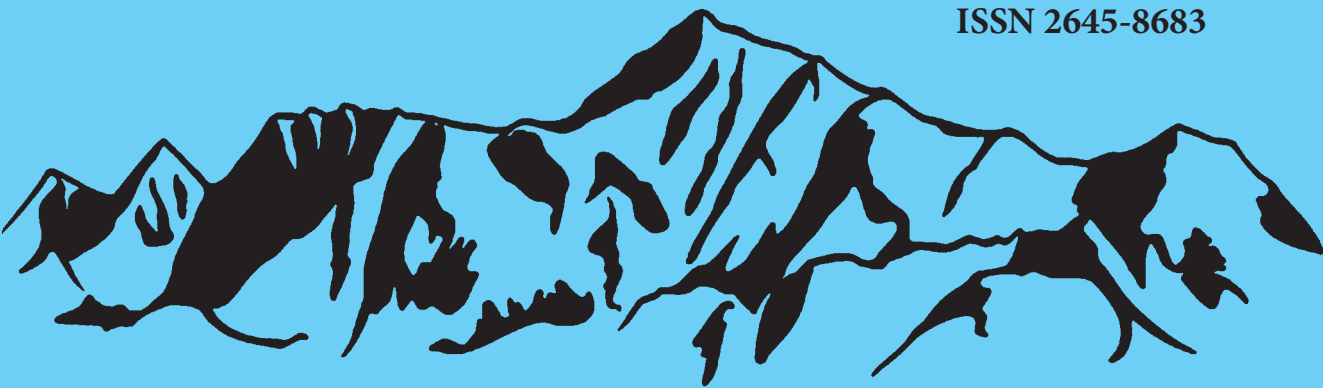


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Vol. 3

No. 1

Year 2020

Editor-in-Chief
Prof. Ramesh Raj Kunwar



Janapriya Multiple Campus (JMC)
(Affiliated to Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal)

Aims and scope

Journal of Tourism & Adventure (JTA) is an annual peer-reviewed journal launched by the Tribhuvan University, Janapriya Multiple Campus, Pokhara, Nepal in 2018. Journal is one of the most important sources of producing and disseminating the knowledge of concerned subject. This is an identity marker of academia and academics. It aims to provide an international knowledge based platform for innovative studies that make a significant contribution to the understanding tourism, hospitality, and event studies/management including risk recreational specialization (adventure). This journal welcomes original, academic and applied research from multi- and interdisciplinary perspectives.

The journal will be an impetus for carrying recent theoretical, conceptual, methodological and new paradigms of tourism studies. Thus, it will be very important for the students, researchers, journalists, policy makers, planners, entrepreneurs and other general readers. It is high time to make this effort for tourism innovation and development particularly in Nepal. It is believed that this knowledge based platform will make the industry and the institutions stronger.

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The journal welcomes the following topics: tourism, mountain tourism and mountaineering tourism, risk management, safety and security, tourism and natural disaster, accident, injuries, medicine and rescue, cultural heritage tourism, festival tourism, pilgrimage tourism, rural tourism, village tourism, urban tourism, geotourism, paper on extreme adventure tourism activities, ecotourism, environmental tourism, hospitality, event tourism, voluntourism, sustainable tourism, wildlife tourism, dark tourism, nostalgia tourism, tourism planning, destination development, tourism marketing, human resource management, adventure tourism education, tourism and research methodology, guiding profession, tourism, conflict and peace and remaining other areas of sea, air and land based adventure tourism research.

We welcome submissions of research paper on annual bases by the end of June for 2nd issue. In one issue, there will be minimum five research articles excluding research notes and book reviews, etc. Every year the journal will be published by the end of the following year. The article will be under the author(s)' copyright. Whoever is willing to contribute he/she/they should not pay any currency for publishing their papers in this journal. The published articles will go to online-www.nepjol.info.

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Peer review statement

This journal operates a double blind review process which means the identities of the author(s) are concealed from the expert reviewers, and vice versa. The papers will be first checked by the Editor-in-Chief and followed by two independent expert reviewers to access the scientific quality of the paper. The paper writers will not be allowed to mention their names inside the text. All research articles and research notes in this journal have undergone rigorous peer review, including editor screening and a double-blind evaluation process by two anonymous referees.

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Journal of Tourism & Adventure accepts the following types of article: original research articles, case studies, research notes, conference reports, and book reviews.

Structure

The articles and research notes should be compiled in the following order: title page; author's introduction; abstract; keywords (maximum five); main text introduction, review of literature, research methodology, findings, discussion; acknowledgments; declaration of interest statement; references; table(s) with caption(s) (on individual pages) and figure(s).

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Journal of
Tourism & Adventure

**Promoting Employment and Preserving Cultural
Heritage: A Study of Handicraft Products Tourism in
Pokhara, Nepal**

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Article

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Abstract

Handicrafts form a fundamental part of tourist experience representing local traditions and indigenous population's talents and skills, income and job opportunities. This paper aims at exploring the role of handicraft products in promoting employment as well as preserving the cultural heritage of Pokhara. The study result reveals that there is a significant level of correlation and dependency between handicraft products and tourist's arrival, job creation and the increase in income and social status of artisans and handicrafts shopkeepers. As a unique experience for tourists, handicraft products have enriched national economy, identity and promoted cultural heritage, uniqueness and authenticity, and cultural commercialization. However, handicraft is not just about commercialization of cultural arts or displaying and selling products, it is about allowing tourists to truly understand the skill and the craft at rear and realize handicrafts unique tradition, linking tourists to artisans to facilitate them understand and appreciate the art. Further it is about how culture is recognized through display of a new self-representation or 'enterprising spirit', but not with the total loss of primordial 'pure culture' albeit an authenticity of hybrid culture. Lack of effective advertisement and marketing, inequitable price, scarcity of raw materials, intrusion of

Keywords

*Handicrafts,
commodified
persona,
heritage tourism,
enterprising spirit*

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foreign goods, ineffective government policies are the crucial tribulations of handicraft products tourism in Pokhara. State policy improvement, increase in supply of raw materials, creative production and marketing are the ways that can promote handicrafts market. It is necessary recognizing the prominence of handicraft products tourism as a prodigious agent for preservation of traditional craft, methods of production and an effective means of sociocultural and economic empowerment, cultural renovation and national identity building.

Introduction

Despite the growth of tourism in previous years, tourism in 2020 has seen a great fall due to COVID-19 pandemic. After an agonizing spring that wiped out billions of rupees in revenues and rendered thousands of workers jobless, Nepal's tourism industry is bracing for further challenges. Despite this, the universal demand for tourism will continue to proliferate at normal time with economic growth that creates opportunities for its consumption as a lifestyle option across cultures of the world. The human desire to travel and the stretch of recreational tourism into distant locations replicates a desire to connect up to local lives for pleasure, touring, business, entertainment, accommodation, adventure etc. Robinson and Picard (2006) affirm that the desire by the tourists to encounter and experience different cultures as well as their materials and non-material/intangible expressions are the strong motivations behind the growth of tourism. Bhatia (1982) argues that humankind has always had the desire to travel to visit exotic place and encounter different cultures. For Kunwar (2002), tourists are temporary visitors staying at least 24 hours in country visited with a purpose. The most significant aspect of tourism is its economic dimensions. Tourism is inseparable part of development programs and also a solution to problems such as unemployment, social and regional disparities (Punia, 1997). Mill and Morris (1985) assert that other than approaching tourism sector as a tool for the development of the whole economy, it brings economic benefits to common people. Heritage and cultural tourism focuses on heritage and cultural attractions which are varied and may include traditional practices, handicrafts and cultural performances (Smith et al. 2010; Fernandes, 2013). Handicraft products tourism is a persuasive catalyst to develop tourism even at the difficult time and perform as a champion for the development of a vibrant tourism sector which contributes to sustainable economic growth, job creation, poverty alleviation, and protection of the natural and cultural heritage.

As an integral part of tourist experience, handicrafts represent local traditions and indigenous populations, they also symbolize the places visited by tourists, the experiences they had, and a souvenir to be taken for friends and relatives (Akhal et al. 2008). Hume (2013) affirms that the ubiquitous presence of souvenirs in global cultural circuits has depicted the relevance of popular culture and the ways

souvenirs are made in an increasingly globalized environment and how their fluidity affects production processes and material signification. Besides evoking wonderful memories by tourists when taking a good quality handicraft home, it arouses the interest of others who see it to visit the destination (UNWTO, 2018). Markwick (2001) affirms that the handicraft industries are of particular interest since handmade articles constitute ideal souvenirs and, if widely produced, may act as powerful tourist attractions. Further, the performance of the craft industries is dependent on tourism in terms of tourist arrivals, expenditure, length of stay and so forth.

Mustafa (2011) asserts that manufacturing traditional artistic handicraft objects generates both income and employment opportunities. Further, there is a natural link between handicrafts and tourism as these two are inextricably connected, with mutual advantage in building and promoting one sector to support the other. For Vijayagopalan (1993) the importance of handicraft is both cultural and economic. The cultural importance of handicrafts leads to the preservation of the heritage, traditional skills and the art. Its economic importance lies in high employment potential, low capital investment, high value addition, and potential for export/foreign exchange earnings. Ramamurthy (1996) believed that handicrafts is not the commodities of sale rather they possess a religious and spiritual appeal reviewed as an essential segment of cultural heritage tourism. Cohen (1993) avows that handicrafts as utilitarian objects often integrates symbolic imagery, domestic tools, decorative items, or religious or ceremonial objects. For Zhang (2001), with the development of handicrafts tourism, commodification of craft products is an unavoidable social phenomenon, but cultural commoditization will also bring benefits to local culture.

Shakya (2017) argues that in Nepal's cultural history, handicraft has been a living heritage serving religious and utilitarian purposes as well as represent dexterous Nepali culture and customary talents. But despite the ability and skills of Nepali craftsmen, the handicraft sector has not been explored for its full potential in tourism market. While traditional handicrafts can be seen displayed in shops in tourist hot spots, very few actually promote the process of producing such items and the stories of craftsmen behind it and very little is known on the interplay between handicrafts and tourism market and the challenges. It is through tourism that handicraft products of Nepal can get recognition in the international market. Consequently, the scope of handicraft products tourism seems incredible in Pokhara which is a tourism hub of Nepal. Pokhara can serve a great variety of tourist needs for understanding Nepali tradition, culture, art and architecture. Particularly indigenous handicrafts can be used in tourism for demonstration of cultural prosperity, indigenous technology, cultural renovation and identity based indigenous culture and history. They can be the means through which community can offer its values and spiritualities and configure a vivacious social and cultural identity. On economic aspect, it can provide

locals with job opportunities and income and help in poverty alleviation and bring lifestyle change.

Barber et al. (2006), assert that the benefits derived from the sales of handicrafts items to tourists in many developing countries are insufficiently researched. Further very little literature has revealed the contribution of this industry to cultural heritage and livelihood. For this reason, there may have been an underestimation of the importance of the tourism informal handicraft sector in eradicating poverty and empowering the poor (Chhabra et al. 2003). Though cultural products like handicrafts can contribute to tourism development and can act as a catalyst in job creation and in propagation of Nepali culture abroad, the excessive focus on Pokhara's natural beauty and landscape has overshadowed the contribution of cultural assets/products. Though a number of studies (Adhikari, 2010; Upadhyaya, 2003) have been accomplished in this field, there has been very little anthropological research that has analyzed the contribution of handicrafts in promoting tourism in Pokhara. Various studies have shown benefits at country level, but failed to show the challenges for people engaged in the selling of handicraft products at the local level. This current study attempts to look at the benefits derived by handicraft entrepreneurs so as to conclude logically at small scale level and avoid the fallacy of generalization.

Objective and methodology

The main objective of this paper is to examine the role of handicraft products in promoting employment as well as preserving the cultural heritage of Pokhara. The impetus is also on exploring the tribulations and challenges of handicrafts sector. The study was conducted in Lakeside, a popular tourism hub, situated in the south-western part of Pokhara metropolitan city of Kaski district, Nepal. Handicraft products tourism is one of the important contributing factors for the promotion of tourism in Lakeside. Handicrafts are important cultural products and due to the availability of a large variety of handicraft items, Lakeside is best suited for understanding the ways in which the handicraft business contributes in promoting tourism in a specific place. The universe of this study comprised the handicraft shops of Lakeside area (altogether 204 handicraft shops). At first, they were numbered in order to prepare a sampling frame, and out of the total 204 handicraft shops, only 106 shops were sampled following systematic random sampling on the ground that owing to similar professional milieu and location, there is more commonality and representativeness of populations exhibiting a natural degree of randomness.

