side has not been conducive to the tourism industry.

2.4. BEST PRACTICE CATALOGUE

Planning sustainable tourism should strive to excel in three central elements: social, economic, and environmental development. This can be achieved if the emphasis is made to align all public policy dimensions in cooperation at the national and regional/local levels. This includes tourism policy, industrial policy and biodiversity conservation.

2.4.1. Narayani Safari Hotel

One example of successfully practicing this harmony in Nepal has been the Narayani Safari Hotel and Lodge, built just outside Chitwan National Park. Although the preference was to build within the park, and permission could have been easily achieved (there are already seven lodges in operation inside the park), the company believed that one should not encroach on the conservation area and so decided to set up their facilities outside of the park’s protected zone.³¹

2.4.2. Heritage Conservation in Bhaktapur

³¹ Integrating Biodiversity into the Tourism Sector: Best Practice Guidelines

³² Primary Data from ‘Focused Group Discussion’, FGD 2021, Relationship between Indigenous

Effective policies need to explore the problems, challenges, prospects, and objectives of each specific state to be fruitful for the Nepalese tourism industry and be in accordance with the tax policy in the tourism industry. Therefore, proper policy and private sector ownership of the laws and guidelines provided by the government will help the private sector be transparent and accountable for contributing taxes to the country. Government initiatives are required to structure the tax system in the sector to utilize the funds successfully for improvements and investments in the industry.

There have been various efforts from Nepalese individuals, communities, and tourism-based organizations, as well as in government to improve the sustainability of the tourism industry as an integral part of the country’s development.³² One such example can be found in Bhaktapur, an ancient city in Kathmandu Valley and a popular tourist site. Here, a locally known curd is traditionally served in biodegradable bowls made from mud.

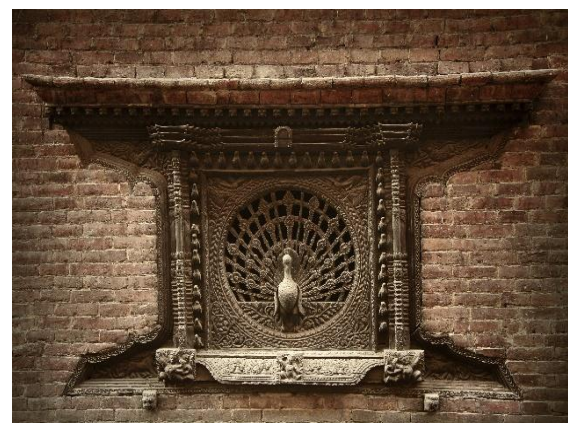


Fig 11: “Akkhey Jhyal” or Eye window, an antique piece of window design

Technology and Sustainable Tourism, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

However, this tradition has declined due to the increased use of plastic cups, which has in turn increased plastic pollution in the city and around popular tourist sites. As such, initiatives promoting traditional native practices could encourage a new, sustainable aspect to the tourist experience focused on

2.5. OTHER POTENTIAL AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The focus group discussions also suggested a number of other aspects of traditional Nepali lifestyle that could be promoted through Nepal's cultural heritage, such as by encouraging a greater food culture rooted in popular traditional cuisines of various Nepali cultures and centred around incorporated traditional Nepali food and drink into a 'fine dining' experience.³⁴

To encourage this approach though, this growth should come with greater cooperation with the entrepreneurial sector, in order to empower the youth and society to promote Nepal's economy. Specific business training, increased market value, and quality products, prices and products within the tourism industry can be learned and adapted to generate more income. With a smart approach to local business, more opportunities can be created in Nepal and decrease the need of Nepali youth to leave the country for income generation.

native cultural traditions and heritage.³³ This could not only reduce pollution, but also encourage and revitalise traditional industries in Nepal such as pottery, boosting the economies of these communities largely dependent on tourism.



Fig 12. Paragliding, an adventure sport

Another path for development is the greater promotion of domestic tourism, including research-based travels by the academic sector. With this approach, the knowledge of the upcoming generation of tourism professionals can be broadened. Local and domestic tourism can be increased through more flexibility in the professional environment. One option to achieve this is through implementing two days of weekly holiday instead of one, or by encouraging greater emphasis on national holidays.³⁵ If implemented, this hopefully develops a culture of visiting many different domestic destinations for leisure, expanding the domestic market. Domestic tourism has the capacity to promote both skilled and unskilled manpower by generating employment opportunities for all. Because of Nepal's tremendous diversity of its culture, geography, languages, technology and social structures, Nepal can profit from a variety of

³³. This data is taken from 'Focused Group Discussion (FGD)' that was done by *Global College International (GCI)*, Kathmandu, Nepal.

³⁴ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainability and Culture, *Global*

College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

³⁵ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainability and Poverty, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

tourists, ranging from domestic travellers and foreign backpackers to the high value.³⁶

There are many ideas, thoughts and innovative projects surrounding sustainable tourism in Nepal. Connecting such ideas and information within the sector and within local

communities is therefore crucial to achieving sustainability.³⁷ Unless local communities do not take ownership of such ideas, it is a goal that cannot succeed. Therefore, they must be involved in tourism development from the first stages of planning and inception.

³⁶ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainability and poverty, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

³⁷ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainability and Culture, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

CHAPTER 3

STATUS QUO REPORT

INTRODUCTION

There are different kinds of systems that are recently being made and practiced in Nepal in the field of tourism after the restoration of democracy and end of Maoist war. However, the practice of 'Cross cutting environment management system' is a major practice in the field of tourism when we talk about ecotourism and adventure-based tourism in Nepal. Through the practice of this cross-cutting catalogue, tourism can be more eco-friendly, helping to strengthen the level of biodiversity via supply chain management.³⁸ These kinds of cross-cutting issues help to generate a positive effect on biodiversity conservation through the realization of income generation in the tourism industry by appreciating nature.

Presently in Nepal there is a workforce hierarchy that is bursting rapidly in the field of tourism. There are workers known as 'Jet Setters' who have tourism businesses all over the world. Similarly, there are sweaters or workers who just have to work all day and sometime even night. There are 'Freeters' who have insignificant contributions and keep on criticizing and complaining. There are also 'Go Getters' in the field of Nepalese tourism who are happy if they are prioritized more than others.³⁹ Laws and rules don't matter to them.

These people just want to get every facility, even if they have to buy the authority of that industry or organizations. Not only this, a huge gap in sustainability of the economy has arisen in Nepal between people living in Himalayas areas and other parts of Nepal. For example: 'Chauri Gai' which is a basic part of livestock production in mountain regions, is now about to go extinct as there is no technology to create that work easily and fast. This is slowly reducing the major tourist products that are made from milk of the chauri gai. Even though government has advertised a lot about mountain and mountain-based adventure tourism in Nepal, due to lack of modern technology and less availability of food to those cows with respect to increasing number to mountain tourist in Nepal, people living in this area are not benefited economically through the milking as they cannot gather huge amount of milk to produce milk products in national level to fulfil the demands of foreign as well as domestic tourist.

Although government is currently running different types of CTEVT (The Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training) programs in Himalayan regions of Nepal, it hasn't changed the lives of people as they still have no option to milk the cow in fast and large quantity other than just to sit and manually

³⁸. Styles, D., Schoenberger, H., & Martos, G. (2013) 'Best Environmental Management Practice in the Tourism Sector', C.2, Cross Cutting Best Environmental Management Practice, Biodiversity conservation, Para. 1, Line nos. 4-7, JRC Scientific and Policy Report, *Institution for Prospective*

Technology Studies (FPTS), DOI: 10.2788/33972 Seville, Spain

³⁹. Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Reality of present tourism industry in Nepal, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

milk those cows spending hours and hours.⁴⁰ This has reduced the productive capacity of those people that they could spend on producing enormous edible items to earn foreign currency through tourism by selling their products that are made from milk of those cows.

The above activities are also affected by ambiguous documentations and regulatory compliances such as the need for varieties of documents to start up the new ventures

promptly. As sustainable development goals are ever changing and dynamic, it is hard for anyone to follow long unnecessary procedures to carry out any development-based activities in tourism to bring sustainable development.⁴¹ Nepal is unable to convert those start-ups documents of tourism in reality as people working as tourism entrepreneurs have to follow so many unnecessary steps that make them frustrated and force those tourism-based entrepreneurs to leave this sector



Fig 13. Skydiving, an adventure sport

3.2. PURPOSE AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to identify the current existing problems that are affecting the sustainability of tourism development of Nepal from the side of both governments, private as well as public sectors with respect to the national laws of Nepal.

In addition, this research had the following key aims:

- To develop an understanding of sustainable tourism concepts and efforts within the context of Nepal, with emphasis on the context of relevant stakeholders, the ecosystem in domain, policy and practice, social aims and programmes at the national level.
- To identify the status quo of the current tourism sector of Nepal, specifically with regards to sustainable tourism efforts.
- To bring together and facilitate discourse among stakeholders and actors, both those

⁴⁰ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable development goals impacting the sustainability of tourism, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

^{41.} *ibid*: Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable development goals impacting the sustainability of tourism, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

directly and indirectly involved in the sector, so that sustainable tourism may be better understood and encouraged in Nepalese society and industry.

- To understand sustainable tourism from different dimensions through open and nuanced discussion with various stakeholders.
- To identify influences and gaps that factor within the tourism sector, so that adequate and proper training and resources can be delivered in collaboration with our partner countries.
- To empower Nepal's tourism industry and the involved bodies, including civil establishments, financial institutions, private enterprises, cooperatives and partnerships and higher education institutes.
- To provide to the government of Nepal a policy advocacy document that covers and recommends the structures, human resources and symbolic scenarios needed for the development of sustainable tourism in Nepal.

3.3. AREA OF STUDY

The area of study of this research is the policy, regulations, and legislation carried out by the government of Nepal, its relevant ministries and organisations like the Nepal Tourism Board and the legislative branch. It also focuses on the role of private sector actors like the Hotel Association of Nepal, Mountaineering Association of Nepal, Rafting Association of Nepal, The Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents and the Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal, in addition to business policy, theoretical and practical approaches in the country and existing academic efforts.

3.4. RESEARCH APPROACH, STRATEGY AND DESIGN

The first stage of research was an assessment of existing academic literature, journal articles and peer reviews, as well as analysis of policy documents by the various associations and stakeholders involved in Nepal's tourism sector. The findings of this research are discussed in Chapter 1. The nature of the initial research was exploratory, pursuing a phenomenological approach to identify key elements and current trends within the sector for further investigation through existing secondary resources. This first stage would then be expanded upon by conducting our own study and collecting new and unique primary data.

The aim of collecting primary data would be to engage with different perspectives and elements of the tourism sector. Focused group discussion with respective stakeholders would help to understand these elements across the Nepalese context, and the assumptions, values and interpretations attached with these elements. Through stakeholders sharing their information, knowledge and experiences with the study, deeper interpretations emerge and thus the co-construction of interpretations has been enhanced. The ranges of participants' interpretations uncovered subtle and hidden dynamics and expanded knowledge about the investigated research topics. Therefore, the choice of qualitative methods was decidedly the most useful in accessing rich and contextual data that would help to investigate nuances, complexities and ambiguities related to the entrepreneurial ecosystem, elaborating on the literary research to corroborate or counter the trends conceived.

In accordance with the prescriptions set out under Work Package 1 of the CESTour project, the study was conducted through two focus group discussions held by country partners Tribhuvan University and Global College

International respectively. As per the guidelines provided by the WP leaders (Birla Institute of Management and Technology), a total of thirty-three participants (eighteen from TU and fifteen from GCI) were invited for involvement in the discussions.

Focus group discussion enhances open interactions which helps in emergence of ideas and concepts. Additionally, participant's ideas and views are challenged, confirmed and approved by other participants which adds to the authenticity of the data collected. There is a flexibility in the process of discussion as participants get to encounter interesting ideas and expand their own responses and perspectives in light of the given subject matter. This flexibility allowed for the exploration of ideas and views that may not have been achieved in other research methods.