Primary data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with 106 handicraft shops proprietors in October 2019. Additionally, case study, observation and key informant interviews (altogether 3) were accomplished in gathering primary information. Two members of Pokhara Handicraft Association and one social activist

were the key informants. The key informants were selected on the principles that most members of any society do not know the full repertoire of forms, meanings and functions of their society as claimed by Sjoberg and Nett (1968). As such, key informants, as a result of their personal skills/position within the local society, are able to provide in-depth information and a deeper insight into what was going on around them. For controlling the validity and reliability, a generic assessment checklist was designed on the magnitude of handicraft and its role in tourism market and pre-test was consummated on fifteen handicraft shops of Lakeside that assisted in maintaining consistency of reliability across time, items and respondents. This facilitated in assisting validation of measurement tools so that to represent the variables they are intended to. Ethical approval in the form of verbal consent was obtained from each respondent (handicraft shop proprietor) before administering the interview and they were convinced of the confidentiality of their identity. No higher statistical tools and methods were used to analyze and interpret the findings. The quantitative data has been treated in terms of frequencies and percentage.

Theoretical framework

Handicraft products tourism is pertinent to many theoretical and real-world issues in many disciplines. Based upon a social science approach to understanding the significance of tourism in contemporary society, Holden (2005) highlights tourism as a multidisciplinary area of study with rich and varied theoretical underpinnings. He analyzed social science disciplines with reference to relevant theories to the understanding of tourism and investigates how the economic and political structures of society influence the manifestation of tourism at global level, and subsequently considers a variety of topical issues including tourism as a form of trade, consumerism, the consequences of tourism etc. Discoursing on the increasing attention on creative tourism, Tan et al. (2013) explored the essence of creativity in creative tourism from a tourist perspective, although the concept remains rather vague requiring more research. Zhang (2001) points out that what western anthropologists of tourism have discussed most are cultural authenticity, cultural commercialization, and acculturation because they are closely related to cultural protection and inheritance in host community. However, under the great influence of modernization every traditional culture should have an enterprising spirit during its development while protecting its strong points. Only in this way it can accomplish its transition and transformation.

In broad-spectrum, the major themes anthropologists have covered in the study of tourism is divided conceptually into two categories: one that seeks to understand the origins of tourism, and the other reveals tourism's impacts. The problem is that most studies aimed at understanding the origins of tourism tend to focus on tourists, and most research concerning the impacts of tourism tend to focus on locals and in

the process many issues of culture, tradition, heritages, ecology etc. remain unstudied. Greenwood (1989) argued that tourism has also been studied by anthropologists as a form of cultural commoditization and/or cultural commercialism culture is packaged, priced, and sold like building lots. As the tourism industry extends its grasp commoditization of local peoples' culture results in them being exploited.

On the contrary, Cohen (1988) and McKean (1989) perceive Greenwood's notion of exploitation as an over-generalization. The impact of commoditization on the meaning and authenticity of cultural products, should not just be assumed to be destructive, but should be looked at within an emic, processual, and comparative framework (Cohen 1988). Cohen's argument is that the emergence of a tourist market frequently facilitates the preservation of a cultural tradition which would otherwise perish casts commoditization in a positive light which is contrary to Greenwood's repugnant claim. On the issue of commercialization of handicrafts, Markwick (2001) argues that such development cannot be conceived of universally as a simple unilinear process leading to inevitable degeneration of crafts, loss of authenticity for tourists and the cultural prostitution of producers. He suggests that development is not only multilinear and complex but may also be bidirectional, as products and styles originally produced for an external market sometimes become appropriated into the producer's own culture. Craft production may split into two distinct lines, with different meanings for the tourist on the one hand and for locals on the other.

Tourism in Pokhara

Ghimire (2009) enunciates that amidst pristine natural environment, abundant wildlife and rich culture and traditions, tourism has bright potentials to be an engine and dynamo for the Nepalese economy, but tourism development in Nepal is far below the potentials. Upadhayaya et al. (2013) argue that although often underestimated, the tourism industry can help promote peace and stability both in Nepal in general and Pokhara in particular by diversifying the economy (e.g. through jobs, income generation, etc.), promoting local environment and environment-related natural and cultural resources, promoting cross-cultural awareness, and solidifying local tradition and culture. Adhikari (2019) affirms that based on geography of the place, there are many forms of tourism, depending upon the place where they are viz. adventure tourism, cultural tourism, religious tourism, sports tourism, business tourism, and eco-tourism. Sahayogee (2018) has stated that Nepal including Pokhara has a diversity of structure that is contemplated within the variation of weather and climate simultaneously evaluated as blissful with glorious views of nature, mountain, multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural groups, cultural heritage sites, antique temples which are a matter of pride and appreciation. *Nepal Mountain Lovers* (webpage with no date) asserts that Nepal is very rich in handicrafts with more than thousands of varieties of handmade products, but there are mainly three types of handicraft

products...handicrafts made of wood, small plants and grasses; handicrafts made of leather and metals, and handicrafts made of clay.

Pokhara the second largest city of Nepal and a major tourism hub, was known as the waypoint for climbers to Mount Annapurna around 1950s to 1960s. These early mountaineers exposed Pokhara as a waypoint for mountaineering in the world. Upreti et al. (2013) affirms that Western hippies were the initial risk bearer and thrill seekers to travel around the new places of Annapurna region in the 1960s and 1970s and their photography has helped Pokhara to become popular in the world. However, it was only at the end of 1970s that the real development of tourism started in Pokhara. During those days Pokhara was known only as the destination of mountain tourist but now it is popular for its various attributes including *nature* and *culture*. It is a geographical landscape of beauty and its major attractions include three of the tallest mountains in the world, the large number of lakes, religious sites, cultural heritages, trekking and hiking routes, and other manmade tributes. Pokhara is often reflected as an adventurous destination that offers paragliding, zip flying, bungee jumping and trek to Annapurna Base Camp (ABC). It is categorized as number one Adventure and Leisure city (NTB, 2018).

Pokhara is also known for city tourism orientation due to natural beauty, cultural attractions, handicraft, social cohesion, harmony and mutual respect. It is famous for hospitality and adventure tourism. Presence of different ethnic and caste groups has made Pokhara valley an attractive place from cultural point of view that offers a number of joyful activities based on nature, culture, tradition, heritage, ceremony, adventure, and sports (NTB, 2011). Although the campaign of *Visit Nepal 2020* that aimed to bring two million tourists in Nepal by 2020, was suspended amid the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, the international tourist arrival in 2018 was 1,173,072, a growth of +24.8% compared to the previous year. About one million tourists (both foreign and domestic) visited Pokhara in 2018, and among them, 60 percent were Nepalese (The Kathmandu Post, 2019). However, according to Prasain (2020), tourist arrivals in Nepal slowed in 2019 after years of solid double-digit growth due to initial COVID-19 outbreak in China. Tourist arrivals grew by a marginal 2 percent to 1.19 million in 2019. This means that there were only 24,119 more visitors than the preceding year 2018, which put the country a long way off from reaching the 2 million target for 2020 which was the target of the postponed *Visit Nepal 2020* campaign.

Results and discussion

As a conspicuous form of tourism attraction, handicrafts are the basis of occupation for many in Pokhara. Most of the handicraft shop proprietors of Lakeside i.e. 39.6 percent are from the age group 26-35 years followed by 30.2 percent from the age group 36-45. Likewise, 19.8 percent are from the age group 16-25 years. Besides, 7.6 percent are above

45 years and 2.8 percent from 56 and above age group. In a predominantly patriarchal Nepalese society, majority of proprietors i.e. 80.2 percent are male and rest 19.8 percent are female. Around 5.9 percent are illiterate, 31.1 percent are just literate, while 30.2 percent are 2/PCL passed, 21.7 percent are Bachelor Level passed, and 7.6 percent are Master Level passed. Broadly the educational status of proprietors was reasonably better with more than half with a qualification equivalent to or above PCL/+2 level. Majority of the proprietors are Brahmin and Kashmiri Muslim i.e. 24.5 percent each, 13.2 percent are Chhetri and 8.5 percent were Tibetans. Besides, they are from Tamang, Dalit, and Gurung community. Most i.e. 50.0 percent are Hindus, whereas 22.6 percent are Buddhists and 24.5 percent are Muslims. Around 54.7 percent of them are living in an extended family and the rest 45.3 percent are living in a nuclear family.

Souvenir consumer and tourism promotion: Innovative experience of culture and authenticity

Souvenir is a vital component of tourist experience with tourists bringing back home the mementos and relics which is something antique. Timothy (2005) assumed that shopping tourism by souvenir consumers is the most favored and functional travel activities and has supported tourism growth and revenue contribution. Around 94.3 percent handicraft shops at Lakeside have been visited by foreign tourists as souvenir customers, while 34.0 percent are internal tourists from different parts of Nepal. Similarly, 3.8 percent are the local visitors of Pokhara.

Table 1: Souvenir customer

Type of the Customers	Number	Percent
External (foreign) tourists	100	94.3
Internal (domestic) and foreign tourists	36	34.0
Local, internal and foreign tourists	4	3.8
Total	140*	

Source: Field Survey, 2019

*Multiple responses

Foreign tourists are the recurrent and major customers of handicraft shops of Lakeside. One case reveals the magnetism of souvenir handicraft items for foreign tourist.

It is my experience as a handicraft shop proprietor that souvenirs and tourism are allied since souvenirs represent an object purchased to remind the buyer of experience or destination visited. Foreign tourists purchase souvenirs either for themselves or as a gift to someone back at home. Among the handicraft souvenir items purchased by foreign tourists are local craft, postcards, fine art, pottery, woodcarvings and figurines, baskets, blankets, clothing, fabrics. Nepali people are little aware of the worth and uniqueness of these items.

Indigenous cultural souvenirs have facilitated familiarize Nepalese handicraft items globally, popularizing Pokhara as a popular touristic destination, attracting tourists as well publicizing the country as a unique cultural showcase, hence thereby promoting the identity of Nepal colossally. The case cited below divulges the viability of souvenir handicraft in tourism promotion.

Numerous external tourists arrive merely to buy indigenous handicrafts which create jobs and lead to the increase in our/artisans' income and social status. Handicraft and foreign tourist are mutually dependent. Tourism is not possible without handicraft; also handicraft can't thrive without tourist. If Government provides easy access of raw materials, skilled employees, cut-low taxes, we will be able to produce quality goods. It will help attract more tourists as well as help in publicizing Nepal at international level. Not less important is awareness on cultural commercialization i.e. to perceive handicrafts as products only for money making and hence forgetting the cultural sentiment and bequest attached to it.

Due to the expansion of tourism industry and escalating worth of handmade products, the demand of the handicraft has greatly increased which has boosted tourist arrival that signifies the correlation between handicrafts and the foreign tourist arrival. Further, there is dependency of handicrafts industry on tourist arrivals. Hence, it is crucial recognizing the magnitude of local handicrafts in tourism development and reciprocally the magnitude of tourism as an agent for the protection and preservation of traditional crafts, methods of production and the cultural context. Kim (1997) states that favorable attitude toward the aesthetic and the uniqueness of souvenirs indicates significant direct effects on purchase intention of the souvenir. It is the exclusivity of souvenir artifacts that appeal customers' intent to purchase that item. Based on artifacts attraction types, the items appealing and purchase intent of souvenir handicrafts at Lakeside can be categorized into three types as cultural items, items related to art, and to religion. For 51.9 percent tourists visiting Lakeside, cultural products are the major attractions, while for 41.5 percent artistic items are the main attraction. Similarly, for 6.6 percent tourist, religious items are the chief attractions.

Echtner & Ritchie (1993) designates *batik* (handicraft tradition of Indonesia) with a number of component-based images attribute viz. holistic impressions, functional characteristics, psychological, unique and common that motivated tourists to purchase these items. In modern world of computerized and machine-made products, indigenously crafted, reshaped and uniquely mastered and distinct Nepali artful handicrafts are not mere pretense, they carry a pride, a sense of possession and satisfaction in substantial nature. Henceforth, almost all visitors (especially foreigners) buy at least one handicraft item during their visit to Lakeside.

There are various advantages of handmade crafts and products such as reusability of waste materials, indigenous creativity and skills, self-employment, eco-friendly, local identity and uniqueness. Tourists considered handicrafts that can be displayed at home that makes a good gift, and are handmade as the most appealing attributes for handicrafts available at Lakeside. Foreign tourists deem handmade items viz. garments as naïve, indigenous, more natural, healthy and easy to wear. The researcher observed many foreign tourists wearing handmade garments along with different indigenous handicraft items. When asked about the price of handicraft, most of the tourists did not find them costly. Foreign tourists don't mind about price if crafts look beautiful, light and easy to carry back home as souvenir. The advantageous assets of Pokhara handicraft products tourism perceived by tourists are fair price, exotic, eco-friendly, welcoming community, fabulous places, and unique culture. It is an *innovative experience* to be the part of local culture and *authenticity* attached to it. For them handicrafts as tangible objects are valued because they serve as their proof of travels and experiences within Nepalese culture and augment their self-identifications as cultured and worldly individuals that consider handicrafts as an aspect of traditional indigenous culture. Examples of authenticity are such as wearing local handicraft outfits and even enthused to speak in Nepali language.

Employment generation and transformation in lifestyle

The handicrafts sector has the prodigious potential in solidification and development of economy in terms of employment generation and social transformation. Jansen-Verbeke (1998) assumes that the retail trade of souvenirs has always been part of the tourism experience and contributes to the local economy and employment in many tourism destination areas. Around 64.2 percent handicraft shops at Lakeside have provided employment to family members, rest 35.8 percent have provided employment to other people outside the family. There were a total of 376 employees (including artisans and other staffs) working in 106 handicraft shops. Out of them 210 are the family members and rest 166 are from outside the family.

Table 2: Employment generation through handicraft

Response	Number	Jobs Provided
Employment for family members	68 (64.2)	210 (55.9)
Employment outside the family	32 (35.8)	166 (44.1)
Total	106 (100.0)	376 (100.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2019

In average, a shop was generating about 3.5 job opportunities. It is largely due to the handicraft tourism that these shops have been able to provide such number of jobs. One case elaborates.

By birth a Kashmiri Muslim, I am running this business with the help of my Nepali wife and her relatives. I have employed four workers. Handicraft business is uncertain but good for earning money and for giving jobs. Handicrafts help to promote tourism, generate employment as well as facilitates in tourist arrivals. There is a link between tourist arrival and our income and the handicraft production. Because of them there has been an increase in our and artisans' income. We need to boost-up handicraft production of different items and maintain the fair price rate of products for the sake of whole tourism industry.

There is a close association between the tourist arrivals and the increase in the income levels of handicraft entrepreneurs. There is an intricate relationship between the tourism industry, proprietor and the handicraft production. Handicrafts are the source of income; it has led to substantial and multifaceted alterations in handicraft proprietors' lifestyle/livelihood pattern. The changes have taken place in various aspects of individual life that includes day-to-day foodstuff pattern, clothing style, housing pattern, consumption of market goods, schooling of children etc. Handicraft shop proprietors perceived the alteration in their social status after they got involved in handicrafts business. Around 81.1 percent labeled an escalation in their social status after the adoption of handicraft business. They perceived their social status much better compared to the period before they got involved in this business. They got due admiration during social gatherings or meetings. One of the key-informant interviewee put forward that the handicraft proprietors have firmly established themselves in the local society; as a result, mutual reverence has greatly increased among the people. Since most of them are experiencing certain degree of rise in their social status, they are blissful and satisfied with handicraft business. With the increasing satisfaction, they have increased their investment in the diversification, expansion and further promotion of handicraft business which has consequently facilitated in the promotion of Lakeside tourism.

Tribulations and challenges in marketing and supply of handicraft items

Marketing is an activity undertaken to endorse the procurement or selling of a product or service. It is an important factor for product promotion in commercial activities. Around 53.8 percent handicraft proprietors market their business/items within Pokhara, 2.8 percent of them market their items at national level. Importantly, 41.5 percent market their items internationally.

Table 3: Handicraft products marketing

Response	Number	Percent
Pokhara only	57	53.8
National level	3	2.8
International	44	41.5
No response	2	1.9
Total	106	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The marketing of handicraft products at national level is bleak due to the lack of publicity at a mass level. Further, proprietors have less trust over national media. The marketing of the handicraft items at the international level has been done by only few number of proprietors as well as by Nepal Tourism Board. One case divulges in detail.

Beforehand 40 to 50 thousand rupees was enough to start this business, but now 4 to 5 Lakh rupees is required. The quantity of sale is affected by the season. We face difficulty in importing raw materials, the government charges heavy tax. It is necessary to produce handicraft at local level and tag the products, maintain data base, similar price rates, and do adequate marketing of our products at international levels because it makes our identity abroad. There has been inadequate marketing of handicraft items not only at worldwide level but even at the national level.

When the demand of any market items increases, ensuring its efficient supply becomes a challenging task. The researcher attempted to find the state of supply of handicraft items (especially those preferred by tourist). For 55.7 percent proprietors, the supply of handicraft items is good, while for 0.9 percent the supply is not in accordance to the demand of tourist. For them the handicraft products are not being produced as per the market demand. They stressed on appropriate actions on the part of concerned agencies to work towards availing the handicraft items as per the demands of tourist.

Table 4: Handicraft items supply to shops

State of Supply of Handicraft Items	Number	Percent
Very good	5	4.7
Good	59	55.7
Normal	41	38.7
Below the demand	1	0.9
Total	106	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Fulfillment of foreign tourist demand plays an important role in promoting handicraft products tourism at international level. For 63.2 percent proprietor, the supply of handicraft items is meeting the demand of their international customers. Their international consumers do not go discontented due to the lack of handicraft items. But for 33 percent, the supply is below tourist demand and for 3.8 percent the supply is not in accordance to the demand of international customers. Further many handicraft products are not being produced as per the market demand of foreign customers. Difficulty in access of raw materials is also a serious concern. For 68.9 percent proprietor, their handicrafts have been manufactured using the locally available raw material products, while for 31.1 percent, their handicrafts are manufactured from the imported raw material. It was noticed that many handicraft shop had employed artisans manufacturing handicrafts at the corner of the shop. Local products include all type of handicraft products made from Nepali raw materials as carvings, textiles, leatherwork, ceramics, and metalwork hence forming a fundamental part of tourist experiences that embodies local traditions and indigenous culture. Since majority of handicraft proprietors rely on classier local raw material and the handicraft items made from them, price of handicraft products is much expensive (for average Nepali) owing to the high value of raw materials as well as scarcity of raw materials in the market. The case of a shopkeeper unveils:

Since it is difficult to import foreign materials, I use Nepali raw material for making handicrafts. Their consignment time is lengthy; the supply system is very bleak hence the product befits costly for average Nepali. If the Government provides us easy loan, raw materials, and good publicity it will help the growth of handicraft industry. We sell indigenous materials made from stone, statues of god/goddess, bangles, pottery, basket, tatting, tapestry, garments etc. Foreigners give us good response and I am planning to manufacture goods according to their choice._

Though handicrafts have been playing a very crucial role in the promotion of tourism in Lakeside, it is not devoid of tribulations and challenges. Kumar and Rajeev (2014) stated that one of the major issues faced by handicraft sector is in information dissemination. This has led to a situation where customers have no information related to the craft products. Insufficient advertisement and marketing, intrusion of foreign goods, inadequate supply of raw materials, inappropriate market price and ineffective government policies are some of the key challenges of handicraft industry in Pokhara. About 33.0 percent handicraft proprietors reckon that lack of effective advertisement and marketing is the main challenge faced by handicraft sector in Lakeside, while 18.9 percent view the encroachment of foreign readymade items and inadequate supply of raw materials as the problem. Similarly, for 14.2 percent, there is the lack of appropriate market price, for 9.4 percent there is the lack of effective

government policies and the rest 24.5 percent think all of the above reasons as the main hurdles.

Price variations of touristic products for internal and foreign tourists has created unfair commercial setting and an environment for cultural commercialization. Around 60.4 percent proprietors sell the similar handicraft item at different rates for foreign and domestic tourists. They charge more money to foreign tourists. Around 37 percent sell without such difference in price. When asked about the reason for this difference, almost all could not furnish concrete and rational reason.

Around 37.7 percent proprietors deem that quality improvement with the preservation of traditional art features will automatically contribute in promoting the handicraft business. Similarly, 33.0 percent consider increase in the source/supply of raw materials, 32.1 percent deem ensuring supply as per the demand, 17.0 percent gave priority to creative production and 30.2 percent view all of the above as the main ways for ensuring the promotion of handicraft products. Additionally, 49.1 percent deem that the future of handicrafts business is bright, for 44.5 percent, it is very bright and for 6.6 percent, it is normal. It denotes that almost all of them perceive the future of handicrafts business as positive and glowing. In the view of one of the key-informants, the reason for such perception is the uniqueness and the benefits of Nepalese traditional handicraft items. They are such that foreign consumers easily get attracted. For most of them they are quite unique and conventional, so they prefer to buy the handicrafts. Hand-made handicraft pottery items, weaved basket, tatting, macramé, crochet, tapestry, mosaic along with popular products like scarf, shawl and blanket are the common choices.

Ingrained in cultural heritages of Nepal, handicraft products tourism has created a foundation for income opportunities and has been efficacious in linking the handicrafts sector to tourism market with cultural uniqueness, cultural authenticity, and cultural commercialization. However, commercialization does not basically extinguish the authenticity of cultural products and the meanings attached to it. Rather it implies how culture is recognized through display with a new self-representation of new-fangled meaning to tourism products that can create a space for new products. This also does not mean the total loss of primal cultural connotation of pure culture but also epitomizes an authenticity of hybrid culture. However, more important is cultural protection and inheriting traditional culture along with supporting innovation and developing new handicrafts markets and meeting the requirements of modern tourism market demand.

Conclusion

Arrival of more number of tourists increases the demand of new handicrafts, consequently the handicraft products proprietors place order to the artisans who are

the main producers of goods. This implies a relationship between handicrafts and foreign tourist arrival and increase in income and social status of handicraft shop proprietor as well as the artisans. Hence, the handicrafts business is dependent on tourist arrival and job creation which is the means of livelihood to many. Handicraft products tourism has played a vital role in extending the fame of local artistic items at national and international level. It has connected *Nepal's ancient cultural heritages to its present that has helped generate an inimitable experience for tourists leading to escalation of tourist arrival hence* contributing positively to the promotion of tourism and *nation's pride, conviction and identity*. Souvenir handicrafts market has facilitated the preservation of Nepali cultural institutions and led to the renovation of traditional arts and skills which otherwise would have perished. It has led to the economic empowerment of the people involved with it and made them proud of their hand-made handicrafts which is coherent to Cohen's (1988) theoretical argument that commoditization on the meaning and authenticity of cultural products should not just be assumed to be destructive, but should be looked at within an emic and processual framework. Corresponding to Markwick (2001), such development cannot be conceived of universally as a simple unilinear process leading only to inevitable degeneration and commercialization of local arts and crafts, but as a contrivance that facilitate in sharing and constructing the *commodified persona* in the heritage industry by transmuting local cultures into alienable products for consumption under the fast process of cultural commercialization to adapt to the modern tourism market demand of handicraft products. Agreeing with Zhang's (2001) contention, under the invasion of fast modernization, traditional cultures should have an *enterprising spirit* while shielding its strong points so that to accomplish its transition and transformation in an innovative way.

Though handicrafts have been playing a significant role in the promotion of tourism, its contribution has been made trivial owing to excessive emphasis on the natural splendor and landscape of Pokhara that has overshadowed the contribution of handicrafts sector. As a result, handicraft products tourism has not been getting sufficient attention from the concerned authorities. Hence, it's the right time for the recognition of handicrafts' contribution and thereby their promotion so that they play much enhanced role in the promotion of overall tourism sector of Pokhara and Nepal. It is necessary to focus on quality improvement and ingenious production and maintain a balance between supply and demand of handicraft products and the raw materials. It is indispensable to focus on production and marketing practices of handicrafts and drawing lessons in relation to production technologies and design aspects, financial and management aspects of production units, marketing channels and methods for optimizing the sale of handicrafts among tourist and the tourism industry. It is crucial defining strategies and practical tools for governments and the

private sector to strengthen the links between handicrafts production and tourism, the skill and craft of the artisan who really make it, prevent them from exploitation and becoming too commercialized, identifying the roles of the government departments and tourism organizations and the sources of financial and technical assistance. There are other implications also such as to establish a database for information on handicrafts' a medium of certification of cultural heritage, uniqueness and cultural symbolism.

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Thanatology Tourism in Nepal Himalayan Region: A Case of Langtang

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Article

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Abstract

On 25th April 2015 at 11:56 am local time, a devastating earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale shook Nepal. It is considered as one of the most fatal disasters in Nepal, ensuing aftershocks, avalanches and landslides triggered in the aftermath killed over 9,000 people. The most damage occurred when the earthquake triggered a destructive avalanche composed of ice, snow and soil, burying the entire Langtang village- a huge settlement of the popular adventure tourism destination of Nepal and killing at least 253 people. This study envisions to explore the scopes of special-interest dark (thanatology) tourism in the post-disaster scene, and it is used as a vehicle for self-reflection and education. This paper also explores the tourism prototype for an adventure tourism destination that has been severely impacted by a disaster. The paper adapts sociological theory, experience, and participant observation to complete a vanity ethnographic study of a "post-disaster tour" in the Langtang area. The tools and techniques of data collection derived from qualitative methodological approaches such as case study, semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, participant observation, content analysis, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and house to house visit.