A combination of formats were used to conduct the focus group discussions. Tribhuvan University opted to hold their event in person, whilst Global College decided on an online discussion, held via the Zoom video-conferencing platform. Whilst the rationale behind these decisions was primarily motivated due to the ongoing situation of COVID-19, the combination of both in-person and virtual discussion each brought their own unique advantages to the discussions. TU's in-person event allowed for a more natural environment between participants, encouraging a more natural flow of conversation and a more intimate connection with other participants not usually possible online, improving not just the atmosphere of discussion but likely the answers given as well. In person events also negated the technical issues presented by online events, namely technical issues that may occur such as

internet disruption and unfamiliarity with the host platform. Similarly, GCI's online discussion brought its own unique benefits. Participants were found to be honest and open in their views as they were in comforting environments, e.g. their own homes, where unlike in a physical setting participants may feel uncomfortable to express their opinions in a new surrounding and around new people. In addition, unlike physical meetings where participants may be conscious about being recorded, which in turn might affect their comfort and willingness to freely express themselves, on online platforms behavior can feel more natural and open, despite the fact they are still being recorded.

The focus group discussions were guided by a series of open-ended questions provided for the Work Package. Questions and the direction of conversation were facilitated by respective moderators, whose role was not only to ask questions but also to encourage participants to deliver more and elaborate their points on the given subject matter. The moderators were conscious about not being dominant in the interactions and were found to be good listeners and facilitators.

3.5. DEVELOPING THE PROCESS OF THE REPORT

In order to execute sustainable tourism, one of the primaries is to create, develop, maintain and facilitate hospitality products and services.⁴² In the case of Nepal, major stakeholders like the tourist destined league as well as hospitality serving organizations etc. plays an important role in strengthening the cultural sectors of Nepalese society through tourism. Prevention of environment and ecology should be undertaken. Similarly, the government should be conscious about the amount of tangible as well as intangible

⁴². (Report) '10 Best Practices for Smart Tourism Destinations,' What is Smart Tourist Destination, Para. 1, line nos. 1 & 2 (site: <https://travelmassive.com/blog/2019/07/10-best->

resources before taking any further steps to strengthen sustainability in tourism.⁴³ While conducting the tourism program and developing policies regarding sustainability, it is necessary for us to develop criteria that would guide these policies and tourism-based programs to be futuristic driven by judicious use of resources. This helps future generations of Nepal to experience and enjoy the diverse native cultures as well as ecology of Nepal both as a citizen as well as domestic tourists. This report has been developed considering these ecological and cultural perspectives of tourist destined places. Similarly, primary data that have been gathered through the focus group discussions has been used extensively to show the present condition of sustainable tourism in Nepal, from the perspective of involved stakeholders in the sector.

3.6. DEVELOPING THE FRAMEWORK OF THE REPORT

A larger framework for the tourism industry is essential for efficient operations. Activities, Associations, Individual companies, and the guiding principles have to be created under this larger framework.⁴⁴ This is similar to how Nepal Tourism Board has created a framework for health and safety in the pandemic recently. The framework will also address multiple dimensions such as animal welfare, environment protections, human rights and inclusive diverse workforce. Additionally, this will accommodate the guidelines for the protection of front-line workers such as porters and tour guides. The framework also touches upon any deviations from the

standard practices such as what if the company does not pay taxes.

Mountains and eco-tourisms are the major strength of Nepalese tourism industry due to the unique geographical structure of Nepal. This research is focused on finding current problems of Nepalese tourism industry that is currently hampering the economical as well as socio- ecological aspects of mountain and eco-tourism. Tourism is the outcome of different kinds of practices done from government as well as local levels. Each and every kind of cultural as well as economical practices along with policies creates a unique scenario in the future in the field of Nepalese tourism industries. There are groups of stakeholders who create plans and are more engaged in external field works. They are the planners and are typically government level officers or entrepreneurs if they are from private sectors.

Similarly, there are workers who work hard to fulfil the dreams of those entrepreneurs or planners. Likewise, there are external agencies who work jointly with these two groups to provide proper hospitality facilities for tourists. National policy is a major element of Nepalese tourism industry. Whereas good governing bodies of tourism industries are factors that affect the overall environment of a tourism focused community. Similarly, activities of host communities described in this research are outcomes of these governing bodies which itself is an element to create an excellent flow of tourists in those tourist hosting communities in Nepal. The frameworks of this study are explained below in Table 3.

⁴³ Primary data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁴⁴ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainability and Policy, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

<i>Elements</i>	<i>Factors</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Sustainable National Policies	Good Governing Bodies	Creation of a Good Tourism Hosting Community, and Entrepreneurs.
Creation of Good Tourism Hosting Community, and Entrepreneurs	Excellent Flow of Tourist	Good job creation in the field of tourism with sustainable tourism environment

Table 3: Managerial framework of Nepalese tourism Industry

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

4.1. PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Ecotourism is regarded as the heart of sustainable tourism. There are basically three principles of sustainable tourism that are adopted by Nepal to uplift its sustainability on ecotourism. These principles are described below.⁴⁵

The first principle of sustainable tourism emphasizes on educating the travelers about the importance of conservation of ecological environment. It is an important aspect of tourism to strengthen its sustainability as it helps to minimize the negative impact on the relationship between nature, economic as well as culture of Nepalese society from being damaged or extinct. Similarly, second principle emphasis on the need for regional tourism zoning and visitor management plans that are designed for either regions or natural areas that are slated to become eco- destinations.⁴⁶ Due to its bureaucratic problems, Nepal is unable to emphasize the need for regional tourism zoning for visitor's management which has weakened the sustainability of Nepalese tourism industry. Similarly, there is also no assurance of tourism development by Nepalese government through which Nepal can maximize its economic benefits as a host country. This has weakened local businesses

that are focused particularly on the tourism industry.

The third principle of sustainable tourism portrays tourism as a part of sustainable development goals that seeks to minimize the negative impact on nature, economic as well as culture of the nation that can damage that specific destination.⁴⁷ However indigenous cultures of Nepal are slowly being destroyed by the influence of tourists in the local community. The Kaami people and their culture are on the verge of extinction due to the influence of western culture through foreign tourists as well as domestic conflicts that are based on cultural hierarchy between high caste people and low caste people.⁴⁸

Essentially Nepalese tourism industry should hold these principles of sustainable tourism aiming for the achievement of sustainable development goals. The Government of Nepal Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation's (MoCTCA) endorsed National Tourism Strategy Plan (NTSP, 2016-25) envisions the disbursement of tourism over the country by developing new destinations and tourism infrastructures in an equitable approach, while adding to the diversity of

⁴⁵ · Kiper, T. (2013) 'Role of Ecotourism in Sustainable Development', P.14, Principle of Ecotourism, Point nos. 1-5, Advances in Landscape Architecture, Murat Özyavuz, IntechOpen, DOI: 10.5772/55749

⁴⁶.Ibid: Kiper, T. (2013) 'Role of Ecotourism in Sustainable Development', Murat Özyavuz, IntechOpen, DOI: 10.5772/55749

⁴⁷. Ibid: Kiper, T. (2013) 'Role of Ecotourism in Sustainable Development', P.14, Principle of Ecotourism, point no. 1-5, Murat Özyavuz, IntechOpen, DOI: 10.5772/55749

⁴⁸-Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Cultural Perspective, Global College International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

attractions.⁴⁹ This is done under the periphery of sustainable development goals 2030. However the challenge is to have proper communication between government officials (Ministry of Tourism) and the locals of those tourist destined areas. The experience so far has not been good as communication gaps between locals and the government are regular phenomena.

4.2. THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS

There are stakeholders such as hoteliers, host community, government, tourists (domestic and international), and tour operators in the field of tourism. Every stakeholder has their prominent roles for the tourism development in the country. For example, host communities play a role to maintain and develop local communities, create and preserve local products, languages, culture, and environment. However these kinds of host communities are not getting much help from the government. On the other hand there are tourism entrepreneurs who are investing a lot in creating sustainable business in this sector. Due to the good flow of private and public investors in the industry as compared to 2019, the future looks good. Note that approximately 7% of contribution was made by the tourism industry in GDP of Nepal in 2017.⁵⁰ Although there was less investment in tourism sectors by stakeholders during 2019 due to Covid19, tourism industry still contributed about 3% in national GDP which can be

considered as fairly good. So if government prioritizes Nepalese tourism industry, Nepalese tourism industry could stand oneself to increase the scope of tourism throughout the world. For now, there is nothing much role of stakeholders just then to wait for new laws and do work under the influence of political parties. Currently different stakeholders who are part of TAAN and CIWIN has signed a treaty to create sustainable working environment by abandoning all kinds of personal as well as private competition that are based on economic as well as gender.⁵¹

The above diagram displays the major stakeholders of Nepalese tourism industry with a complete executive structure of all the associations that are running under the constitution of Nepal.⁵² It also shows how these organizations are guided by the norms of those associations of tourism organizations. As this governs all the tourism industry of Nepal, 'Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MOCTCA)' is considered head of all the executive areas. Similarly, it is also the pioneer government department from Government of Nepal for this strategy of governance structure.

4.3. IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES WITHIN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

This methodological framework related to sustainable tourism is built around the Nepalese national policy by integrating it with

⁴⁹. Upadhayaya, P. K. (2019) 'Sustainable Tourism Appliance in Destinations: An Overview of Ghodaghodi Lake Area in Far West Nepal', P.41, Introduction, para.4, line nos. 1-3, Contemporary Research: An Interdisciplinary Academic Journal (CRAIAJ), vol. 3 , issue no. 1, NCCR (site: <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/craiaj/article/view/27489/22743>)

⁵⁰. Primary data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Census report explained by one of the interviewee from FGD, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁵¹. Ibid: Primary data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Aspects based on Legal and

Policies of Sustainability in Tourism, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁵² Lama, S., Pradhan, S. & Shrestha A. (2019) 'An e-Tourism Adoption Model & Its Implications for Tourism Industry in Nepal', Nepal tourism governance structure, Tabulation, DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-05940-8_23 (site: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Nepal-tourism-governance-structure_fig1_329685935)

SDGs. Issues are identified through primary data that are based on online focus group discussion with about 10 experts was held to find out different issues and policies related to sustainable tourism. Guiding Policies like 'Caring for the Environment' is currently adopted by different organizations of Nepalese tourism industries. The central concern is the trade-off between the business and the

preservation.⁵³ For example, the benefits of trekking to Gosaikunda provides real experiences of Nepal's flora and fauna. However people, these days, prefer to take helicopter rides for the same. Yes it sustains the businesses of helicopter operators but at the cost of local businesses that would have gained, if trekked.



Fig 14. Helicopter ride to the Langtang Region

Mass production, accessibility and affordability is the central concern. There are unique Nepalese local products. However, if it takes a long time to produce a few products, then local producers will not preserve such local technology and products because it is not economically sustainable.⁵⁴ Therefore, local technologies need to be innovated so that they can produce in larger volumes in a shorter span of time. Such products will get access to the majority of the people in terms of easy

availability and affordability so that people will use their own local products instead of imported ones. Vegetables from Karnali, Manang and Mustang are sold in a Farmers' Market every Saturday. However, they are too expensive and hence, people don't buy them. This will apparently discourage the local farmers and producers, thereby negatively affecting its sustainability.

Under this guiding principle, activities like promoting the environment without

⁵³ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable Tourism in Nepal and Culture, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁵⁴ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable Tourism in Nepal and Technology, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

hampering any entity of environment as well as expectation of tourists are being carried out focusing on sustainable tourism goals of Nepal. Similarly, policies that are based on human rights are also identified by some of the nationally recognized tourism organizations of Nepal.⁵⁵ Through this policy based on the human rights of the tourist visiting Nepal, almost all the nationally recognized organizations are working to create a good environment for workers working in the field of tourism. However, it has been very tough work for Nepalese tourism industry to work from an inward perspective of tourism. Due to this our tourism industry is being unreliable day by day as most of the tourism workers do have no complete scientific knowledge about their own Nepalese cultures that they could teach to foreign tourists.

Beside this, there is also the absence of culture or policies with the Nepalese government to reward or punish the people of any field of developmental activities.⁵⁶ The Government of Nepal also lacks to treat Nepalese tourism sectors as the major industry of development. They are taking it just as a means of recreation and a secondary source of earnings despite knowing that sustainable tourism can be one of the most effective tools to acquire its economic goals.

4.4. RELATING TOURISM TO DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

Nepal is currently a developing nation with a huge capacity to strengthen its national economy with the help of tourism. It has been playing a unique role in strengthening foreign exchange of a nation. Additionally, there is not adequate data on foreign investment in Nepalese hotels and trekking agencies or even

⁵⁵. This data is taken from 'Focused Group Discussion (FGD)' that was done by Global College International, Kathmandu, Nepal.