Keywords

Thanatology
tourism, disaster,
commoditization,
remembrance,
darventure

The findings show how the adventure tourism hosts bounced

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back and depicted resiliency through unified reconstruction. Langtang's post-disaster touristic setting instigates a unique paradigm in the tourism sector that can go parallel with the adventure tourism engagements. The model is represented through the amalgamation of dark tourism (Dark) and adventure tourism (Adventure), which forms a phenomenon that is named "darventure" (Kunwar,2019) tourism. The 'darventure' tourism features the elements of both thanatology and frontier thrills at the same place. Dark tourist and adventure tourist experiences can coexist in Langtang, it creates a unique tourism prototype that complements both practices and can be offered as 'darventure' tourism.

Introduction

An inclusive definition of tourism does not only entail the act of touring, along with the construction of a worldview that renders the word 'tourable'...Tourism discourses are sets of expressions, words, and behaviours that describe places and peoples, and turn sites into easily consumable attractions (Salazar, 2006,p.326-327; Wintersteiner & Wohlmuther, 2013,p.35; in Kunwar, 2018,p.86).The concept of pleasant diversion in pleasant places is changing and broadening into new market demanding, more complex and even unusual (Wight, 2006; in Fonseca et al., 2006) dynamics. Dark tourism is the youngest subset of tourism. It entails the impulses of special interest tourism propounded by Trauer (2006; in Wen & Wu, 2020) which defines the provision of customized leisure and recreational experiences driven by individuals' and groups' unique interests (Derrett, 2001; in Wen & Wu, 2020). Similarly, dark tourism is distinctively linked with history and heritage; tourism and tragedies is more than a simple fascination with death, it is also a powerful lens that allows contemporary life and death to be witnessed and relationships with broader societies and culture recognized (Stone, 2013; Allman,2017).

"Dark tourism" is academically known as thanatourism. Dark tourism has been studied first by Seaton (1996) as thanatourism. Later on, this became an academic subject through the study of Lennon and Foley (2000). This study surrounds three definitions of thanatology (dark) tourism defined by Seaton (1996), Foley & Lennon (1996) and Stone (2006). The concept of thanatourism was defined as 'travel to a location wholly, or partially, motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death, particularly, but not exclusively, violent death' (Seaton, 1996). Foley and Lennon (1996) defined dark tourism as "the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified death and disaster sites". Stone's (2006) definition states that dark tourism is 'the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre' (Stone, 2006, p.146). These definitions have three different emphases on dark tourism. A demand-led approach by Seaton (1996, 2009; in Light, 2017b), a supply led perspective by Foley and Lennon (1996; in Light, 2017b) and sites associated with death, suffering and macabre by Stone (2006; in Light, 2017b).

Dark tourism as an umbrella phenomenon also includes natural disaster tourism (Rucińska, 2016), disaster tourism (Fonseca, Seabra & Silva, 2015) and post-disaster tourism (Biran, Liu, Li, & Eichhorn, 2014). The concept of disaster has been focused as one of the major aspects of dark tourism therefore in this study disaster, natural disaster and post-disaster scenario has been presented as a subset of dark tourism. Fonseca, Seabra, and Silva (2015, p.2) describe disaster tourism as the practice of travelling to areas that have recently experienced natural or man-made disasters. Individuals who participate in this type of tours are typically curious to see the results of the disasters and often travel as part of an organized group (Fonseca et al., 2016, p.2). Information about disasters and their effects draws human attention and also plays an important informative and educational role.

Langtang-a high-Himalayan valley which endured the wrath of an earthquake-triggered avalanche in 2015 was selected as a study site. Located in Rasuwa District of Nepal that lies between 27° 55' to 28° 25' N latitude and 85° 00' to 85° E' longitude. The Langtang Valley starts from an altitude of 1,500m beside the road at Syabru Besi, disappearing up a narrow, forested gorge. The valley ascends steeply, and gradually widens before emerging into wide open spaces at Kyanjin Gompa (3,850m) (Horell, 2017). The narrow valley running east to west, wedged between dramatic 6,000 to 7,000m snow-capped peaks, the highest of which is 7,227m Langtang Lirung, to the south are the Chimse Danda (ridge), crossed by the Ganja La pass (5,122 m), and Jugal Himal, culminating in Dorje Lhakpa (6,989 m). It is situated inside Langtang national park (LNP) the fourth national park in Nepal and was established in 1976 as the first Himalayan national park which is famous for the endangered wildlife such as red panda, musk deer, Himalayan *langur* and *ghoral* (Lamsal, 2019). Prior to the earthquake, the Langtang valley was home to around 500 people and an important site for Tibetan Buddhism. The era 1970s marked Langtang's transition from pastoral a yak-herding community to a tourism-based economy. Langtang is Nepal's third main trekking region (Horell, 2017) and is a priority of off the beat trekkers who seek wilderness.

Nepal earthquake 2015 and its impacts in Langtang

Nepal experienced a disastrous earthquake (7.8 magnitudes) on 25 April, 2015, it is found to be one of the fatal disasters in Nepal (The US Geological Survey, 2015). The epicentre was in Barpak Gorkha district of Nepal – about 80km north-west of Kathmandu valley. The quake lasted approximately 50 seconds affecting 32 districts out of which 14 districts were heavily affected (Subedi, 2018). Earthquake and ensuing aftershocks, avalanches and landslides triggered in the aftermath killed over 9,000 people and over 1 million rendered homeless. It severely hampered the tourism industry (Kunwar, 2016, p.13). The negative repercussions of the disaster in Nepal's tourism industry are likely to be translated into a reduced number of tourist arrivals, in the year 2015 there was a decrease in tourist arrival by 32 percent compared to

2014, the total number of the visitors in the year 2014 was 7,90,118 whereas it dropped to 5,38,970 in the year 2015 (*Nepal Tourism Statistics, 2015*). In earthquake 2015, Langtang was doubly devastated. The earthquake struck, landslides and avalanches came down throughout the valley, including a massive co-seismic avalanche that began on the southern slopes of Langtang Lirung (7,234m). The avalanche is said to have released half the force of the Hiroshima atomic bomb, causing the single most concentrated loss of life anywhere in Nepal (Kargel et al., 2016). The tremendous force of avalanche brought giant boulders, much of the glacier and entire frozen lake and an estimated 40 million tons of rock and ice was funnelled down the couloirs, straight onto the Langtang village (Langtang Valley Assessment; in Lamsal, 2019). The shaking also dislodged five different snowfields and hanging glaciers sitting two thousand meters above the village. A resulting landslide swept down the steep mountainside, picking up rock, ice, and snow along the way, until, fatefully, it took out the main settlement. The avalanche buried the entire village, more than half the community's population of 500 were killed in 2015 (Lord & Galen, 2017). It accounted death of 253 individuals at the same spot, out of the 175 were valley members, 27 tourism staffs, 10 Nepal army staffs and 41 foreign trekkers. The survivors in Langtang were evacuated to Kathmandu, where some lived for more than a year before returning to the valley to rebuild and restore their livelihoods.

The history of earthquake and landslide danger in Langtang is one of continuous negotiation, adaptation, and uncertainty, rather than a punctuated equilibrium that an isolated focus on major events like the 1934 and 2015 earthquakes would portray (Lord & Galen, 2017). However, notwithstanding the foregoing experiences of *sanghul* (local name of an earthquake) and the warnings from the geologists about the potential burst of ice lake, the community continued their settlement in a risk zone that further intensified the damage.

Rationale of the study

This work attempts to explore the flexibility of the tourism industry after a catastrophe, noting that the post-disaster scenario is the 'opportunity', 'signs of hope' and 'rebirth' (Miller, 2007, p.15), rather than an incident of decline. Furthermore, this study tries to identify the potential of dark tourism in Nepal's post-disaster setting. This paper also tries to reflect upon the efforts of the tourism hosts and the stakeholders to revive the tourism industry in the aftermath of the devastating experience. The reason for selecting Langtang as a site is because Langtang became a disaster site after the Nepal earthquake 2015 and is symbolic to a new reality that continues to affect the post-disaster scenario throughout Nepal. Based on a case study of Langtang, this study discusses the aspects of popular mountainous adventure tourism destinations becoming a disaster tourism attraction and seeks to add a new dimension to the dark tourism literature.

This paper sheds light upon the importance of disaster education and highlights the role of dark (disaster) tourism in drawing human attention towards disaster and playing informative and educational roles. In this backdrop, to explore the potential of dark tourism's educational role in Nepal's post-disaster setting, an adventure tourism destination with disaster experience. Adventure, itself is an area of thrills and death risks and a form of what Lyng (1990, 2005; in Priest & Bunting, 1993) calls "edgework" and attempt to negotiate that razor's edge between life and death, order and chaos, control and uncertainty, as such offers a consumption experience that is extraordinary and redolent with rich symbolic resources (Priest & Bunting, 1993). This paper merges death dynamics of adventure and dark tourism and attempts to suggest contextual tourism prototype.

The practices of disaster sites turning into the object of the dark tourist gaze in the aftermath of a disaster (Wright and Sharpley, 2016, p.2), a surprising omission gave the immediacy and potential impacts of tourism on the local community and the recovery process in places where disasters have recently occurred. The guiding questions for this study are as follows: What is the motivation of tourists to visit Langtang in a post-disaster context? What is the situation before and after the disaster and who contributed to boost tourism after the disaster? What are the measures that were adopted to promote Langtang as a post-disaster tourism site?

The objectives of this study are to examine the demand for and supply of dark tourism in Langtang and to identify and explore issues relevant to development, management, commoditization and interpretation of Langtang as a dark tourism site.

Ethical consideration

There are serious ethical concerns relating to thanatology-based tourism worldwide. And dark tourism is widely criticized around the world for this very reason. During this research, there were instances where the overall ethical status of the research method and the topic itself was questioned. Although, this study periphery the dark tourism elements of history, heritage, remembrance, education or entertainment (edutainment) purposes, there are several criticisms of dark tourism components.

Stone (2006,) states that ethics and the morality of selling provocative and 'sensitive' narrative through heritage to the touring and visiting community is a more established and documented problem of dark tourism. The practice of offering death for touristic consumption, exploitation of grief, disaster and death which is in recent living memory and any use of tragic history must be treated with care and sensitivity. Sound management and governance are fundamental to ensuring dark tourism sites are not reduced to simply a voyeuristic tourist gaze, where people come to gawp

upon others' grief and misfortune. Therefore, to help attain an ethical dimension, balanced and rigorous interpretation is required if dark tourism, in its various shades, is to achieve the educative and commemorative objectives of exposing our heritage which hurts (Stone, 2006). Although the term dark denotes devoid of light (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2010; Kunwar & Karki, 2020), dark tourism as a new tourism product tends to provide awareness, education and entertainment on several cases of history and heritage, tourism and tragedies. This tourism form could play a potential role in allowing us to confront the mortality of both ourselves and others, and addressing wider anxieties in modern society (Stone, 2006) if interpreted well.

The locution 'dark tourism' has undergone critical scrutiny, as detractors claim that it entails negative cultural connotations (Dunnett, 2014; Edensor, 2013; in Martini & Buda, 2020), and prefer definitions perceived as more neutral, such as thanatourism. Regardless of the word used to describe visits to places related to death, negativity may be implied because of wider morality and mortality subtexts (Stone, 2006). Dark places are discursive formations that can influence or be influenced by perceptions, imageries and bodily practices, which may bring with itself a connotation of ghastly, negative and destructive (Sather-Wagstaff, 2011, p. 72), but also of the new or exciting (Edensor, 2013; in Martini & Buda, 2020)). Dark recalls diabolism, deviancy, monstrosity, death and chaos (Koslofsky, 2011). Nonetheless the imageries associated with darkness, night, and obscurity, have been portrayed also through positive qualities: it is the time of experimentation, excitement, and spectacle (Edensor, 2013, p. 2; Martini & Buda, 2020). Moreover, not only does 'dark' not always equate with negative, but dark places cannot be considered solely as vehicles of reflection on death, as it diminishes the importance of the spatial characteristics and agency of the tourist (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2009; in Martini & Buda, 2020).

Review of literatures

As far as dark tourism in the context of Nepal is concerned, the area remains untouched for so long despite the immense possibility. The discourse of dark tourism only started after the 2015 earthquake although Hepburn (2012) had already published an article on dark tourism in the context of Nepal. The paper entitled "Shades of darkness: Silence, risks, and fear among tourists and Nepalese during Nepal's civil war" published in *Writing the Dark Side of Travel* edited by J. Skinner. The work of Hepburn's chapter published in Hooper and Lennon's edited book entitled *Dark Tourism: Practice and Interpretation* (2017). Her chapter, "Everyday darkness and catastrophic events: Riding Nepal's buses through peace, war, and an earthquake" highlights the concept of "everyday darkness in Nepal" and mentions that although there are better and worse deaths, everyone dies. And although we all experience different kinds and degrees of suffering, no one dies without their share of it. This is everyday darkness. The very idea of dark tourism is premised on selective attention

to instances of events that are, in fact, ubiquitous (Kunwar, Aryal & Karki, 2019). Nepal has the potential to be a unique dark tourism supplier as indicated by Hepburn (2012, 2017). It is Kunwar (2015, 2016) who published two articles on disaster-related tourism in the post-earthquake context of Nepal where he proposed to develop dark tourism as an alternative product in Langtang of Nepal, through his article entitled “tourism and earthquake: a case study of Nepal and Turkey” (Kunwar & Limbu, 2015) and “tourism and natural disaster: a study of Nepal’s earthquake-2015” (2016).

Research methods

The study incorporates qualitative approach and descriptive and exploratory research design. This research values adapting a broader, qualitative approach focusing on unpacking ‘more of’, if not ‘the whole truth’ (Moufakkir & Reisinger, 2013, p. xiii) of the destination’s social reality. This paper adapts sociological theory, experience, and participant observation to complete a vanity ethnographic study of a “post-disaster tour” in the Langtang area. Adopting this methodology helped the readers to develop an understanding of post-disaster sociological, cultural, environmental and economic scenario specifically concerning tourism sector without being immersed in the tour experience. The tools and techniques of data collection derived from qualitative methodological approaches such as case study, semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, participant observation, content analysis, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and house to house visit. The interviews were undertaken by the researcher during one and half month period the month of December and January 2018-2019. A total of 337 respondents were interviewed, an equal number of men and women were interviewed, varying in age from 19 to 84 but a relatively age group of 30-50 years representing the local voices. There were only 8 interviews with the local youth aged between 18-25. The demand-side interviews were taken to 185 individuals from 20 different nationalities. And supply-side interviews were taken to 83 individuals including 21 old-aged people. An average of 7 in-depth interviews per day out of 45 field work days. A variety of occupations, such as teachers, students, social workers, photo-journalists, engineers and tourism/hospitality professionals. Respondents were selected through a convenience and snowball sampling. It was adopted as the most appropriate sampling method for a number of reasons. First, the displacement of much of the population to surrounding villages and towns following the earthquake significantly complicated the process of identifying and accessing the respondents; second, the research required respondents who could vocally express about the disastrous experience; and third, it was evident that the local community was fatigued by hordes ‘outsiders’ (researchers, journalists) wanting to talk about the catastrophic impact. Hence, a process of recommendation and introduction was deemed the most effective in securing a representative sample of respondents

willing and able to participate in the research. The interviews, each lasting between 5 minutes and 2 hours and 30 minutes, took place in a variety of locations in Langtang valley i.e. either in respondents' homes or in local places.

The synchronic study is supported by diachronic evidence in terms of earthquake history, myth, story and suffering. In the course of analysing the data the researcher followed certain qualitative tools such as coding, sorting, imagery and semiotics, dominant themes, triangulation and phenomenological interpretation. The discussions covered a variety of themes relevant to the research objectives but sought specifically to address a few broad areas of concern, namely: the supply side perspective, demand side perspective and commoditization of dark tourism. The colloquial language has been used in this study. However, talking about the research limitations. The life of Langtangpa (people of Langtang) has irrevocably changed after the disaster, and the physical destruction of the valley is evident but the social consequences of the disaster is very complex to be portrayed.

This work was initially the part of researcher's dissertation entitled "Langtang: A Prospective Destination for Thanatology Tourism in Nepal" submitted to Department of Conflict, Peace, and Development Studies (DCPDS), Tribhuvan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (M.A) in Conflict, Peace and Development Studies in the year 2019. After the completion of the degree, the researcher continued the study and the work has been thoroughly revised in the form of a research paper.

Findings and discussions

Several modes of data collection on the aspect of thanatology in Langtang, led the emergence of quite a few significant themes viz: commoditization of Langtang as dark tourism site, supply-side and demand-side perspective on dark tourism, disaster and identity crisis, edutainment, 'darventure' (Kunwar, 2019) tourism, and so on to justify the prospective of thanatology tourism in Langtang. Yet, it can be recognized that few categories intersect one another. The common possibilities of dark tourism in Langtang are conscripted in following headings:

Tourism trends in Langtang

Particulars	2070/71	2071/72	2072/73	2073/74	2074/75
SAARC Country	279	277	63	157	289
Other Country	12,273	11,988	4,229	8,097	10,330
Total	12,552	12,265	4,292	8,254	10,619
%change	-6	-3	-65	92	29

Fig: Foreign Visitors Statistics in Langtang, (2019; in Lamsal, 2019, p.28).

The milestone for highlighting Langtang as a tourism-based economy started-off in 1970's with establishment of Cheese factory by Swish Anthropologist Tony Hagen, founding of Langtang National Park and contribution of local tourism enthusiasts. Every single settlement in the Langtang valley has embraced tourism as the major source of their livelihood. However, the three prominent settlements are Lama Hotel at the altitude of 2500m, Langtang village at 3400m and Kyanjin Gomba the highest settlement at the altitude of 3850m. The visitor tourism statistic shows that Langtang was visited by 12,265 visitors per year before Earthquake 2015. There was a drastic decrease in the visitor's in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. The immediate aftermath visitors were researchers, relatives of the bereaved members, journalists, volunteers and so on. There were only 4,292 visitors in the disaster year 2015. Whereas the Nepalese visitors are visiting Langtang more than ever before. Disaster popularized Langtang among Nepalese visitor and they were more empathetic to the suffering as they were also the one who experienced it on a different site.

Prior to the 2015 earthquake, there were few hotels with larger capacities in Langtang, but in the post-disaster setting, every household has turned into a hotel with room capacity as low as 2 bedrooms. Field interviews illustrate the slight increment in carrying capacity of the hotels in the anticipation of increment in the visitors. From each touristic settlement hosting approximately 400 visitors prior to disaster to hosting approximately 600 visitors per night in the post-disaster setting. However, the sluggish flow of the visitors and hotels being the only amenity has created an unhealthy competition in Langtang. Conferring to the field interviews, 9 out of 13 local respondents when asked about the faulty tourism practices prevalent in Langtang noted about rampant bargaining, contact and recommendation system, demand and supply of free room and facilities, hoteliers conflict, tourist and locals' conflict and so on. When asked the same question, 14 out of 20 foreign visitors, listed constant pressure from hoteliers to stay in their place, recommendation as a problem. The foreign visitors realized their freedom of choices being ruined. Based on the field observation, many hoteliers were seen to be travelling to the cliff nearby during the time of tourist's arrival in order to persuade the visitors to stay at their hotels. Despite these faulty practices the locals are optimistic on the improvisation of tourism practices along with the stability. They also aim to revive the Langtang tourism committee, to create a win-win situation for hosts and guests and ensure responsible tourism through collective effort.

Disaster and resilience

In the immediate aftermath, the survivors in Langtang were evacuated to Kathmandu, where some lived for more than a year before returning to the valley to rebuild and restore their livelihoods. Most of the 488 survivors from the Langtang community shifted to a camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) that had

been established at the Phuntsok Choeling Monastery (Yellow Gumpa) near Swayambhunath in Kathmandu. Most of the community remained as rehabilitee until October 2015 (Lord & Galen, 2017), where as a significant team of locals were leading the reconstruction via the local-led recovery process initiative named Langtang Management and Reconstruction Committee (LMRC) which was tasked to organize the post-disaster recovery of the Langtang Valley in an equitable way and by seeking self-determination within the official process of reconstruction (Lord & Galen, 2017). In the absence of formal assistance from the government during this period, Langtang residents primarily relied on their own networks and ingenuity (Lord & Galen, 2017).

In the course of reconstructing the devastated village, in the very beginning, there was a huge influx of professional outsiders and donors aiming to intervene and support the community. Nevertheless, the dilemma on how to support the community was prevalent. This scenario could be correlated with the statement of Barsalou (2014). As he writes “while it is apparent that professional outsiders can indeed plan and implement memorial projects, especially if they have a qualified skill set not readily available in survivor communities, it should always be ascertained whether they assist in bringing disparate together without creating unrealistic expectations or generating additional hostility” (Barsalou, 2014; in Freidrich, Stone, & Ruksha, 2018, p. 266). To avoid such conflict and solve the dilemma in the post-disaster period in Langtang, the insiders (the survivors) of the community played a very important role in coming together and decided to form a reconstruction committee on their own. LMRC, which originated as a symbol of local unity in times of hardship, comprised one person from each household as a member, making 116 members and seven executive members in the Committee. The unanimous voice was represented in several forums to plan for reconstruction, this effort showcased the resilience of the community, resilience is, ‘The ability of system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to the community and recover from the effects a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions’ (UNISDR, 2009). The committee eased the reconstruction work, most importantly by setting up a joint bank account for the entire community where the donated amount from every donor was distributed equally to 116 household. Even bringing and coming together demonstrated few conflicting expectations, priorities, memories, and realities which were solved by open discussion and participation. Financial transparency was the key for committee’s success. Along with that, the assistance of a small network of NGOs, to repair and rebuild community infrastructures—trail networks and bridges, community and religious centres, a health post, and a small hydro power station (Soden & Lord, 2017) supported the livelihoods in the valley.

Disaster and identity crisis

The disaster somewhat faded away from the effervescence of Langtang as a tourism site for a while and there was a phase of identity crisis and delusion within the Langtangpa community about the revival of tourism in their place and going back to normal. Langtang Valley was long considered a *beyul* (sacred hidden valley within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition), it had only recently become a tourist Shangri-La. Hence, Langtangpa's are attached to their place and this attachment is discussed under the spectrum of identity and identity crisis. In the immediate aftermath, the government imposed a cordon for three months, cordon is a barrier established by an authority to temporarily exclude the public from a defined area. It is a tool that allows authorities to manage access to and from the restricted area (Underwood, Orchiston, EERI, & Shrestha, 2020). But, later Langtang was claimed inhabitable, the authority proposed the translocation of the entire Langtang community. This decision was highly opposed by the people of Langtang because of the issue of identity crisis, topographical variances, and attachment to the place and so on.

The avalanche and the force of the blast it created, turned the centuries-old village of Langtang into a monotone landscape. The disaster hindered the cultural landscape of Langtang, it cannot be neglected that culture joins each and every quintessence that furnishes the human flavors with the capacity to be a piece of a general public (Albense & Boedeker, 2003; in Pliakas, 2017). The hustle of rebuilding further deteriorated the cultural identity of the Tibetan Buddhist community. Regardless of locals' interest in rebuilding in a culturally sensitive way, Langtang's new concrete structure failed to embed the cultural essence. These indexes the contours of culture and catastrophe in Langtang. The locals, particularly the older generations, wished to recover a future that resembles the past. At present day, only one village in the valley named Mundu, reflects the past through the traditional houses that still remain. However, people in Mundu are divided as to whether they should repair their homes (now symbols of a 'traditional' or lost past) or deconstruct them and build new based on the modern government-endorsed designs. Caught between longing for that which is lost and desires for a new post-earthquake future, they are engaged in their own kind of 'negotiated traditionalism' (Lord, 2017). The authentic heritage has become even more endangered in Langtang at the present context, the senior most religious leaders, very few people who knew stories and songs of the place died in the disaster ensuing a huge cultural and heritage loss. The traditional ways of life such as yak herding, farming and weaving have declined and there is very little chance of passing the old practices to the generations to come (Kvicalova, Slade, & Gawne, 2017; in Lamsal, 2019). The transmission of language to the younger generation is gradually declining as children as young as 4 years old are sent to Kathmandu for sponsor-supported education. Adding on a visitor's perspective on the cultural essence of Langtang, 7 out of 11 foreign respondents explained about

the missing mountain culture that they were expecting to see in the mountain village i.e. the features like wooden carved houses, heritage trails, people working in highland pastures, weaving, cultural welcome and singing songs. The present Langtang valley resembles very little to what it was before the disaster.