⁵⁶. Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Role of Government to Promote Sustainable Tourism in Nepal, *Global College*

in the government subsidies policies such as tax holidays.⁵⁷ This lack of basic information on foreign investment has occurred because Nepal is lacking to look after its product lines and find out its actual potentiality. Currently Nepal lacks the presence of immersive product lines where tourists can truly experience everything they planned for after deciding to travel to Nepal in their home nation.



Fig 15 : A Young Nepali Girl Selling The National Flower Rhododendron by the road

Nepalese tourism is still regarded as the backbone of Nepal. One of the priorities of Nepalese tourism industry is cultural tourism and its sustainability. The central concern is how the travelers' expectations, and the local culture can be interfaced with balance. Nepalese culture is characterized by diversity, richness, and uniqueness and therefore sensitivity. The concern is the possible extinction of local culture by the footprints of travellers' lifestyles and amenities of their

International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁵⁷. Stevens, S. (n.d) 'Tourism and Development in Nepal', P. 68, Nepal: A Setting for Tourism, para. 7, line no. 2, *KAS Papers*

lives.⁵⁸ Note that the preservation of local cultures is not only crucial for the local community but also other domestic and future international travellers. For this, the front-line tour guides need to be highly trained and educated regarding the norms and values of local cultures and to be aware travelers.⁵⁹

However, tourism can help in the development of Nepal if it can move to the concept of 'Go Local'. This concept of tourism helps Nepal to provide in-depth experience of local cultures, foods, customs, rituals, festivals, lifestyles, values and beliefs to international tourists.⁶⁰ It also helps tourists to know more about ethnological activities of Nepalese people which helps in strengthening and flourishing our local technological products throughout the world that are made by different ethnological groups of that specific community of Nepal.

Sustainability in tourism cannot exist in absence of infrastructural development. In order to strengthen sustainability in tourism, it needs ideologies of 3 'A' like Accumulation, Accountability, and Accessibility. Looking at

these perspectives and comparing it with the contemporary situation of Nepalese tourism especially at the Annapurna site and ACAP site, we can't find proper executive and work-plan coordination between local governments of that area and officers who are given responsibility to conserve these areas.⁶¹ However, they have been using Kerosene extensively for TDS works. This has been destroying many small insects due to extensive emission of carbon which is directly playing a huge role in bringing unsustainability to the environment and climate. As ecotourism and wildlife tourism are directly related to environment and climatic conditions, use of excessive kerosene has adversely affected the sustainability of ecotourism in Nepal.



⁵⁸ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable Development and Culture, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁵⁹ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable Development and Culture, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁶⁰ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction of Nepal, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁶¹ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Impact on Biodiversity due to maximum visit of both national and international tourist, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

Fig 16. Tiger resting in the protected area of the Nation

Similarly as an intervention to development through tourism by stopping the extensive use of kerosene; governments have been using fuels from cow dung as well as solar to make tourists feel comfortable and reduce the use of those kerosene which may bring down many environmental hazards.⁶² Beside this, there hasn't been any work in the field of tourism from the side of both government as well as private- public sectors that could help tourism to bring huge economical as well as socio-environment development in Nepal.

Many tourists don't like to visit Nepal due to its excessive pollution levels despite being the best place for tourism, may it be adventure, religious, cultural, sightseeing etc. Tourist

destined areas like Bhaktapur have lots of unmanaged chimney factories from where lots of smoke comes out on a daily basis.⁶³ This has brought lots of air pollution in these kinds of tourist centered cities. Likewise, there are lots of ecotourism destinations just out of Kathmandu valley at Chovar hills. In the past, this used to be the best and shortest destination for viewing nature and trekking in the name of mini- mini-track. But currently due to deforestation in the name of housing and due to so called infrastructural development, nothing can be seen from the top hill of Chovar. This has reduced one of the best and nearest tourist destinations from Kathmandu. These kinds of development are reducing the scope of ecotourism in Nepal day by day.



Fig 17: Jeep Safari in Chitwan National Park

⁶². This primary data is taken from 'Focused Group Discussion (FGD)' that was done by *Global College International (GCI)*, Kathmandu, Nepal.

⁶³. Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Impact on Biodiversity due to maximum

visit of both national and international tourist, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

Chapter 5

NEED GAP ANALYSIS

5.1. STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

Stakeholder mapping or analysis of stakeholder is one of the most important tasks for a smooth and long-term operation of the tourism industry. In other words, for sustainability it is very crucial that the needs and requirements of the stakeholders are understood thoroughly. For effectiveness, it is very important that the key players are identified and grouped accordingly. One criterion for its categorization is based on levels of participation, interest and influence. The best possible way to satisfy the requirements should be established, as a result good relationship with that of the stakeholders.

Tourism is a joint effort which seeks for the effective synchronization for its smooth operation. The third largest industry in the world comprises involvement of different individuals, groups and organizations and they are involved at different levels. In that sense, we can say that every stakeholder holds the same importance at different levels. With a stable base we can ensure that the further steps will move accordingly following the pattern. So, for the sustainability of tourism, the government plays the role of base creator and therefore plays an integral role to pave the way for the sustainability of tourism. The plans and policies drafted by the government show the direction of tourism development. If the government manages to come up with proper plans and policies along with the proper strategies of its execution considering all the possible hurdles that can obstruct its way beforehand and come up with the strategies to eradicate the obstacles in the best possible way. Since plans and policies serve as a

blueprint so if proper emphasis is given the development will be successful. On the other hand, the government is the key player responsible for the infrastructural development which is one of the prerequisites for the development of tourism which supports successful implementation of policies and all other stakeholders. In this regard, plans and policies drafted by the government along with the interest of theirs for the development and maintenance of infrastructural factors plays an important role. Likewise, government plans and formulates the plans and policies considering all the aspects at national level. Some authority should be disseminated to the local government since they do have a proper insight of the resources available there and may come up with a better way or approach. Considering all the strategies beforehand in order to preserve the available resources and methods that can be applied in order to minimize the negative impact of tourism without hampering the needs and wants of the visitors.

However, local participation is crucial because in absence of them, only local governments cannot function properly. Strategies to involve the local people for the long run is important. It is because tourism is an activity which seeks for the involvement and interaction of the people both visitor and host community, so all the drafted strategies fail to act if one fails to involve local people in the best possible way. If local participation fails to be achieved and they do have a negative perception towards tourism then it will be much more difficult to achieve the goal of sustainable tourism. Lisa (2012) argued that local authorities or institutions should have greater responsibility and participate in planning and developing

tourism destinations. Research shows that local governments need to facilitate the agendas of sustainable tourism, and the lack of powerful leadership from industries, top-down directives from state and federal governments, power struggles, and the lack of participation of the local community have contributed to the prevention and inhibition toward the development of sustainable tourism.

At the same time, the host community in coordination with the local government can come up with the legal restrictions required in an area for preserving and maintaining authenticity in the destination, which is one of the major criteria to be followed for the development of sustainable tourism. Tsung (2013) showed that the close connection and participation of the community are important factors affecting the level of support for the development of sustainable tourism. In this globalized world, what sort of tourists will be visiting the destination totally depends upon the travel associations and enterprises, as they are the one who acts as the bridge between the destination and that of the origin. If they happen to come up with better package system and marketing strategies then it definitely can attract the quality tourists who can spend a quality amount of money at the time of their visit and their length of stay will also be higher as a result there won't be much more pressure to the environment and cultural factors of the destination offering various tourism products to that of the tourists.

Wray et al. (2010) argued that the marketing for tourism destinations is an option of “best

practice or best travel destination” or “local marketing in tourism development” which attracts visitors and needs to be planned in the best way, managed by the local government and widely advertised in the media.

NGOs and voluntary groups also aid in the sustainability of tourism. For instance, NGOs can conduct various awareness programs along with vocational training programs in coordination with that of governmental organizations which directly and indirectly helps to enhance the knowledge of all the concerned and may motivate them to practice for the same in order to preserve the available resources and eradicate the negative impacts of tourism in the best possible way. This will support the sustainability of the tourism industry.

Educational institutions are the ones who create the future of tourism. The content of the education provided needs to match the practical scenario in order to create professional manpower. Tran (2011) stated that for tourism development, human resources for tourism have a great influence on sustainable development; human resources here are understood as human resources directly serving the tourism industry such as employees working in tourism businesses and also officials working in tourism authorities in the locality. Furthermore, the following illustrated chart will help us to understand the correlation of the stakeholders in the simplest form.

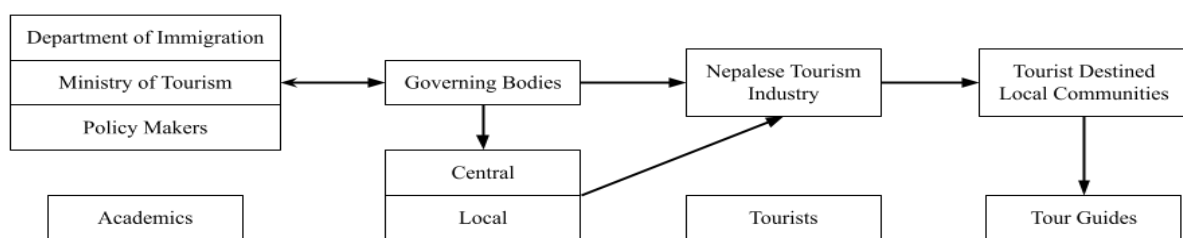


Fig 4: Stakeholders Mapping of Tourism Industry of Nepal

The above figure shows the mapping of different stakeholders in Nepal. The Ministry of Tourism, National policy making bodies as well as immigration departments are major stakeholders of Nepalese tourism industries. All these stakeholders are also a major part of the governing body of Nepal with respect to Nepalese tourism industry. With the division of national governing bodies at central as well as local state level, the tourism industry is doing its work in affiliation with governing bodies of each local state along with central state as its major source of policy making. The Nepalese tourism industry is currently focused on 'tourist destined local communities' affiliating itself with local governing bodies of Nepal which require trained tour guides. Currently, Nepalese tour guides experience a lack of training due to a mismanagement of resources and a fundamental gap in policies and guidelines for their requirements.

5.1.1. Gap Between Best Practices and Reality

Nepal has a huge capability in the tourism sector. However, there is also a huge gap between best practices that are needed to be implemented in Nepalese tourism industry and real practice that is being carried out in Nepalese tourism industry.

There are various kinds of scientific best practices in the tourism sector throughout the world concerning strengthening the coordination of public and private actors in the sector, conserving biodiversity, and dynamic and practical inter-sectoral mechanisms for coordination.⁶⁴ Communities that are focused more towards tourism-based activities can be successful to start these kinds of inter- sectoral mechanisms.

Similarly, short-term participation of biodiversity conservation by all the planners in

meetings that deal with tourism planning and the participation of tourism planners in discussions of biodiversity conservation issues is required. Internal collaboration within the conformed tourism destined areas and central government with the mission of forming reliable tourism friendly policies and information exchange must be established.

Nepal currently lacks both of those coordination types, creating the scarcity of proper tour guide who have good knowledge about tourism of the tourist destined areas. income generation activities are often not sustainable due to a lack of knowledge, training and coordination among the different stakeholders. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the cooperation of institutions such as the Ministry of Tourism, the Immigration Department and Policy making bodies of Nepal. These bodies currently act as separate entities of Nepalese governing bodies which creates a gap in information flow and the effective implementation of policies. Proper flow of information exchange between government agencies and people from tourist destined local communities is minimal due to lack of technology as well as lack of proper knowledge regarding new and emerging tourism policy for the native people as well as tour guides.⁶⁵ There is a gap in coordination regarding flow of information between the ministry of tourism, policy making institutions, policy makers and immigration departments.

5.2. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM VALUE CHAIN

The supply chain diagram presents different relationships which could potentially exist between its participants such as: suppliers, aggregators (Global Distribution Systems, Computer Reservation Systems, wholesalers),

⁶⁴ Lascurain, H. (2001) 'Integrating Biodiversity into the Tourism Sector: Best Practice Guidelines', Best Practice Guidelines, P. 11, Point nos. 1-3 (site:

<https://www.cbd.int/doc/case-studies/tour/cs-tour-unep.pdf>)

⁶⁵ Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Global College International (GCI), Kathmandu, Nepal

principals (tour operators), distributors (travel portals, travel agents) and consumers. Enterprises will typically occupy a single position within the supply chain and will have commercial agreements with other companies which reside in other parts of the supply chain. (M. Kaukal, W. Hopken, H. Werthner (2000).

A tourism supply chain can be defined as the network of tourism organizations supplying different components of tourism products/services such as flights and accommodation for the distribution and marketing of the final tourism products at a specific tourism destination and involves a wide range of participants in both private and public sectors. (H. Song (2012).

Many organizations are directly or indirectly associated with tourism, so the involvement of different sectors is crucial for its smooth operation. As a result, it will have a multiplier effect on most of the areas.

In order to create a complete value chain for sustainable development in Nepalese tourism industries, the following parties play a vital role. The Ministry of Tourism and Culture is the head governing body in the sector of Nepalese tourism. However, 'Ministry of Environment; also plays an important role to create sustainability in tourism as sustainable tourism is also related to environment and biodiversity protection, especially in the nation where ecotourism and nature-based adventure tourism is given more priority.

The following list gives examples of the different types of businesses within each stakeholder group:

A. Travel Organization and Booking

In origin and transit destinations: Internet, call centre, travel agent, airline companies, tour operators and wholesalers.

B. Transportation in Destination

Car rental, bus companies, taxi companies, river ferry, informal transportation

C. Accommodation in Destination

Hotels, apartments, guesthouse, youth hostels

D. Food and Beverage in Destination

Bars and restaurants, night clubs, fast food

E. Handicrafts

Handicraft shops, craftsmen, handicraft workshops

F. Leisure, Excursions and Tours

Shows, tourists guide organization, independent tourist guide, transport guide and escorts, tourism packages, wellness and spas

G. Support Services

Information centers, grocery shop and retail outlet, laundry, security and bank services

H. Infrastructural Support

Waste management, construction materials, energy, water, education, communications, public security and health

The above-mentioned chains will have direct benefits from that of sustainable tourism. Apart from this there are many indirect factors that sustainable tourism will have a positive impact on. The most important factor to be considered is the whole system that is engaged will ultimately help in the contribution of GDP which will have a direct impact on the development of the country.

5.3. BARRIERS AND DRIVERS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

In the context of Nepal, geography acts as a strength as well as weakness. Because of the diverse geographical scenario, required infrastructural development is a major

challenge. The tourism industry is led by the private sector and is supported by the public sectors. Both the parties are trying their best to work for the welfare of the overall development of the tourism industry. However, the clash arises when the motive does not match. To lead the industry in a systematic way, the government attempts to implement different strategies which directly or indirectly have an impact on the private sector.

Political instability is one of the major barriers of the overall development of the country, including the tourism industry. A frequent change in the government results in frequent change in the plans and policies which leads to unstable working conditions and expectations. For the sustainable tourism development, political stability of the country/ host community is essential. Muhammet et al. (2010) shows that complex political systems and power structures in society are important factors in planning and implementing a sustainable tourism policy.

Infrastructural development seeks for higher investments and underdeveloped countries like Nepal cannot make a huge investment at a time. As a result most sell-able attractions remain ideal. The economic challenge leads to many resources being unused and possible tourism destinations remaining unexplored. Hollier and Lanquar (1996) argued that to develop sustainable tourism, countries need to build an effective tourist transport system, improve public facilities at tourist destinations, increase support activities at tourist destinations in bad weather, develop appropriate pricing policies for the high and low seasons, and the supply of tourism activities must target specific groups of customers. The nature of tourism business is seasonal and is very volatile in nature so that internal as well as external factors will have

greater impact on tourism. That is the reason why there is always some sort of risk for the rapid development of any community based on tourism only. The factors like natural disasters, economic depression, etc plays an important role in determining the sustainability of tourism in any given country. Nepal has high potential in small scale sustainable tourism businesses which can positively impact the overall development of the local communities. For instance, local business, indigenous products, and family operated home stay are the major components of the sustainable tourism industry.

However, ineffective marketing, promotional strategies and usage of monetary resources decreases the compatibility of Nepal with outside markets and creates a barrier for sustainable tourism.

Decentralization of the authority to the local government is another important initiation in order to enhance and facilitate the concept of sustainability. Tourism is a joint effort so it is essential that every stakeholder, directly or indirectly associated with the tourism industry should be effectively involved in planning and implementation processes.

On the other hand, the concept of luxury should be converted into the concept of authenticity involving various activities which can keep the visitors engaged. Consultation with the local community of the destination can act as a best driver for the enhancement of tourism in the destination ensuring that the negative impact is minimized.

Understanding the essence of tourism and creating the packages using local products can attract the local communities to be more involved and may lead to higher quality in hospitality. Since tourism seeks social interaction, the behaviour shown by the local

people and their attitude towards the visitors must be taken into major consideration.

Furthermore, the following illustrated table will help us to understand the correlation of the barriers and drives in the simplest form.. It includes all the criteria from infrastructures to

human capital as well as socio- cultural challenges of Nepal that are affecting the sustainability of the tourism industry in Nepal.⁶⁶

Criteria	Barriers	Drivers
Human Capital	Disorganized Networking	Inner self- centered and self- promotion based competitions among government institutions who are responsible for Tourism.
Infrastructures	No reach of local peoples of regions like Karnali to save their local technologies due to high price in maintenance	Advertisement and popularization of their local technology by the Ministry of Tourism by showing pictures and videos related to those technologies while advertising the 'Tourism year'.
Role of Educational Institutes	Unable to provide practical ground-based tourism education and teaching just to cover-up the academic criteria of education rather than providing in-depth knowledge regarding ground- based practical problems.	Organize different tourism related practical information based weekly if not monthly national seminars either virtually or live by each institution who are teaching hospitality and tourism.

Table 4: *Tabulation of Factors Affecting Sustainable Tourism of Nepal*

Moreover, the local culture itself can be a barrier and the driver for sustainability.⁶⁷ For example, there are communities who still rely on fire for their daily cooking which impacts health, hygiene, and environment. On the other hand, local culture is also a driver for sustainability as local communities often have thorough knowledge about the best practices concerning conservation of the natural environment and resources in their home. This

can lead to mutual learning, if correctly implemented.

5.4. CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN NEPAL

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2017) "Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future." This definition is short and concise; however, it is

⁶⁶. Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁶⁷ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainability and Culture, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

too general since it refers to meeting only the needs of current and future visitors without taking into account the needs of the local community, culture, society, ecological environment, and biodiversity.

5.4.1. Development of Infrastructure

Infrastructure is one of the important aspects for the development of tourism. The routes to travel between the tourist destinations and attractions must especially be well developed in order to facilitate easy and safe movement. Chen and Chen (2011) argued that infrastructure in general and tourism infrastructure, in particular, are in many cases, the factors determining the success or failure of regional economic development.

The basic infrastructure in tourism development may include road, residence facility, transport and electricity. In order to establish, promote and develop home stay, the mentioned factor plays a very crucial role. So, it is very essential to work on the proper management of the basic infrastructure.

Electricity is a very important factor to be considered and in order to eradicate this challenge, the local authority and their locals must join their hands together and move forward. Although being conducted rapidly, development activities often lack proper planning which reduces the probability for them to be sustainable.

5.4.2. Development of Management

Management is another major challenge of the sector. It includes skill management concerning especially the training and deployment of human resources (training, hospitality and cooking). Additionally, change management shall be prioritized in the context of Nepal. The practice of adapting the primitive method is still in existence. As a result, the pace of changing trends in the global context is not being met so the attraction of tourists is not being increased to that extent which it was supposed to be.



Fig 18. Khaptad National Park

5.4.3. Registration

Registration Practices require concrete policies and laws, whereas a very complex registration process may disinterest the entrepreneurs. It is an important factor for management and planning processes.

The following points can be a possible solution to address the problem.

- The provision of proper training should be conducted by the concerned authorities with an objective of filling the gap and in order to convert their weakness into strength.
- Concrete policy from central level must be implemented
- Implementation of regulations and bylines
- Rules must be simple, clear, comprehensive, and easy to understand
- Provisions in government budget is very essential

5.4.4. Marketing and Promotion

An effort in the promotional activities by the concerned associations is being conducted undoubtedly. However, the concern is today's market seeks for adequate and effective marketing and promotional strategies. So, it is very essential that based on the research, effective marketing and promotional tools should be conducted with proper market segmentation. The more one lacks marketing and promotion, the more chances of getting dissolved from the competitive market. The following can help to minimize the problem.

- Extension of marketing and network (tour operator, government entity, etc)
- Participation of concerned stakeholders such as TAAN, NATTA, NTB etc during the home-stay package and design
- Establishment of national and regional level network for home-stay tourism promotion

- Advertisement and promotion of home-stay via local media
- Providing Leave Travel Concession for public servants and promoting them to go home stay tourism.

5.4.5. Benefit Sharing

Tourism is a joint effort. For its success, every individual of the host community holds the same importance. However, the failure in the understanding of this important relation is a major reason which is creating obstacles for the overall long-term development of tourism in Nepal. For instance, in the case of sustainable homestay, benefit sharing may be one of the major challenges the host community may have to face going forward. So, in order to minimize that possibility, one can adopt the following strategies:

- Priority to community based homestay
- Prioritize product based on local agriculture, culture and custom
- Promote alternative and local food items
- Provide loan subsidy to the poor
- Establish community tourism fund

The understanding of the importance of internal tourism must be considered a priority for development. The actual focus is made only on the international tourist. To stop the decrease of the number of tourists, targeted and effective mechanisms are required. For instance, for the success of home-stay for the long run one must come up with the most attractive and reasonable packages. The following strategies must be adopted before the mentioned problem occurs.

Preparation of innovative home-stay packages by individual home-stay groups as well as organic farming with local tourism might enhance this practice.

5.4.6. Lack of Research and Development

An importance of research and development is being noticed however. So, a good research team must be formed and work accordingly for

the betterment of the tourism industry as a whole.

Similarly, it is a huge challenge for Nepalese tourism sector to come up with proper translation that can be native to native culture and society regarding what should be given to native tourist and tourism workers on those activities and entities that have been prescribed by other developed nations through their long time practice in their homeland.⁶⁸ This helps to create secure working modules as well as policies for the government and other tourism based organizations through which they can attract more stakeholders in the sector of Nepalese tourism industry.

The global COVID-19 pandemic is challenging and threatening the tourism industry worldwide. However, developed countries are coming up with packages and subsidies to reduce the impact on the tourism sector in their respective countries. Nevertheless, countries like Nepal are trying to be involved in the category of developing countries, economic challenges are one of the major issues due to a lack of budget and economic growth rate. It might be even more challenging for Nepal and its tourism entrepreneurs to continue to survive and to rebuild their business activities in a quick manner. Therefore, it is vital for the government to prioritize and give extra efforts to sustain the tourism sector in Nepal.

5.5. KEY FACTORS

Security is one of the key components for the development of sustainable tourism, especially in terms of its quality. In other words, the capacity of the destination to ensure and make the visitors feel that the destination is safe and secured for their visit

will have a huge impact on tourism and its sustainability. For instance, in the context of Nepal until 1998 when Nepal proclaimed, "Visit Year 1998", the number of visitors in that year was nearly 4 million. However, after the hijacking of Indian fleet from the Tribhuvan International Airport, Nepal was considered as an unsafe place to travel. Also the Maoist movement supported the cause which led to a decline of visiting tourists. After the peace agreement between the Nepal Government and Maoist, the country was regarded as a safe place to travel as a result the number of tourists increased. Security and creation of a sense of security to the tourist are therefore key factors for a successful tourism industry.

Authenticity in culture is one of the important key factors which attracts the visitors to the destinations. Traveling is done in order to explore new things and gain knowledge about the new culture and ethnicity. If there is no authenticity in the tourism product that is being offered, then for the same experience tourists won't come to the destination. For instance, Ghalegau was the major tourist destination for a longer time and the attracting factor was their culture and ethnicity. The visit of many tourists is enhancing the regional development of the destination. Mowforth and Munt (2015) argued that the endowed natural landscapes or unique culture are key factors for the development of sustainable tourism. Therefore, countries need to preserve landscapes and indigenous cultural values for the development of sustainable tourism. The same view is seen in Nguyen (2015), Nguyen (2014), Nguyen (2013), and Vu et al (2020).