Cultural coping mechanism

It is widely mentioned that disasters give lessons to the communities that are rechanneled by means of a mythical mechanism of resiliency (Krostanje & Ivanov, 2012). Referring to Krostanje and Ivanov's (2012) model, the role of sacralization of the dead in the process of anthropomorphism ultimately ends in exhibiting a place wherein suffering, tragedy and curiosity converge and reinforce the social bondage and cultural values of every society. Resembling this phenomenon, the post-disaster visits to Langtang echoed subtle emotions mixed with trauma, hope and frustration that was combated through strong spirit. The resilience and determination of Langtangpa community to lead the reconstruction phase all by themselves 'not merely as victims of disaster or idealized 'others' living in a remote Himalayan community, but as complicated people facing uncertainty, doing the best they can' (Austin, 2017). The path of sustainable recovery, bouncing back and resettlement was directed by Langtangpa's engagement in cultural and religious coping mechanism. Several acts of memories and death rituals were organized signifying the different forms of cultural coping mechanism and post-disaster engagement to help themselves recover from the suffering and despair.

The cultural coping mechanism initiated along with the combined funeral acts of reciting the funerary text, the *Bardo Thödröl* also called as Tibetan Book of the Dead in Tibetan Buddhism. Aforesaid series composed by Padmasambhava is recited by *Lamas* to ease the consciousness of a recently deceased person through death and assists them into a favorable rebirth and continues throughout the 49-day period leading to rebirth (Fremantle & Trungpa, 1975). On 49th day, community members and Lamas (priest) conducted a *ghewa* ceremony, that signifies the final stage in the larger process of 'ritual poesis' that facilitates the "transmutation of life" in the Tibetan Buddhist traditions (Desjarlais, 2016; in Lord, 2017). In addition to that, the field observation showcased the practice of everyday remembrance ritual called *sangsing* which requires burning incense, offering water in the altar where pictures of holy people and bereaved members are placed with ritual items and ingredients in the morning and evening hours. Formal ceremony was organized in Langtang village to mark the one-year anniversary of the earthquake where Langtangpa's along with the families of foreigners who lost their lives in Langtang gathered in the avalanche zone to perform religious rites, which was led by a group of local Lamas. Diverse acts of commemoration were conducted including reading aloud the names of the deceased, unveiling memorial walls with the name inscription of the deceased, instilling white

prayer flags in avalanche spots as a symbol of peace and so on. Hotels are constructed in the name of bereaved relatives and few relatives have tried to give continuity to the hotels that used to be run by the deceased relatives. Photographs are of great importance in the tourist driven community, but in the aftermath of disaster they rarely have pictures of their house and the loved ones. Hence, in a community house there was a photo display of old houses retrieved from the satellite imagery and old pictures sent by the former visitor which can also be taken as an act of memory and revisiting the past. There has also been an increase in religious pilgrims visited by the entire community in post-disaster settings including the prominent tour to India to get blessings from Dalai Lama in the immediate aftermath.

Supply-side perspective

Perspective of those who have suffered a disaster is very important in order to get a sense of the supply side narrative of post-disaster tourism. Local's understanding of what a disaster 'is', really important, researcher comprehended that the Langtangpa community depicted utter reluctance to talk about the disaster experience. Most of the locals associated Langtang's tourism motivation to the adventure tourism model and they perceived it to be the only medium that engages the tourists. Conferring to the field interviews, 23 out of 25 local respondents ranked Langtang's natural beauty (mountain, *beyul*, National Park) on the top rank to the visitor's motivation to Langtang.

Local's narrative evidently suggests that there is a demand and curiosity among the visitors to know about the disaster, however, the locals are in denial of addressing visitor's motivation relating the disaster and obstinate from addressing the queries about disaster, death and suffering. The concept of becoming the object of dark tourist gaze is considered as a subject of intrusion to their personal life. Many of the local residents of Langtang mentioned the voyeuristic attitude of visitors that checked their patience at times. Although they have been involved in the tourism industry for two decades, they explained they need some space and privacy which are often infringed by visitors who would cross their limits by either asking too personal questions, clicking pictures every time. Some respondents believed that tourists come to Langtang not to gaze upon the mountains but to gaze upon the destruction with, perhaps, an element of *schadenfreude*. Few anecdotes of the locals while intervening these narratives are:

"They are our guests, they are paying us for the services we deliver, we have to respect them...but that doesn't mean we need to bear all their irrational actions."

"Langtang is famous for it's beautiful landscapes, flora, fauna, heritage...yet people like to go back in the rubble and take pictures. Is that a pleasant scene? What do you say?"

"We know tourists like to take pictures as a memory, but sometimes we are not ready."

"I think the natural beauty of our place is more appealing, rather than the deserted avalanche site".

The researcher's questions that commenced with the content of disaster experience were unattended by the locals. Few locals padlocked the interview in the middle of conversation when they had to recall the gloomy morning of the disaster experience. Hence, a participatory data collection method was adopted. The daily schedule of Langtangpa is dedicated towards rebuilding their lives and restarting tourism. Therefore, to think of the scope of dark tourism, discussion on working on aspects is not impossible but will definitely be too early to be initiated by the locals. Nevertheless, some respondents were more pragmatic, revealing the inherent resilience of people of Langtang and sharing the entire experience of disaster. There was a different narrative from few respondents who realized that disaster marketed their place in the world like never before and also discussed the prospects of tourism flourishing in a post-disaster setting. A variety of insights and retorts in regards to post-disaster tourism is observed, from intolerance to voyeuristic gaze upon the misery to feeding the curiosity of the visitors in a right way in order to prevent misinterpretation of their place and experience. The local's resilience and evolution over the time in relation to disaster tourism discourse is seen. Few anecdotes shared by the locals showed immense positivity on dark tourism possibility as noted:

"we can't change the past and we can't lie about it either, we suffered and we bounced back, there need not be any reluctance in sharing what we went through, that is part of us now. It is better to share the real experience rather than making ourselves misunderstood by the random hunches of the visitors".

Demand side perspective

When asked about the major motivation behind visiting Langtang valley, the majority of the visitors responded that the main reason for visiting Langtang was because of its adventure and tourism features i.e. beautiful landscapes and mountains, scope off-beat travel, adventure, wildlife, wilderness, remoteness and comradery. The authenticity in Langtang valley trekking has been promoted through the word of mouth marketing principle and preferred by beginners, short-term travelers and cultural enthusiasts. Aforementioned preferences majorly cover the context of the pre-disaster scenario and priorities of adventure tourists who are unknown about the disastrous event of Langtang. However, those who knew about the disaster, prior to the visit and during the visit, developed an interest to know about the disaster, to see the rugged trail, the mound created by the avalanche and so on. A number of local respondents reported that every tourist that stays at their hotels are curious

about the disaster experience. The urge to understand and explore more on disaster experience can be a significant pattern to imply dark tourism. Some of the anecdotes that explains the demand side perspective are:

"Recommended by a friend who is a mountain Lover. Choose Langtang also because I could support the community by visiting here. I visited most of the guest houses... purchased their food and services...since everyone was inviting to stay at their place... that was the least I could do..."

"We didn't know about it before coming to Langtang. We felt very sad while walking through the site of devastation."

"Didn't know about the avalanche, only knew of the earthquake. Who enjoys watching devastated sites?- I could not imagine the intensity of the damage it made in the lives of people"

"I see this place as it is now and want to contribute for a better-looking back would not be an ideal idea-I don't want to dig into their personal stories- but rather believe that they need our support to heal- Their resilience must be respected"

"I was so curious about the entire incident, asked a few questions to the locals but was very reluctant to dig into their personal life"

"Mountains are the danger zones for most of the German's, they don't like taking risks", that's why they hire porters and guides. I couldn't do that because I can't afford it as a student. I thought it would be risky to visit this place, especially with all the bad things that I heard from the news. I can now recommend this to anyone."

Although adventure motivations emerged as the first reason to choose Langtang, there was subtle visitor interest towards disaster that the researcher perceived through fieldwork. Disaster reversely popularized Langtang in the tourism market by relating to the magnitude of the suffering and damage caused by the earthquake triggered avalanche. It generated inquisitiveness to visit and know more about the occurrences in tourism enthusiasts. In the case of actual visitors, every visitor in the valley must pass through the avalanche site because it falls on the main trail. The spot of the disaster is so confronting that visitors and adventure tourists who visited Langtang for adventure purposes will incidentally turn into dark tourists because of the curiosity that arises in them when they see the intensity of the damage. The monotone area spread almost 1.5 km where the former Langtang village was situated resembles nothing to its former state is filled with rubbles, big rocks, debris of older settlement, white prayer flags, small pond, a five storied building in the corner that survived the avalanche. The walk through the disaster site generates a lot of questions among the visitors and despite the curiosity they will have to be limited with the information provided by their guides and their conversation with their hotel owner.

To sum up, adventure tourism Langtang was already commodified before the earthquake but after the great disaster a new possibility of dark tourism has been identified with the patterns of visitors thinking about disaster, death and sufferings. This will be consumed by the tourists on one side and getting adventurous activities on the other. Langtang visitors will experience repressed sadism (disaster, death and suffering) which compels them to memorialize the invisible debris of the dead buried under the avalanche site. Until before the earthquake the tourists used to get only one benefit now in the post-disaster the prospective tourists would get multiple benefits with features of darkness and adventure respectively.

Commoditization of Langtang as dark tourism site

Disaster is portrayed as the consequences of a sudden, unpredictable and extreme event that define it not only as a disaster but also as a dark tourism attraction (Wright & Sharpley, 2016). More specifically, it is arguably the human cost of an 'event concentrated in time and space, in which a society or one of its subdivisions undergoes physical harm and social disruption' (Kreps, 1995, p. 256; in Wright & Sharpley, 2016), often measured in a relatively significant number of deaths and injuries, that transforms the site of a disaster into a potential disaster tourism destination. Earthquake 2015 popularized Langtang for catastrophe whys and wherefores and sensitized its valuation as a disaster tourism destination. Every visitor approaching Langtang valley knowingly or unknowingly confronts the disaster tourism attributes of the place, they have to cross a rugged trail of approximately 1.5 km which is the major site of an avalanche situated between Gumbadada and new Langtang village. The old Langtang village was situated in the avalanche zone prior to the 2015 earthquake and there is no trace of it at present. In the course of proceeding one's journey everyone should encounter the mound which reflects the avalanches' damage. This might raise curiosity to the visitors. If a visitor is unknown about the disaster occurrence or self-guided, his/her mind will generate questions as to why this place is like this? What resulted in dispersion of large rocks everywhere? Why is the trail not maintained? Why are the white flags standing in between the site? And if the visitors know about the disaster experiences as a part of a guided tour, he/she will have questions such as How was the place before it got swiped away by an avalanche? What were the settlements like? And so on. The absence of information from the authorities further complicates the process of curiosity about the composited wreckage. The visitors have to be limited with the verbal narrative provided by their guides, some passerby and few locals who are ready to open up about their disaster experience.

From the field observations, it is evident that the disaster site and the memorial walls were consumed as an attraction by many visitors. However, the consumption of the disaster related attributes is not commoditized by the authorities. Disaster sites act as an open learning laboratory; hence, a valid information dissemination

is a key in disaster sites. But in the case of Langtang the official attempt to deliver information about the disaster is almost non-existent. The local authorities identified to perform the task are the village council and ward office, the Langtang national park authorities, and the buffer zone committee. There are no signages to facilitate the visitors on post-disaster tourism experience. Information desks are required to feed the curiosity and warn about the safety of walking through the disaster affected trails. The deserted path ends with a memorial *mhane* (Buddhist earthen-stone monuments) and a long freestanding stone wall engraved with Tibetan Buddhist mantra, Kunwar, 1989, 1999) and inscription names of the people who lost their life in Langtang disaster, prayer flags, special messages carved by the relatives of foreigners and photographs of the deceased. The open structure and windy weather in Langtang village has held only a few pictures now, the inscription is blurred and information is almost faded away, bamboo attached prayer flags are scattered here and there and the place is not maintained. The authorities need to understand that memorials are not just a symbol of commemorating the lost lives but also a way through which relevant information can be communicated to the visitors (Wright & Sharpley, 2016), these potential disaster tourism products can be taken as a very powerful tool of memorial interpretation and disaster education.