The plans and policies that the government adopts will directly impact the development of sustainable tourism. For instance, Bhutan is the perfect example, the policy that the

⁶⁸. Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Policies based on Sustainable Tourism concerning to current scenario of Nepalese Tourism

Bhutanese government has adopted can be a milestone for those countries which are gifted by nature. Garcia-Melon et al. (2012) said that management and institutions have a strong impact on the development of sustainable tourism.

Tourism is a joint effort so collaboration with the other stakeholders is really important and among those participation of local people is utmost. As local people serve as the essential factor to safeguard the authenticity of the destination as well as play a crucial factor to understand the needs of the tourist and impact of tourism on different aspects of the society. For instance, when a service is being offered by the outsiders, they may only focus on the profit

without considering other factors. However, when local people are involved, they may regard tourism as a source of income for the long run and work accordingly to balance the available resources along with modification in the service style without destructing an authenticity. Seldjan and Donald (2009) examined the concept of the development of sustainable tourism in urban destinations and showed that there are important similarities and differences between stakeholders (local government, tourism industry cluster, environment offices), Especially, the perceptions of different stakeholders have a significant influence on the development of sustainable tourism in urban areas.



Fig 19. Boudhnath Stupa

Key resources are the major attraction factor of the destinations. For the visit of any destination by the outsider the major factor that is required is attraction. Understanding the key resources on the first hand and the supply chain of it and its preservation and utilization in the best possible way coping with as per the demand of today will definitely

support the development of sustainable tourism in the most effective manner.

Tourism comprises four major components, they are: attraction, accessibility, accommodation and amenities. In absence of one the existence of other factors cannot really give the best result. So, for the development of sustainable tourism, infrastructural

development of the destination can be regarded as one of the important key factors responsible for creating a path for sustainable tourism in any given destination. Hollier and Lanquar (1996) argued that to develop sustainable tourism, countries need to build an effective tourist transport system, improve

public facilities at tourist destinations, increase support activities at tourist destinations in bad weather, develop appropriate pricing policies for the high and low seasons, and the supply of tourism activities must target specific groups of customers.

CHAPTER 6

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM INITIATIVES AND OPPURTUNITIES

6.1. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND SMART CITIES

A smart tourism city, convergence of smart city and smart tourism, is an innovative tourist destination that guarantees sustainable development. It facilitates and enhances visitors' interaction with experiences at the destination, tourism quality over quantity, and eventually improves the residents' quality of life. The concept of the smart tourism city is based on data sharing between the public and private sectors. Visitors and residents are playing a significant role in providing and receiving that information. The active participation of both visitors and residents by sharing their on-site experiences is highly crucial during the smart experience process. The components of smart city are combined with the elements of smart city (service, infrastructure, land) and smart tourism (transportation, accommodation, gastronomy, attraction and ancillary service). The integrated and coordinated implementation of the smart city elements is to enhance the smart tourism experience during all three traveling phases (before–during–after). The development of a smart tourism city depends highly on its local context factors. In fact, a tourism city in which the tourists are of central importance also has the ultimate goal of enhancing the city's competitiveness. More importantly, the smart tourism city's competitiveness can be increased by government leadership based on

environmental quality, and cities must identify their strong spots that can accommodate massive numbers of visitors, and the spots they want to remain untapped. In the context of Nepal "Green city is a smart city" should be evolved with the model of smart city. A smart city, new approaches to urban planning and living, is a hightech, intensively connected city that uses advanced new smart technologies to create a greener metropolis, innovative commerce, and enriched quality of life for its citizens. Smart city ideas absorb urban policies such as digital city, green city, knowledge city, therefore it is a complex approach and requires long-term perspectives. Smart city is also referred to as an intelligent city as the information flow is analyzed and translated throughout the IT, social and business infrastructures to enhance the intelligence of the city. The concept of the smart city is to optimize infrastructures in order to ideally ensure quality of citizens' life: transportation, water and power supply, waste management, IT connectivity, efficient urban mobility, e-governance and citizen participation. It contains the domains of mobility, building, health care, entertainment, education, public safety, environment and economy; six key domains, including governance, economy, environment, mobility, living and people; four pillars of key components, including energy, environment, industry, living and service.

Presently, the demand for Smart cities in Nepal is high. The different approaches for the smart city are adopted globally and in Nepal two

different Government bodies namely: Department of Urban Development and Building Construction and National Planning Commission are created.

Although talk about city/ urban tourism, religion and tourism based on art and craft culture are more popular, the construction for two smart cities is ongoing in Nepal. The current form of tourism is coined as 'Pilgrimage Tourism',⁶⁹ and is a major sector of sustainable tourism especially in cities like Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. However, due to pollution along with over population as compared to their areas, there is no existence of ecotourism in these kinds of cities. Although some newly emerging cities of Bhaktapur like city that is being made at Gundu area⁷⁰ and other areas of Bhaktapur looking at the development criteria of sustainable urban areas that are given in the guide of sustainable development.

The Government of Nepal introduced the Smart city in Nepal scheme through Budget

The Authority is still waiting for the fourth DPR to be completed for transforming the look of Kathmandu into a smart city. After all the four DPRs are presented to the Authority, the 'Project Management Committee' will be formed to start work on the ground, says Bhaikaji Tiwari, the commissioner of Authority. All the four DPRs will be presented to the Council of Ministers and after receiving the approval from there, all the necessary finances

Speech in 2072-73 to develop 10 cities of Nepal. The concept of Smart City in Nepal is identified as "A smart city is a city that makes appropriate use of information and Communication Technology (ICT) in establishing itself as a disaster resilient, eco-friendly and people centric city-National Planning Commission of Nepal" Further, Kathmandu Valley Development Authority has planned to improve upon the existing urban space into four 'smart cities' among them and moving fast to make it a reality on the ground level. The Authority is all geared up to turn the capital city of Nepal into a smart city of international standard full of modern facilities and other amenities to give a high-class experience to city dwellers, visitors and tourists. The blueprint for constructing smart cities in the Kathmandu Valley is ready. The DPR (Detailed Project Report) of building a smart city in Bhaktapur was already prepared in 2018 and the DPR for the other two cities has also been completed in the first month of the 2019 financial year

will be tapped for successfully completing the project of smart cities. The Government of Nepal in the fiscal year 2075/076 BS had allocated Rs 180 million out of which Rs 120 million was given out to Bhaktapur city project and the rest Rs 60 million was distributed among the other three proposed smart cities equally with Rs 20 million to each of the three city projects within the valley.

⁶⁹. Basnet, S. (2016) 'Types of Tourism in Nepal and Their Prospect', C.6, P.18, Religious and Cultural Tourism, Para. 2, line no. 2, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Kerava (site: <https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/115568/Tourism-and-Prospect-Thesis-Report.pdf?sequence=1>)

⁷⁰. Gundu: One of the emerging smart city of Bhaktapur district of Nepal. 10,000 ropanis (1257.1166207529843 acre land) of land from Gundu to Balkot, Changu Narayan areas in Bhaktapur for developing a 'smart city' (site: <https://kathmandupost.com/valley/2018/01/09/govt-set-to-hire-consultant-for-smart-city-plan>)



Fig 20. Patan Durbar Square

This is how Kathmandu smart city project got to receive Rs 20 million from the allocated federal budget of Rs 180 million. As per the decision taken by Kathmandu Valley Development Committee on Baisakh 24, 2074, the demarcated land areas have been kept aside for laying the foundation of the infrastructure of proposed four smart cities.

The demarcated land kept aside for building four smart cities are named after directions used in ancient building construction popularly called Vastu Shastra. They are Ishaan (North-East), Agneya (South-East), Nairitya (South-West) and Uttar (North).

Although the concept of smart cities has not popularly flourished in Nepal, Nepalese cities can still sustain in the field of sustainable tourism due to cultural heritage they carry from past centuries. Sites like Pashupatinath Temple, Bhaktapur Durbar Square, Muktinath, Lumbini, Gosainkunda, Kathmandu Durbar Square, as well as Patan Durbar Square to mention some are currently major places that can help to strengthen sustainable tourism in

Nepal based on urban tourism.⁷¹ These places are also focused more by UNESCO as major destinations to strengthen sustainability of urban tourism in Nepal. However, due to increase in population living in these places along with increase in pollution and number of houses, tourist destinations in urban areas are said to be endangered with respect to its sustainability.

Additionally, technology is the central element of smart cities. From the tourism perspective, traditional technologies are still in practice. For example, oil manufacturing technology, carpet manufacturing technology, simple pulley systems and potteries. Tourism is associated with development and accessibility. Thus such local technologies need evolution and transformation so that they can be produced considering the need of the current demand, both in terms of quantity and quality.⁷² Pottery is still a popular practice because the industry embraces innovation and addresses the requirements of the customers. They evolved into ceramics and scale up their businesses. Additionally, one of the greatest concerns of

⁷¹ Basnet, S. (2016) 'Types of Tourism in Nepal and Their Prospect', C.6, P.18, Religious and Cultural Tourism, Para. 2, line nos. 7-9, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Kerava (site: <https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/>

11568/Tourism-and-Prospect-Thesis-Report.pdf?sequence=1)

⁷² Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainability and Technology, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

the smart city is to find out the strategies to reduce the use of plastic water bottles. The solution for this is to establish the Water ATMs in the highways and driveways so that travelers reduce the use of plastic bottles.

The usefulness of Information Technology cannot be undermined here. There are a myriad of uniqueness in Nepalese community in terms of places, products, culture, and religion. Such uniqueness needs to be promoted through the internet.⁷³ The lists of local technologies and products need to be displayed in search engines such as Google. Moreover, Nepalese places should be visible in the Google maps. Especially IT experts are in the position to promote the development of technology in Nepal, improve the structures in the sector and make Nepal more accessible to tourists from a technological point of view.

6.2. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN RURAL NEPAL

Tourism cannot survive in isolation and is a multi-disciplinary service that depends on many external factors, subsequently engulfing and benefiting a larger community. Tourism, if promoted carefully, can provide economic gain and improvement of living conditions to the entire community. Reciprocally, income

generated through tourism has the potential to have a trickle-down effect providing benefits to the larger community.

Ultimately, promotion of sustainable rural tourism not only protects the resources but also promotes the identity of the place and the people's livelihood at stake due to globalization.

As a developing country, Nepal lacks resources for large scale investments and infrastructure constructions. The recent economic policies since the reinstatement of multiparty democracy has opened potential foreign direct investments, however, the internal Maoists conflict in the past decade has deterred large scale investments. Nepal still has a long way to go before the complete democracy and stability is regained, an environment not alluring the investors. Nepal has many villages and towns that can attract tourism. However, many villages lack basic facilities for tourists. As we all know that the spirit of Nepalese tourism lies in the natural richness and its indigenous societies with their mystic cultures which can be best showcased through the home-stay programme. Apart from the thousands of hotels and resorts catering to the tourists, the charm of home-stay is also mounting at a satisfactory level.

⁷³ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable tourism and technology,



Fig 21. *Cycling activities in the beautiful landscape of Kulekhani*

Homestay, still an afterthought dimension of tourism in Nepal, is gradually becoming dominant in the hospitality market. The main reason for its growth is that it adds genuine socio-cultural components to a tourist's experience. For many travel enthusiasts, homestay provides the opportunity to socialize with the local customs, relish the local cuisine and get to know the real local lifestyle.

"As a culturally rich country, Nepal has great prospects in home-stay tourism. Tourists who are interested in experiencing culture, tradition and lifestyle of different ethnic groups of Nepal form the clientele of home-stay business," says Keshav Badal, president of Home-stay Association of Nepal.

According to the field survey conducted by the Journal and Advanced Academic Research in 2016 A.D. data shows that daily income of home-stay entities from lodging only one can earn from Rs.100 up to Rs. 600 as daily income with average income as NRs. 175.25. Looking into the expenditure side with the same factor, it was found that the expenditure for lodging

only may range from NRs. 60 to NRs. 175 with an average of NRs. 119.75. Likewise, for vegetarian food and lodging operators may charge from 280 to 860 Nepali rupee, this results in the average income being NRs. 514.22. The daily expenditure for vegetarian food and lodging may range from NRs. 200 to NRs. 850. Similarly, non-vegetarian food along lodging will be charged from 500 to 1100 Nepali rupee. But as far as expenditure is concerned it ranges from NRs. 250 to NRs. 850. Daily income and expenditure helps to determine monthly income and expenditure from which the net profit or loss can be calculated. Here, the data shows that the monthly income may range from NRs. 12000 to NRs. 40000 with an average income of NRs. 23053.92. Similarly, the monthly expenditure may range from NRs. 2500 to NRs. 25000 with an average expenditure of NRs. 13279.41. Net monthly income was minimum NRs. 3000 and maximum NRs. 30000 with that average net income was NRs. 12265.69. The data shows that income level is higher than the expenditure which clearly indicates the level of

net profit from homestay. An average of NRs. 25000-30000 remains good to manage household expenditure which shows that rural life is comparatively easier than that of urban life; expenditure is comparatively less than that of urban life which results in saving of an income. When people can earn money, one will definitely be interested to get engaged into the profitable business which ultimately results in an increase in numbers. Likewise, with reference to Nepal Tourism Statistics 2018, the data shows that, the number of home-stays across the country has gone up by 14.48 percent to 324 in 2018. Until 2017, there were 283 registered home-stays in the country. The increment in the percentage also reflects that the possibility of home-stay in Nepal will definitely be rising in the upcoming years. However, in order to achieve this target it is very essential to change the mindset of considering it as a passive business for the uneducated, unemployed dependent members of a family should be changed.

Nepal homestay guidelines require that the concerned family give a taste of local culture to visitors who are to be served whatever food the homeowners themselves eat. Participating houses have to ensure cleanliness, a safe and secure environment with adequate hygiene facilities. Sirubari and Ghalegaon were the first to implement village/rural tourism now called homestay programs. Today, Kavrepalanchowk district only has over 26 registered community-based homestay homes while Chitwan has at least 10 and Makwanpur and Nuwakot have around 11 and 12 respectively.

Community Homestay

Community-based homestays are run by a minimum of five people. Community homestays have existed for many years, staying at them is becoming increasingly popular as a sustainable way to travel, and a better way for guests to get a true insight into the places and people they are visiting. Guests

stay in the homes of local families and can gain a much better experience of their host culture and day-to-day life. They can get involved in activities like joining their host families in the fields, learning to cook local dishes, or volunteering to teach in a school.

Private (Individual) Homestay

The homestay which is run by an individual is known as a private homestay. A homestay is a popular form of hospitality and lodging where visitors share a residence with a local of the city to which they are traveling. Homestays are examples of collaborative consumption and the sharing economy.

Exemplary Achievement of Homestay in Bardia

Dalla Homestay in Madhuwan Municipality-1, which falls under the Bardia National Park account biological route area, has been declared the best in Nepal. The Taragaon Development Committee of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation has declared Dalla Homestay in Bardiya as the best. Dalla Homestay is one of the best homestays in Nepal where British Prince Harry spent the night.

Homestay is not only a rural tourism program but also a strategy for rural development. The development of Homestay demands high commitment and understanding among the villagers. To create a successful environment for the homestay, program coordination, cooperation between the villagers is very essential. Homestay plays a vital role in socio-economic, social capital development as well as contribution to the conservation of rural areas. Homestay is one of the important sectors of Nepal which is contributing to economic growth and social change. It has contributed to more employment creation in our Nepalese economy. It is a significant source of employment, foreign and domestic income. Homestay, still an afterthought

dimension of tourism in Nepal, is gradually becoming a dominant hospitality market. The main reason for its growth is it adds genuine socio-cultural components to a tourist's experience. For many travel enthusiasts, the homestay provides just the opportunity to assimilate with the local customs, relish the local cuisine and get to know the real local lifestyle. It is one of the inimitable chances to experience life as it is lived. tourism sector beyond the existing 'relief package' (postponement of debt servicing and liquidity support), by enabling tourism enterprises to bring out transformative changes in the industry.

Sustainability in the Mountain Area

Sustainable tourism in Nepal does have a deep relation with rural life of a Nepalese people. It also looks gender friendly and equal participation. In fact the majority of men go for foreign employment, women, apart from being homemakers, engage in income generating activities at the local levels such as farming, homestay and cultural shows for tourism. As sustainable tourism of rural Nepal is based on both internal and external environments of those areas, rural tourism cannot be successful in absence of division of work in a gender friendly manner.



Fig.22 Gurkhali Khukuri, a well-known form of knife used in battle and a formal part of Nepali uniform

However due to less population of females in slope areas of rural Nepal along with many females being busy in household activities with lots of males going out of Nepal in search of work, it is tough to find a proper guide who could carry loads of foreign tourists and take them on a proper mountain tours.⁷⁴ Tourism is a seasonal activity in Nepal. So local tour guides have to go out of their native place in search of jobs for other seasons in Nepal. Doing this, most of the male members of those mountain communities do not return to their native homeland. This has currently created

scarcity of labor force with strong physique in these rural areas.

The Nepal Tourism Board, in collaboration with UNDP designed a program to grant funds to five village municipalities to uplift the economic status of the community. The requirement was 33 percent women participation. Villages such as Madi have significantly less women participation due to engagement in household activities and few women population in such inaccessible hilly areas. The biggest concern is how the rural

⁷⁴. Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, How can Sustainable Tourism helps in Strengthening the Development of Nepalese

community will be economically sustained after the wrap up of the program.⁷⁵

Similarly, people from Madi have to go to Pokhara (an important tourist destination of Nepal) to buy each and every kind of edible item that has directly weakened productive knowledge of local peoples of these areas.⁷⁶ The suggestion is to understand the availability of the local products in their own community and work on sustainable income generation which also helps at a larger level by reduction of imports of international products. Moreover, owners of homestay programs offer merely a basic service of housing and dining. Had they offered more activities such as cycling, farming, and other local activities, they would have earned income from varieties of services.

Thus creating complexity in this municipality to give proper diet services in this area which in long term is directly hampering sustainability of tourism in this area. However, if the government, private- public agencies or any international organization could provide any kind of knowledge and training regarding 'inventory of local products and technology', these kinds of rural communities could strengthen its sustainability in the rural tourism industry. Sustainable tourism in Nepal can only exist if it can guarantee cost of living. However, in absence of other recreational activities like cycling, boating, agro-based tourist visits other than just showing the cultural shows, it has been tough for these

kinds of tourist destinations to sustain themselves just through normal homestay activities. The charges for dining are priced significantly low as they are homely grown. Therefore the suggestion is not to undermine their own efforts and the value of the local products.

In order to execute rural and village based tourism activities fairly for strengthening the economy of local people of these kinds of communities, native people of these kinds of communities should be taught about nutritional values of their local food products. It is because nutritional food that we find in local edible products of these kinds of community may not be suitable for tourists who came from city areas like Kathmandu, Biratnagar or any other international tourists as they are not used to of taking those kinds of highly nutritious foods that are found in these tourist destined rural areas.⁷⁷ Similarly, products from local food resources like bread made from Barley needs lots of resources to create which directly increases the cost price of those products.

In the same way, villagers also need advanced technologies like ovens to create proper cookies from these kinds of local raw products. However such kitchenettes such as microwaves, ovens, inductions, water heaters etc are not available in these kinds of hilly based rural areas which on the other hand increases labor cost of these local people.⁷⁸ Due to these kinds of reasons, host

⁷⁵ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, How can Sustainable Tourism helps in Strengthening the Development of Nepalese Economy in large scale, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁷⁶. Ibid: Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, How can Sustainable Tourism helps in Strengthening the Development of Nepalese Economy in large scale, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁷⁷. *ibid*: Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, How can Sustainable Tourism helps in Strengthening the Development of Nepalese Economy in large scale, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁷⁸. *ibid*: Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, How can Sustainable Tourism helps in Strengthening the Development of Nepalese Economy in large scale, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

communities from rural Nepal are not able to provide tourists the food of their native tastes. However the emphasis should be on the local ways of doing things. For example, people can produce bread locally through their indigenous knowledge. This will help the development at both levels forward and backward integration. Tourists will receive authentic services (forward integration) and local suppliers of raw materials and local resources (backward integration) will be benefitted, thereby contributing to sustainable tourism.

Although tourism is moving at its own speed in rural areas of Nepal like the places mentioned above, it still takes lots of facilities to create itself as a sustainable tourism destination. First of all, it is necessary to change the perception of Nepalese people of considering only foreign goods as the best ones rather than their own local products. Only then, as a whole Nepalese people can be benefitted economically through sustainable tourism.⁷⁹ This again helps rural communities like 'Madhi Village Municipality' to develop their areas with both top-down and community consensus based models of development. Not only this, these kinds of activities are currently needed in these kinds of rural tourism as they help in linking the forward as well as backward linkage of development approaches of sustainability and sustainable development in a more scientific way.

6.3. PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

Travel and tourism has a diverse nature, it is also a highly fragmented industry. Therefore, the long-term survival of the industry also depends on coordinated action between different sectors. This is both challenging and important in order to achieve a more sustainable industry. It demands greater dialogue, cooperation and partnerships

⁷⁹. This primary data is taken from 'Focused Group Discussion (FGD)' that was done by *Global College International (GCI)*, Kathmandu, Nepal

between the public and private sectors (WTO 2001). The process of collaboration and partnership is a key element for planning and managing natural and cultural assets/products. Partnerships are at the core of sustainable development and sustainable tourism (De Lacy, et. al. 2002). Public-Private Partnerships are essentially partnerships between public sector organizations and private sector investors and businesses for the purpose of designing, planning, financing, constructing, providing and/or operating infrastructure, facilities or related services. They represent a pooling of knowledge, expertise, capital and other resources from various stakeholders (Bramwell and Lane 2000). It ensures consistency within a framework and acts as an effective agent for planning, management, problem solving and change, and therefore enhances rather than reduces the competitive advantage of the tourism product (UNCSD 1999).

6.3.1. Risks of Public-Private Partnerships

As with conventional forms of service delivery, there are potential risks associated with PPPs. Governments can reduce or eliminate the risks by understanding what they are and addressing them through well-conceived negotiations and contractual arrangements, the involvement of stakeholder groups.

Potential risks include:

- Loss of control by government
- Increased user fees
- Political risks and labor issues
- Accountability issues
- Unreliable service
- Lack of competition
- Reduced quality or efficiency of service

6.3.2. Opportunities of Public-Private Partnerships

Areas where partnering can create PPP opportunities in tourism are summarized below:

- Technology
- Operations
- Advocacy
- Product development
- Human resources development
- Research
- Marketing
- Financing

The Nepal Tourism Board has restructured as a public-private partnership to ensure that the national tourism organization is meeting the needs of Nepal's private sector. The Nepal Tourism Board mobilized village development committees (VDCs), district development committees (DDCs), and local co-operatives to manage homestay facilities and imparted training to ensure quality homestay arrangements in rural areas. Aside from increasing accommodative capacity, the prime aim of homestay programs is to engage local participation in tourism activities and enhance their income. In Nepal, homestays are of two kinds; community homestays and private homestays.

Public-Private Partnerships in the Mountain Area

Nepal needs to accomplish its SDG goals by 2022 A.D. to upgrade itself from LDC to a developing country where sustainable tourism is one of them and is regarded as a major

backbone of development for Nepal.⁸⁰ As tourism is under the government's responsibility, it cannot give all authority to private companies to handle as it would also decrease the reputation of the tourism board of Nepal. So due to absence of proper policy preparation on suitable distribution of dangers while executing large infrastructure based and development based plans that are of national importance, government bodies of Nepal developed the scheme of jointly working on any tourism projects on PPP concepts.⁸¹ However, due to the epidemic of COVID19, the achievements are hampered. Due to the increase in the flow of tourists, the livelihood of people from places like Dhading have profited from development. This has also brought the concept of developing their areas for the public of Dhading's through tourism by partnering with private companies working in this sector.