Educational elements can be commoditized as dark tourism products in Langtang. The place is already established as an education hub for outdoor and adventure trainees with the mountainous sport, peak climbing, rescue, ski and rock-climbing feasibility, it is a place selected by many geologists to understand more on the mountain geographies, the rich biodiversity has attracted scholars of natural science in Langtang since time immemorial. To this milieu, disaster gives an additional dynamic on consuming Langtang as a disaster education site. As educational visits to the dead, whether in the classroom through books or at heritage sites through educational tourism, are the basis of the teaching of history. Sometimes the dead are physically present, as in exhibitions. The exhibition, like all popular yet purportedly serious exhibitions, museums and heritage sites, and indeed like comparable television documentaries, is edutainment (Walter, 2009, p. 48; in Kunwar, Karki, & Aryal). As Cohen epitomizes dark tourism, acts are an instrument which can be used for educative purposes (Korstanje, 2017, p. 61). Dark tourism sites represent unique opportunities for learning not only about the historical facts of atrocity and disaster, but also human experiences of and responses to them, including our own (Roberts, 2018, p. 628). The dead, like much else from the past, are used to educate and entertain today's masses- as they were too in 18th-century public executions (Walter, 2009, p. 48). To which Roberts (2018) Dale and Robinson (2011) called 'dertainment', which identifies both dark attractions that attempt to entertain (Robinson & Dale, 2009 b; in Dale & Robinson, 2011, p. 213). There needs to be design and dissemination

of resources and educational material at all levels. But in the case of Langtang all the education materials are centralized in the district headquarter named Dhunche and travelers miss out on a lot of information. The interviews with national park authorities reflected that documentaries and several audio/video tools are made yearly but only kept in the official record.

The other prospect of commoditization is remembrance, it entails the act of commemoration of those whose suffering and death one may not have personally witnessed, but is not yet history. When memory is not first hand, it turns into remembrance or history, genealogy, or ancestry ...and doubtless other possibilities too (Walter, 2009, p. 47). If there is no formal way to care for the dead, all that is left is to remember them. If a shrine is where the dead are cared for, prayed to and where guidance is sought from them, a memorial is more simply a place of memory. Memories may be internal to the individual visitor, or shared within the group, but a memorial is not designed to be a place of interaction between the living and the dead—or at least, not officially. Post-disaster memory projects are proposed in Langtang in different ways. The inception of Langtang Memorial Project aimed to create a ‘living archive’ of Langtangpa culture and heritage and supported Langtangpa to tell their tales before and after the avalanche. The projects as part of a larger commitment to polyvocality in the wake of disaster—providing space for at-risk communities to describe their own conditions of vulnerability and narrate their own process of recovery (Schuller 2014; Liboiron 2015; Gergan 2016; in Lord & Murton, 2017, p.96). This action of souveniring is connected to the meaning of the word rooted in the Latin verb *subvenire* (meaning ‘to remember’) The other aspect of commoditization could also be souveniring the disaster experience.

The other dark tourism commoditization discourse is identified through the museum construction plan of the locals. Since the rebuild household couldn’t maintain the heritage authenticity. Locals have now realized that there needs to be an effort to preserve the settlements which were not devastated by disaster and convert them to museums. The old houses are not used as tourism products by the locals despite that they are being consumed as one hence few notables in the valley have been discussing setting up a museum as a way to introduce new products in Langtang’s tourism and an initiative to protect the authenticity related to their identity. Museums allow combining emotional and spiritual factors to create the tourist experience (Sheng & Chen, 2012; in Korstanje, 2012, p.57). In the case of Langtang the proposal of museum establishment project in Mundu village of Langtang highlights the component of historical reminiscence and cultural entertainment (Sheng & Chen 2012; in Korstanje, 2012, p.57; in Kunwar, Aryal, & Karki, 2019). Museums have been described as key institutions through which we understand our past and present identities. All the belongings that Langtangpa owned are only in their memory now. Langtangpa are

concerned about the loss of cultural identity, therefore they are willing to archive the few things that still remain. Almost 8 out of the 19 houses in Mundu, a village within the valley resembles the old Langtang valley's outlook. With regards to the houses that survived the earthquake with repairable damages, the owners are planning to demolish the house and make it a new one to fit the touristic mandate of providing rooms and services. Amidst the demolition plans, there are narratives of turning those houses into museum and cultural heritage sites and compensating the owners for their contributing to saving heritage.

The curiosity of the people about suffering of their own kind appears to be insatiable, and motivated by empathy, excitement and other psychological stimuli of varying moral worth (Uzzell, 1989; in Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996, p.96). Thus, the tourist appetite for sites and artefacts relating to tragedy is substantial. "If a museum or a site is to have educational value...they must also honestly represent the more shameful events of our past... if interpretation is to be a social good then it must... alert us to the future through past" (Uzzell, 1989:46; in Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996, p.96). Natural disaster are part of the common heritage of mankind but rarely in themselves can be seen as atrocities in so far as there is no human perpetrator. However, disasters and accidents link this theme to the literature on natural and human hazards (Yin and Moore, 1985; Oliver-Smith, 1986; Platt, 1986; in Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996, p.96).

The use of storytelling as a product is yet another dimension of commoditization of dark tourism in Langtang. On the eve of 24 April, 2015, hundreds of people gathered at the monastery for a *ghewa* of a deceased valley resident who wanted to be buried near Langtang Lirung. The earthquake of 25 April 2015 induced a disastrous avalanche which is called *Khayuu* in Langtangpa language. Langtang village (3040m) of Langtang valley was completely buried. The field interviewees mentioned that the structures constructed predominantly of stones and strong materials despite that, almost 100 houses were buried and were grounded by the debris and only one house adjacent to the mountain survived. Only a few of them luckily survived. Those who survived were mourning over the loss and some were frantically searching for their loved ones. The aftershocks continued to occur with grand rocks falling down from the mountains. The fear remained among survivors. All of the remaining 488 Langtangpa survivors were evacuated to Kathmandu. Every survivor went through a traumatic phase and the field interviews highlighted that there was no psychosocial support and intervention dedicated to help the Langtangpa community. The survivor stories were quite moving, personalized and graphic. Some anecdotes from the survivors are cited below:

"Every ghewa for me is about drinking and dancing a lot and waking up at noon. That day I woke up at 6:00 am, I took an alternative way to reach Sindhum, my

home. If I had taken the main route I would have been offered tea in every relative's home and we would have been busy with conversations and probably would have been swept away by the avalanche".

"Four of us had session breaks of our high school, we celebrated ghewa and slept together in our friend's house which was in the present avalanche zone. Two of us woke up nearly at 11:30 am and were ready to go home. My friend who wouldn't let me go without a cup of tea didn't stop me that day. That was quite unusual. We passed the village and minutes later an avalanche covered the entire settlement. We witnessed it from a cliff. It is the darkest nightmare."- As narrated by a local teenager about the disastrous event and who could not pursue his further education because of the family obligation created after the loss of his father and sister in the disaster.

"I am a survivor of the Langtang disaster. I had been guiding tourists on this route with one of my friends. We had divided our guests. We were returning down. He was a few minutes ahead of me. Me and my guest were taking a rest, and we could see them from far. Suddenly it was all dark, dark fumes made it hard to breathe. We rushed to the mountain wall; stones were falling from everywhere. We spent that night in the cave. We could hear people screaming all night but we were helpless. We were unsure if we could survive the night. Next day, 25 of us were evacuated to Dhunche. I was the only one who could speak. I mustered up the courage to revisit this place after 4 years. It was a traumatic experience. This place is nothing like before."- As narrated by a guide who survived the Langtang disaster 2015 and was continuously looking at the disaster spot through the hotel windows trying to picturize everything that he experienced four years ago.

Although the experience was similar, there were diverse stories of survivor's guilt when locals were asked to recall the disastrous incident. The statements made by 14 out of 24 local respondents who survived the incident were very striking and full of pain. They explained about how they wished to save lives and decrease the casualties but had to remain helpless because of the situation they were in. Many people died of the cold and since everyone were exposed to that situation there was no option to help, people were struck under giant boulders and asking for help but survivors couldn't help, those who were unharmed by the avalanche took a shed in the caves from where they could hear people screaming for help and since rocks were falling from everywhere and it was too dark the survivors had no alternative but to listen to the appeal. A few died asking for water and the survivor has been regretting still now for not being able to provide water. All the dead bodies were collected and burned together. Survivors have guilt on not being able to organize proper funerals in the fatal death emergency. The intensity of pain is different in the case of natural and unnatural death. In the local language, fatality and mortality is distinguished

asgelsuru/hoptesisuru and *suru* respectively. These local narratives can be the element of commoditizing dark tourism. This engagement can help visitors to gain awareness about disaster whereas it can help locals in the healing process through the received empathy. For Ashworth and Hartmann (2005), empathy relies upon the capacity of heritage consumers to identify with individual victims of the atrocity in question. Subsequently, Miles (2002, p.1176) regards this enabling of empathy 'between the site seer and the past victim over and above the evocation of historical knowledge' as essential to the success of dark tourism interpretation. However, Genuine empathy of being able to understand and share the feelings of another with those whose lives and deaths are represented by in-situ sites may be impossible to achieve.

Potential of 'darventure' tourism prototype.

Adventure tourism in Langtang was commodified before the earthquake. After disaster the destination reflects a new product of dark tourism and popular adventure tourism destination. Therefore, the prospective tourists visiting Langtang may not know about the disastrous events. When they reach the proposed destination, they will come to know about the tragedies that might instantly change their mind thinking about disaster, death and suffering. Ultimately this will be consumed by the tourists on one side and getting peak experience from their adventurous activities on the other. Thus, the tourists might realize, consume and enjoy from nature and culture. Though the trekking seems to be the most important activities a visitor visiting post-disaster Langtang will experience with repressed sadism (disaster, death and suffering) which compels them to memorialize with invisible debris of the dead buried under the avalanche. The tourists used to get only one benefit prior to the disaster, but now in the post-disaster the prospective tourists visiting both sites would get multiple benefits with features of darkness and adventure respectively.

This could be called as 'darventure' (Kunwar, 2019) a new form of dark tourism (Kunwar, Aryal, & Karki, 2019). The model is represented through the amalgamation of dark tourism (Dark) and adventure tourism (Adventure), the letters "dar" from dark tourism is prefixed and the letters "venture" from adventure tourism is suffixed to form a phenomenon that is named "darventure" (Kunwar, 2019). And, the phenomenon of 'darventure' tourism features the elements of both thanatology and frontier thrills at the same place. Dark tourist and adventure tourist experience can coexist in Langtang, it creates a unique tourism prototype that complements both practice and can be offered as 'darventure' tourism. Implication of this model can be further justified by Dunkley's (2005) recommendations on various inspirations that may hasten visits to dark tourism destinations. In the case of Langtang, the primary motivation of the visitor is the adventure component, however, special interest tourism like dark tourism can coincide with the mainstream tourism forms as a matter of convenience (Dunkley, 2005). Adventure tourists (mainstream tourists) can also be a dark tourist

partially and explore the dark attractions. This way, dark tourism can be considered as a complimentary phenomenon in the case of Langtang. Korstanje and Ivanov's (2012) have also highlighted the implication of dark tourism as a part of the resilience of tourism industry which are impinged with diverse threats. Tourism, from our end, does not seem to be a resilient industry but it works as a mechanism (one among many others) societies develop to intellectualize the disaster (Korstanje & Ivanov, 2012). This resiliency can be a ripe moment for tourism suppliers for introducing circumstantial tourism products like dark tourism in a post-disaster scenario.

Post-disaster dilemma

The reconstruction realities were narrated by the community in different ways by prioritizing their present ameliorations (political, social, personal, economical). Even global communication mediums like the media mired the destination image of Langtang. This could be linked with the concept of dissonant heritage as defined by Asworth and Hartmann (2005:253) as "lack of congruence at a particular time or place between people and the heritage with which they identify", characterized by (re) presenting painful pasts. Therefore, it is crucial for the researcher of this study to 'identify, determine, and attempt to alleviate narrative tensions within the interpretation of dark tourism sites' (Freidrich et al., 2018, p.266).

Media is a crucial element in the consumption and supply of dark tourism experiences. In the case of Langtang, the media mired the destination image. The fiasco in differentiating Langtang village (Langtang *lungba*) and Langtang valley circulated the misinformation of the entire valley swiped up by avalanche whereas the reality was one settlement named Langtang village was only affected by the avalanche. There are several other settlements i.e. Rimche, Lama Hotel, Thangshyap, Ghodatahela, Gumbadada, Mundu, Sindhum, Yamphu, Nashapali, Kyanjin Gumpa within the valley that was only affected by the earthquake. The title story entitled "Langtang Gone" questioned the existence of the rest of the settlements within the valley. The intensity of the damage was emphasized frequently through every medium but Langtangpa's resilience and self-determination in leading the rebuilding process by setting up independent committee was kept on shadows. Realizing an urgency to the participation of locals in disaster interpretation and signifying their effort of coming together during in the post-disaster scenario local tourism entrepreneurs mentioned: "*Interpretation of the disaster experience will be entirely changed if there is no local people to voice their experience*".