Over the past few years, the upper part of Dhading has seen lots of physical changes with the help of these kinds of partnerships. Presently there are lots of good clinics, education institutes, adult's literacy programs, along with various environment friendly changes occurring in this place.⁸² People are also being health conscious due to contact with lots of foreigners. It has also provided jobs to lots of publics living in this part of Dhading. These groups of people living in the upper part of Dhading also invited many health related private companies with the help of a private tourism based organization of Nepal named 'Himalaya Holidays' to build local clinics in joint ventures. Partnering with the public helped

⁸⁰. National Report, 'Public-Private Partnership Policy, (2072)' P.5, Challenges and Problems, point no. 4.1, *Ministry of Finance*, Singhdurbar, Kathmandu, Nepal (site: <https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/sites/ppp.worldbank.org/files/documents/PPP%20Policy%202015%20unofficial%20translation.pdf>)

⁸¹. *ibid*: National Report, 'Public-Private Partnership Policy, (2072)' P.5, Challenges and Problems, point no. 4.5, *Ministry of Finance*, Singhdurbar, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁸². Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Are We Degrading Our Cultures Due to Influence of Foreign Tourists? *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

private cultural food based enterprises of Nepal to grow the market of their product among tourists all over this place of Dhading area.⁸³ These people also slowly learned the business strategy and started to partner with every tourist based organization in order to grow their tourism business.

Beside business, public-private partnership plays an important role in strengthening local culture. Locals know more about their own cultures than any private organizations. Tourism is one of the most important equipment of the nation to flourish its culture all over the world. But in absence of public-private partnership Nepalese tourism is not able to transfer and teach local cultures to foreign tourists effectively, causing weakening of native culture of those places.⁸⁴ Therefore, a good mutual relation between a group of public people and tourism based private organizations is crucial.

6.4. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

A. **Central Nepal:** The central Nepal consists of 10 major destinations offering home-stay facilities to the tourists, which are as follows:

1. Panauti Community Homestay
2. Nuwakot Community Homestay
3. Barauli Community Homestay
4. Kapan Gyanmala Community Homestay
5. Patan Community Homestay
6. Nagarkot Community Homestay
7. Tharu Community Homestay
8. Piprahar Community Homestay
9. Bungamati Community Homestay

⁸³. Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Are We Degrading Our Cultures Due to Influence of Foreign Tourists? *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁸⁴. This primary data is taken from 'Focused Group Discussion (FGD)' that was done by *Global College International (GCI)*, Kathmandu, Nepal.

As noted, religious sites such as Pashupatinath and Swayambhunath and base camps of Everest, Annapurna and other mountains have human trash. To clean up such trash, the most important part of the solution is the awareness of stakeholders such as visitors, locals and local government representatives and public-private partnerships to end the problems of trash.⁸⁵

Fundamentally, government and private sectors should work together. Tourism has been enhanced since the last 60 years by the private sector contribution.⁸⁶ Innovation in local technologies such as production of 'Dhaka' garments, oil mills, cups and plates by local papers, carpets etc. led by the private sectors should be facilitated and the patent rights protected.. Additionally, the government is responsible for promoting Nepalese tourism in the world at a larger scale.

B. **Far-Western Nepal:** Far western Nepal consists of four major destinations offering home-stay facilities to the tourists. The list is as follows:

1. Bardiya Community Homestay
2. Rana Tharu Community Homestay
3. Bhada Community Homestay
4. Lafa Community Homestay

C. **Eastern Nepal:** The Eastern Nepal consists of three major destinations offering homestay facilities to the tourists, which are as follows:

1. Illam Community Homestay
2. Namche Community Homestay

⁸⁵ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable Tourism in Nepal and Culture, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁸⁶ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Tourism and Government. *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

3. Mai Pokhari Community Homestay

D. Western Nepal: The Western Nepal consists of 4 major destinations offering home-stay facilities to the tourists, which are as follows:

1. Palpa Community Homestay
2. Mustang Community Homestay
3. Naryang Community Homestay
4. Hemjakot Community Homestay

6.5. PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION

Private sectors deliver the basic products for tourism and facilities with essential services, such as: accommodation, transportation, restaurants, retailing activities, providing various attractions and experiences.⁸⁷ In case of ecotourism in Nepal, it also provides clothes and other items that are necessary for adventure based tourists joining hands with the government as per the need. Private sector in tourism is also working jointly with different health based organizations to provide proper health care facilities to tourists who come here to enjoy rural tourism. Foreign tourists hardly visited the rural parts of Nepal for a long time due to absence of good health facilities.⁸⁸ For this, private companies like 'Himalaya Holidays' have partnered with numerous government based as well as private health-posts, hospitals and health related organizations since 1990.⁸⁹ However, due to

lack of proper private sector participation in investment for developing health sectors and other tourism based infrastructures in these kinds of tourist based areas, along with lack of maintenance of hospitals as well as infrastructures built by the Chinese government to Nepal have weakened the scope of rural tourism in Nepal.⁹⁰ The major places in the tourism industry of Nepal where we can see major participation of the private sector in terms of investment are hotels and tourist focused restaurants.

Private organizations have also contributed in preserving the indigenous businesses of local communities. For example, Himalayan Holidays, on their journey of providing rural health care, discovered Kami gaun and their magnificent skills of making local weapons such as Khukuri, Hasiya etc.⁹¹ They used to charge 100 Nepalese Rupees back in 1992. Through the support of Himalayan Holidays with materials, the price could be increased to 10 USD (which was equivalent to about 500-600 Nepalese Rupees then).

The involvement of Himalayan Holidays led to higher environmental awareness, building of schools, launching of adult literacy programs, an improvement in sanitary facilities, but also a high increase in Christianity over the original religion.⁹²

⁸⁷ Lacy, T. et. al (2002) 'Public / Private Partnerships for Sustainable Tourism', P. 3, no. 1.2.2., Private Sector, Para.1, line nos. 1-4, *Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation*, APEC Tourism Working Group

⁸⁸ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, How can Sustainable Tourism helps in Strengthening the Development of Nepalese Economy in large scale, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁸⁹ Ibid: Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, How can Sustainable Tourism helps in Strengthening the Development of Nepalese Economy in large scale, *Global College*

International (GCI), Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁹⁰ This primary data is taken from 'Focused Group Discussion (FGD)' that was done by *Global College International (GCI)*, Kathmandu, Nepal.

⁹¹ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable Tourism and culture, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

⁹² Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable Tourism and Culture, *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal



Fig 23. A Traditional Lakhey dance in front of Mt. Manaslu

6.6. CROSS-INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGES AND APPROACHES TO ATTRACT PRIVATE SECTOR

The term “linkage” (i.e., the state of being linked) is used to explain the interactions and the relationships amongst innovative actors (Pechlaner & Volgger, 2012). There are many different types of linkages in tourism reflecting the composite nature of the tourism complex (Hall & Williams, 2008), composed of diversified sectors or companies, such as hospitality, transportation, tourist attractions, and souvenir shops, where firms are commonly considered as the main innovators (i.e., novelty generators, who introduce the innovations into the market). Many different sectors are involved in tourism, including an array of suppliers and most recognizable are air travel, accommodation, tours and tour operations, restaurants, retail shops, ground transport, and tourist attractions.

With strong linkages to other sector and thematic issues, tourism:

- a. Provides markets for raw and value-added agricultural products;
- b. Generates millions of jobs for school graduates—mostly women;
- c. Catalyzes additional public and private investment for roads, airports, and other infrastructure that is used by both tourists and the local population to access services and markets;
- d. Generates taxes and fees to finance infrastructure maintenance and subsidize environmental services.

In the case of institutional linkages, long-term contracts—enabling a high volume of exchange and frequency of interaction between firms—are likely to be useful in guarding against opportunism and facilitating sustainable alliances, which brings about a renewal in institutional and managerial innovation (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Tomlinson, 2010). Cross Institutional linkage, especially new or revised business models, can be boosted by this linkage. Linkages proved

beneficial especially for product and marketing innovation.

Long-term institutional linkages mirror the long-term challenges. They provide a basis for a strong partnership approach, building on our shared ties, history and common interests. Institutional linkages activities can apply across the public, private, educational and community sectors.

Both the government as well as private sectors are vitally important for strengthening the sustainability of the tourism industry in Nepal. Private sectors show what are the inner problems that the government is not able to experience due to its limitations. This helps the

government to create a flexible ground- based framework regarding the tourism industry. There is much work which cannot be done alone by government or private- public sectors, so there needs to be one path to strengthen the sustainability of tourism during that situation.

Although there is a framework created by the government of Nepal, it has not clearly defined what the actual role of private sectors is and the role of the government sector in strengthening the sustainability of tourism in Nepal. Under this framework Nepal shall identify the activities dividing tourism in different parts as per the geographical and socio- cultural environment of Nepal.



Fig 24. Ultra-light flight, an activity for mountain sight

The current framework is lacking practicality for implementation among tourism entrepreneurs.⁹³ As society develops, new

problems emerge in new and unique forms. This requires participation for different stakeholders and government effort with a

⁹³. Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, What could you think can be done from the side of Nepalese government in order to promote sustainable tourism and what kinds of

policies and strategies do you think that the government should undertake for the promotion of sustainable tourism? *Global College International (GCI)*, Old- Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

focus on sustainability in tourism. For this the government must continue to focus on cross-institutional linkage to attract as many private sectors towards them as they can in order to work jointly.

In this way Nepal will be able to create a ground-based framework related to the tourism industry as at the end of the day, private and public sectors are major entities to work in this field rather than the government in Nepal. With a functioning framework, associations like TAAN, Himalaya Holidays etc. can work conceptually under that framework making it their base of working strategy according to time relevant.⁹⁴

6.6.1. Enhancement of Cross-Institutional Linkage

Co-Management Arrangements Between Communities and Governments:

The simplest kind of cross-scale linkage is the one that connects local-level management with government-level management in partnerships. It also helps in conflict resolution for the cross parties.

Multi-Stakeholder Bodies

Multi-stakeholder bodies link multiple user groups and interests, local and regional, with the government, and provide a forum for conflict resolution and negotiation among users. According to Murphree (1994), stakeholder groups “can easily transform interest into a conceptual collective by a vast and amorphous circle of stakeholders.”

Development, Empowerment, Co-Management Arrangements

This form of linkages seems distinct from the first two sets in terms of the emphasis on community development and empowerment, with co-management as an incidental

outcome. These arrangements often involve nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or other capacity-building bodies. Often there are horizontal as well as vertical cross scale linkages.

Citizen Science

Citizen science is characterized by citizen activism for environmental management and by the involvement of environmental NGOs and hence it differs in its primary focus from development-empowerment organizations. In India, “people’s science movements have a history since the 1960’s in the southern state of Kerala where they took the form of alternative resource and environmental assessments with inputs from university scientists. Out of this emerged in the 1980’s an activity called the village-level resource mapping program which formulated the understanding between rural, forest-dwelling people to living organisms and their ecological setting, ecological changes in respect to their own development.

Adaptive Management

Adaptive management is used to integrate uncertainty into the decision-making process, and to ensure that the policy makers and the managers could learn from their successes as well as failures. It emphasizes learning by doing, feedback relations and adaptive processes. It has become a particularly promising approach to study the dynamics of ecosystems.

Resilience

Partnerships of managers and users do not resolve scientific uncertainties, but they help place those uncertainties in an institutional context that encourages building trust among parties, learning by doing, and developing the capacity to respond—in short, building

⁹⁴. Ibid: Please see above.

resilient institutions. Resilience is a central idea in the application of adaptive management. It has three defining characteristics. Resilience is a measure of

1. The amount of change the system can undergo and still retain the same controls on function and structure;
2. The degree to which the system is capable of self-organization; and
3. The ability to build and increase the capacity for learning and adaptation (Resilience Alliance, 2001).

A second feature of a resilient system is the maintenance of heterogeneity, and the availability of a diversity of options for selection to act on as conditions change. The

resilience of any complex adaptive system is embodied in the diversity of its components and their capacity for adaptive change. The attraction of the private sector in the context of Nepal has seen tremendous growth in the past few years. The number of hotels, resorts, home stays, zip flying, paragliding etc has been the main investment done so far. The positive growth in this trend can definitely establish a positive environment. However, Nepal currently sees a lack in promoting entrepreneurship. The multiplier effect of tourism to other big and subsidiary industries shouldn't be unnoticed with the growth of tourism. The relation of cross institutional linkage between the whole economies should be streamlined and should be driven for everybody's growth.



Fig 25: One-horned Rhino, an endangered species.

CHAPTER 7

FUTURE PROSPECTS

The scope of this project is very comprehensive. It can be safely said that a lot has been done since the restoration of democracy in 2007 to develop the field of Nepalese tourism. However, there is still much to do for Nepal to achieve the goals defined in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. It is a continuous and iterative process of development that requires endless monitoring and support from all stakeholders in the tourism sector. However, in the case of Nepal, we should aim to prioritize local peoples and consensus-based activities that emphasise local cultures (fooding as well as working) in order to strengthen sustainability in the near future and encourage greater profit. Similarly, there is also a need for advancement in native indigenous technology of different tourism focused areas of Nepal, so that the people living in these areas can continue to produce those native goods in high amounts without sacrificing its quality.

It is suggested that tourism stakeholders, specifically local communities and tour guides, should be educated in the values of Nepalese culture and consequently, should be encouraged to educate travelers and tourists in turn about Nepalese culture, its values and underlying stories behind these cultural practices.⁹⁵ This will help to expose our unique cultural values and practices throughout the world. Tourists are curious about traditional practices and lifestyle, and by encouraging awareness and education among stakeholders, such as in homestays Nepali culture can be shared with the world. From the abundance of

turmeric in Nepalese cooking and the hanging of maize outside village homes, to customs surrounding dining with crossed legs and conventions of building homes, though it may seem disorganized and untidy, these practices have profound meaning to Nepal's diverse people, and the tourists deserve to learn their origins.

Nepal has huge scope to strengthen its sustainable tourism in the field of adventure as well as culture based tourism. Due to lack of advancement in its technology, Nepal cannot fully benefit from tourism yet, and this lack of development remains a serious obstacle to Nepal's development. Beside this, there is a general ignorance of people regarding forestry products, as well as native medical herbs found in Nepal. Along with degradation in the climate of various parts of tourist-oriented areas, there is a threat to slowly reduce the scope of tourism in Nepal. Global climate crisis and carelessness towards the environment has led Nepal's mountains to suffer with reduced snows bringing unsustainability in mountain tourism. If we do not care about pollution and deforestation wildly, mountain tourism and wild-life based tourism will continue to present a serious risk.

The future prospect of overall sustainability can be studied with the help of SWOT analysis.

7.1. STRENGTHS

Nepal is ranked 25th for biodiversity richness in the world, and 11th in Asia. Nepal is home to 3.2% of the world's flora and 1.1% of the

⁹⁵ Primary Data from 'Focused Group Discussion', FGD 2021, Sustainable Tourism and Culture. *Global*

world's fauna. In the Terai region, national parks like Chitwan National Park house countless safari animals. Technology-based innovations are a necessary tool for rural development, especially for those that have considerable human and physical capital embedded in them. Local spring water can be turned into mineral and alkaline water that can be supplied to hotels and restaurants. This will have spill-over effects that will further drive nonfarm job creation. Avocado, kiwi and pumpkin seeds are in high demand in the cities, and with value addition, can be sold at premium prices. This requires access to onfarm knowledge on 'how to grow' high-value crops through public-private tech platforms that address the knowledge and marketing needs of farmers to pull them out from low-value subsistence farming.

Technologies such as artificial intelligence can be utilized to provide crop intelligence as well as grading to help farmers. Himalayan herbs can be used for wellness retreats in remote areas. An enabling environment needs to be created to help value-addition and develop backward linkages. It is fair to say that farmers will gain real benefits only when they have access to information and the entire agricultural produce trade is digitized, giving much emphasis to backward linkages. With high priorities and an integrated approach, and drawing on Nepal's many sources of strength, it can gain much-needed momentum for rural development through contributions from tourism. Nepal has rich rural development experiences in the tourism sector and has many success stories to share with the world. Homestays at Sirubari and Ghalegaun villages have won international accolades for their cultural richness. In 2001, Sirubari Village Tourism was awarded the Pacific Asia Travel Association Gold Awards; and in 2008, Ghalegaun was declared a SAARC model village in recognition of its cultural richness.

7.2. WEAKNESSES

Infrastructure Development - Tourism specific investments are often not well planned and infrastructure investments not designed or implemented considering specific tourism needs. As a result, most tourism destinations are suffering from low quality and poor maintenance of small and medium infrastructure (e.g. trekking trails, small bridges, camping sites, picnic spots, recreational parks), inadequate services (e.g. water, waste management and electricity) and inadequate planning and zoning.

Human Resources and Capacity Building - The sense of ownership, management and maintenance of sustainable tourism is very important in the long run. We still lack the community partners that have greater control over their own future development.

Tourism Promotion, Publications and Marketing - Marketing plays a crucial role in tourism, and is differentiated from that of other forms of marketing because it must present an overall vision of the complete tourism product, including peripheral services from other sectors. We definitely lack a large volume of international marketing as there is still the world who doesn't know the existence of Nepal. Even still the travelers who come to visit India are unaware of the country Nepal and its richness in every aspect of tourism.

Rigid Limits to Tourism Activities - there are still some rigid rules that exist to the tourists travelling, for example boundary restrictions in preservation areas and forests.

Weak Product Diversification - The tourist shouldn't feel bored of seeing the same thing if he is a repeated visitor. That would create boredom and can influence others also in negative marketing. Diversification in the product should come when tourists visit the place and one tourism product should not be identical to others.

More Health Posts and Security Units to be Implanted in Rural Areas - Absence of modern facility hospitals many travellers are brought back to the city in the medical emergencies. Though Nepal is said to be a safe country, the security units should exist at a minimum distance. The travellers should feel safe to travel at any time.

Investments in Large Transport and Connectivity Infrastructure and Service - These investments are undertaken without a tourism perspective. Inadequate coverage and quality of the road network has been a longstanding problem, making access to many areas with tourism potential difficult. Large investments in the road and air transport have been recently launched, notably with donor's support, but implementation is slow and infrastructure is often not resilient or designed with a tourism perspective.

Outdated and/or Unpredictable Regulatory Environment for Private Sector Development - Nepal ranked 103rd out of 136 countries on the World Economic Forum's 2017 Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index, far behind regional competitors such as India (40th) and Bhutan (78th). While Nepal does well on competitiveness pillars such as natural assets and price competitiveness, it fares poorly with regards to quality of the business environment as per the World Bank report.

7.3. OPPORTUNITIES

Nepal, being a country with over 3,000 villages could be turned into a good destination for village tourism. Nepal has a high potential in the development of its tourism industry and

therefore village tourism could provide a backbone to enriching the tourism industry from the grassroots.

Promoting existing homestays could be a good choice for tourism business in rural sites close to flora and fauna, as well as the rich cultural heritage of these sites themselves.

Local participation in promoting tourism is extensively beneficial for responsible traveller awareness. The economic benefits from tourism activities goes to locals and would create more opportunities – entrepreneurship, development, local products entering into the market, employment etc.

Availability of hospitality and service sectors should increase along with its standards, and would open the door for more international investors. Showcasing Nepal's rich culture and gastronomy to the world as a diverse tourist attraction will not only create a sense of pride but familiarize the whole world about Nepal's uniqueness.

Establishment of tourist information desks for those who seek information about any local places of the district.

7.4. THREATS

Depletion of natural resources- unknowingly tourists may be encouraging the destruction of the very landmarks that they seek to visit. The greatest vulnerability of the environment comes from scattering waste and leaking sewage. The loss of traditional culture and local customs, as well as general ignorance by tourists has the risk of increasing social crimes.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Through this combination of primary research with the help of focus group discussion, as well as a wider literature review, it is clear that Nepal has a tremendous amount of potential in the field of sustainable tourism. However, many obstacles still remain to the country realising its full potential. Ineffective government policy, lack of coordination and communication between private industries and government agencies, none of the government plans regarding sustainable tourism thus far have been successful enough.

Similarly, there is also no proper working framework created by the government of Nepal that would encourage different stakeholders, as well as investors working in the field of tourism. It is true that nature has gifted Nepal with a diverse ecology that gives it perfect potential. Tourism similarly could provide a major job opportunity for its citizens, as well as for increased investment in the field. However, the Nepalese government should be able to create a proper executive framework and policy that would guarantee a sustainable future for those living and engaging in these tourist-oriented areas.

Homestays are a simple yet very popular form of hospitality, which allows visitors to understand and experience the real local life of the given area. To be specific, homestays offer authenticity. Visitors can live or enjoy the local customs and traditions, practice speaking local languages, allowing one to spend time with the people that really make the place what it is, and this alternative form of accommodation is very common in rural areas. The spirit of Nepalese tourism lies in the natural richness

and its indigenous societies with their mystic cultures which can be best showcased through the home-stay programme. The main reason for its growth is it adds genuine socio-cultural components to a tourist's experience. For many travel enthusiasts, homestay provides just the opportunity to assimilate with the local customs, relish the local cuisine and get to know the real local lifestyle. It is one among the inimitable chances to experience life as it is lived. Based on the field survey conducted by the Journal and Advanced Academic Research (JAAR) in 2016 A.D and Nepal Tourism Statistics 2018, the alternative form accommodation is winning the heart of both the parties i.e host as well as the guest, which is very good sign and based on it the future of the homestay can be predicted to be very bright. Though homestays are a strong source of income and undoubtedly it is, while conducting homestay, it is essential that an operator must maintain the ethics of hospitality, else the negative consequences can be experienced. Such as loss of identity, acculturation and finally the collapse of the good source of income which will directly result like increment in unemployment as an outcome of it, the poverty rate increases. But in order to avoid such consequences and to ensure the long term sustainability of homestays, it is very essential to work on various aspects, short term as well as long term vision and goals are really essential. For instance, there is a high need for preparation of homestay planning and development for the local people. Hence, the local people of the proposed destination should be technically assisted in preparation of planning and development, which eventually help them to bring any changes in the near

future in order to adapt with the changing scenario. Likewise, the government should provide loan subsidies to homestays, so that they can fulfill and maintain the set standards. Similarly, locals are sometimes not capable enough to provide basic services on their own, so in order to avoid this problem, provision of providing training on leadership, hospitality along with food and beverage and menu planning should be considered, using local resources to the locals can help the host community to provide a quality service.

Tourism organizations such as NTB, NATTA and NATHM should take initiative and develop a homestay database so that tourists can easily explore, choose and book their stay. On the other hand, the practice of community based, and private homestays must be differentiated and treated as such from conventional accommodation, according to the Government of Nepal when providing assistance and other facilities. Apart from this, for the overall development of sustainable tourism in the context of Nepal the following strategies can be adopted:

8.1. COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES

There are several strategies that focus on the internal strengths and external opportunities of Nepal. The following are proposed to utilize these available priorities to develop rural tourism.

- More development in nature and agriculture tourism.
- Utilization and preparation of private sector support for investments in the tourism sector in district villages.
- Identify and take advantage of attractions, products, souvenirs, homestays and other relative tourism advantages in the area in order to compete with other recreational areas;

8.2. DIVERSIFICATION STRATEGIES

In diversification strategies that focus on the internal strengths and external threats, the following strategies are presented to provide some requirements in order to meet the threats:

- Diversifying tourism facilities and services in order to meet tourists' satisfaction, and to increase the number of tourists through the creation of a pleasant, convenient environment to avoid social crimes
- Developing the attraction of tourism by enhancing local culture, traditional dances and customs, and natural scenery with advertising programs to introduce natural tourism and also organizing seminars.
- Determining the optimal population density in visiting this area in order to protect and prevent environmental degradation and vulnerability of the environment.

8.3. OVERVIEW STRATEGIES

Whilst the previous strategies emphasized on internal weaknesses, here we try to take advantage of external opportunities to address these weaknesses:

- In addition to public and private investment in the area, improvement of environmental infrastructures and facilities;
 - Train local community to become skilled workers in managing the rural area as a tourist village that can provide funding opportunities from local government, improving the standard of living and regional employment
 - Regulate special rules and regulations for optimal utilization of attractions and tourism products (homestays, souvenirs, tour packages etc.), prevention of
-

environmental destruction and pollution, and the loss of these resources in the area

8.4. DEFENSIVE STRATEGIES

In addition to emphasis on removing the vulnerability of the rural area:

- Encourage people to participate in the development of infrastructure, various equipment and facilities for tourism, and

encourage local government's support in the management of tourist destinations in order to ensure sustainability.

- Conduct training for local communities in cultural hospitality and homestay management for tourists, and also educate and inform the public about interactions with tourists within the area.



Fig 26. The Divine Krishna temple