The field interviews, however, show that portrayal of Langtang as a victim site somehow helped in advertising a valley which was marketed solely on "word of mouth" principle prior the earthquake. Yet, another dynamic to the post-disaster scene is the lines of responsibility in a post-disaster situation which creates conflicts among the

various stakeholders. In fact, there are many instances where much valuable time is wasted after a disaster determining who will take charge of the reconstruction agenda and how lines of responsibility for implementing that agenda will be organized. Disputes that can be resolved over time under ordinary circumstances can be very difficult to handle if there is inadequacy in the post-disaster scene and it can further complicate the situation. The local authorities identified in the case of Langtang are Langtang National Park, Buffer Zone Committee, Gosainkunda Village Council, Ward Number-4 of Gosainkunda Village Council. The post-disaster scenario and reconstruction roles created a dilemma among the authorities on who will lead the post-disaster rebuilding. When asked about the corrective measures to be taken in order to improvise the existing faulty practices in the tourism sector and planning and priorities to introduce new form of tourism products in post-disaster Even four years after the disaster there is a blame game among the local stakeholders. Another form of conflict existing in Langtang is similar to Schwabet al. (1998) demolitions related conflict particularly of badly damaged historic infrastructures. Langtang valley's cultural architectures can be resembled only through one particular village named Mundu that too not visited by many visitors as it doesn't lie on the main trail. Many visitors mentioned the lesser authentic essence through the building structures existing in the post-disaster Langtang, the locals acknowledge the fact that the speedy rebuilding process was unable to guarantee the historic designs in the architectures.

Conclusion

The massive earthquake of 2015 devastated Langtang, one of the most popular adventure tourism destinations of Nepal Himalayan region. Nevertheless, the post-disaster Langtang gives a picture of a resilient, self-supportive and introspective society that is well-suited to the change but somehow reserved towards outsiders. Tourism has been a part of its economy since 1953, hence, the resilient and robust efforts of unified reconstruction were made by adventure tourism hosts to revive their tourism value. This paper attempts to explore the flexibility of the tourism industry after a catastrophe, noting that the post-disaster scenario is the 'opportunity', 'signs of hope' and 'rebirth'(Miller, 2007, p.15), rather than an incident of decline. Furthermore, this study tries to identify the potential of dark tourism in Nepal's post-disaster setting.

The data was collected primarily through a collection of personalized interpretation through first person stories. The visitors and locals' words are recollected and are illustrated in several dark tourism themes. On the one hand the interpretation moves on to the earthquake triggered avalanche and follows individual victims and survivors through the actual event and the days that followed to cover the supply-side perspective, but on the other hand the interpretation is based on Langtang being chosen as a destination and figuring out the major motivation and retaliating with dark tourism themes to highlight the demand-side perspective.

In the course of understanding local's experiences of disaster, researchers realized that the Langtangpa community depicted utter reluctance to talk about the disaster and their experience of it. Therefore, to think about the scope of dark tourism, discussing and working on aspects is possible but will definitely be too early to be initiated by the locals. The supply-side stakeholders are unknown about dark tourism purview but want to introduce new tourism products to retaliate with hotel-based neck-to-neck competition. People who come to see the mountains and the beautiful landscape of Langtang are also interested to see the rugged trail, the mound created by the avalanche and so on. The confronting disaster spot will incidentally turn every adventure tourist into a dark tourist because of the curiosity that arises in them when they see the intensity of the damage. This urge to understand and explore more on disaster experience can be a significant pattern to imply dark tourism. Post-disaster Langtang reflects the prospect of dark tourism that compliments adventure tourism components. Though trekking seems to be the most important activity, a visitor visiting post-disaster Langtang will experience repressed sadism (Korstanje, 2017), relating to disaster, death and suffering which might compel them to visualize the invisible debris of the dead buried under the avalanche site. Ultimately, the tourists will not only experience the adventure of the mountains but also contemplate the calamity and its implications. The tourists used to get only one experience prior to the earthquake, and now in the post-disaster the prospective tourists visiting both sites will get multiple experiences with features of darkness and adventure respectively. This paper attempts to portray an important proposition; the coalescing of two hitherto distinct tourism motives for visiting post-disaster tourism destinations. The model is represented through the amalgamation of dark tourism (Dark) and adventure tourism (Adventure), the letters "dar" from dark tourism is prefixed and the letters "venture" from adventure tourism is suffixed to form a new tourism phenomenon that is named "darventure" (Kunwar, 2019) tourism as a subset form dark tourism (Kunwar, Aryal, & Karki, 2019). The 'darventure' tourism features the elements of both thanatology and frontier thrills at the same place. Dark tourist and adventure tourist experience can coexist in Langtang, it creates a unique tourism prototype that complements both practices. These diverse motivations of visiting Langtang could be materialized by introducing new forms of tourism products that ultimately leads to tourism sustainability.

However, the official attempt to cash the dynamic tourism values is almost non-existent. The local authorities fail to interpret the essence of tourism, disaster and memorials in the main sites, it should be understood that memorials are not just a symbol of commemorating the lost lives but also a way through which relevant information can be communicated to the visitors (Wright & Sharpley, 2016). The

flow of the internal and international tourists and their motivations and benefits show the prospects of both adventure tourism and dark tourism in Langtang can be promoted. The individuals or groups whoever interested to visit Langtang in post-disaster context will be benefited and well-motivated in the different aspects as of: culture & tradition, environmental, heritage identity, suffering, commemoration, economic, security, ecological, psychological, remembrance, educational, ethical, memorial, humanitarian aspect and more importantly edutainment. This is what Roberts (2018) called dartinment, a memorial site used in order to educate people of the disaster and intensity of damage which may arouse extensive interests of tourists. Langtang's thanatology tourism induced by earthquake 2015 has following themes that are identified through field work:

- Dark tourism attractions/ resources: The avalanche site, debris of dead, rubbles, wreckages and the survivor's story can be highlighted as dark tourism resources.
- Dark tourism product: The proposal of establishing a museum in the disaster site and using the site itself in order to educate many scholars of diverse fields can be categorized under dark tourism.
- Dark tourism element: The elements of nostalgia, myths and legends, survivors' guilt, acts of memory, remembrance can be categorized as dark tourism elements in the case of Langtang.
- Dark tourism attribute: disaster interpretation, emotion, experience, authenticity.

As Robinson (2015) recognized dark (thanatology) tourism as a subjective experience which will fluctuate starting with one individual then onto the next including their relationship to the site (Robb, 2009). There are many types of dark tourism and the motives of the visitors are all different (Chang, 2014; in Pliakas, 2017). To fulfill all these motivations and make it more beneficial through the dark tourism in Langtang, it is necessary to promote the dark tourism by accessibility, attraction, interpretation, accommodation and reconstruction. Nepal Earthquake 2015 post disaster recovery framework brought up by Government of Nepal has categorized year 2015-2020 as post-disaster recovery phase. The tourism revival planning enlisted in the framework is not holistic and it is just limited to trail maintenance projects in touristic areas. A recovery plan on prioritizing innovative approaches to sustain the tourism industry is equally important in disaster affected areas. In the case of Langtang, the tourism recovery plan must include the technical support in revamping the tourism committee for locality-led tourism development, launching contextual tourism initiatives that meet the multiple interests of the visitors, upgrading the tourism amenities i.e. correcting trails, waste management,

updating map and information board, categorizing hotels and services, controlling price monopoly, establishing new form of tourism products and so on.

To sum up all, although the term dark denotes devoid of light (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2010; Kunwar & Karki, 2020), and recalls diabolism, deviancy, monstrosity, death and chaos (Koslofsky, 2011; in Martini & Buda, 2020). Dark tourism as a new tourism product tends to provide awareness, education and entertainment on several cases of history and heritage, tourism and tragedies. Nonetheless the imageries associated with darkness, night, and obscurity, have been portrayed also through positive qualities: it is the time of experimentation, excitement, and spectacle (Edensor, 2013, p. 2; Martini & Buda, 2020). Moreover, not only does 'dark' not always equate with negative, but dark places cannot be considered solely as vehicles of reflection on death, as it diminishes the importance of the spatial characteristics and agency of the tourist (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2009; in Martini & Buda, 2020). Dark tourism acts as a mediating institution of the mortality and mortality is inevitable in both ordinary situations and also the situation of crisis. Hence, as the core idea of dark tourism being "death", there is the sustainability of dark tourism as a special interest tourism.

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COVID-19 Pandemic and its Impact on Tourism Industry in Nepal

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Abstract

The article aims to measure the impact of novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on tourism industry in Nepal. The pause of tourism mobility for months due to an abrupt halt of transportation means; shuttered borders; and stay-at-home orders by government has brought adverse effects on Nepal's tourism industry and its stakeholders. Likewise, airlines, accommodation, transport operators and other sub-sectors of Nepal are suffering due to international travel bans. There are spillover impacts of the pandemic on the socio-cultural structure, human psychology and global economic system where tourism industry is no exception. The impacts are gradually unfolding. Hence, the study also focuses on the preparedness and response strategy of stakeholders for combating this pandemic which has brought crisis and fear to Nepal's tourism industry. The research is qualitative in its nature and followed basic/fundamental research type to expand knowledge on this topic which will shed light on the significant impact on the tourism industry in Nepal. The study is based on both primary data collected through interviews with intended stakeholders and the review of several relevant secondary sources.

Introduction

According to Wu, Chen and Chan (2020), "COVID-19 is a contagious respiratory illness caused by novel

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coronavirus” which was spread very fast (Baker & Rosbi, 2020, p.189) and has a long incubation period (Zaki & Mohamed, 2020, p.1). The new coronavirus was discovered in December, 2019 for the first time in Wuhan, China (ADB, 2020a; Gössling, Scott & Hall, 2020, p.1; Folinas & Metaxas, 2020; UNWTO, 2020a; Ulak, 2020; Zhu et al., 2020) later declared a pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO) on 12 March, 2020 (Sigala, 2020). Pandemic is the form of epidemic that spreads through human population affecting large numbers of people of the entire world (Samal, 2014, p.165). This pandemic is one of the most impactful events of the 21st century (Zenker & Kock, 2020) and considered catastrophic event after World War II (Gössling et al., 2020) which is affecting global economic, political, socio-cultural systems, and tourism (Estrada et al., 2020; in Folinas & Metaxas, 2020; Sigala, 2020).

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has brought uncertainty and spillover impact on almost all the sectors, and its enduring crisis on global tourism is a burning issue. Tourism industry is gigantic, global business accounting for 10.4% of GDP and 10% of global employment (Joppe, 2020; in Menegaki, 2020). Similarly, Nepal has also been affected adversely by the pandemic, and its preliminary impact recorded 14.37% loss to Nepalese economy as a repercussion of travel restrictions and flight cancellations (Shrestha, 2020). Nepal’s tourism industry generated NRs. 240.7 billion in 2018 that stood at 7.9 percent GDP (Prasain, 2019). There are about 200,000 people who are directly employed in hotel, restaurants, trekking, mountaineering, airlines and other tourism subsectors in Nepal (Asian Development Bank, 2019) and all of them are significantly affected by the pandemic. This is not the first crisis that tourism industry of Nepal has experienced of this level, the sector was hard-hit by catastrophic earthquake & trade disruptions along the southern border in the year 2015 which had resulted in 33% tourism decline (ADB, 2019; in Ulak, 2020, p.2), and now it is COVID-19 pandemic.

Considering the intensity of coronavirus and its health impact, Nepal Government had to cancel the ambitious campaign “Visit Nepal Year 2020” which aimed in bringing 2 million tourists in Nepal (Ulak, 2020). According to Nepal Tourism Statistics (2019), there are altogether 1254 registered hotels (star and tourist standard categories); 29 international airlines flying to Nepal; 20 domestic airlines; and 2649 registered trekking agencies and other subsectors which are having tough time to sustain their businesses. According to Ojha (2020), tourism-related businesses due to the lockdown and no prospect of tourist arrivals at this moment, many businesses around 10,000 can no longer sustain as they are paying NRs. 15,000-4.5 million as a monthly rent to their landlords. Therefore, to find out “the major impact of COVID-19 pandemic on tourism industry in Nepal” is chosen for this study. The findings of the impacts are illuminated in the paper.

The first case of COVID-19 in Nepal, according to Bastola, Sah, Rodriguez-Morales, Lal, Jha, Ojha, Shrestha, Chu, Poon, Costello, Morita, and Pandey (2020), was detected on January 13, 2020, a 32-year-old man, a Nepalese student at Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan China, returned to Nepal tested positive for 2019-nCoV on real time Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) assays at the WHO laboratory in Hong Kong who got discharged on January 17, 2020 as his clinical condition improved (Bastola et al., 2020) which was also the first ever case in South Asia (NDTV, 2020; in Poudel & Subedi, 2020, p.1). As of August 22, 2020, there are 22,812,491 confirmed cases worldwide and 795,132 have lost their lives (World Health Organization, 2020).

As of August 22, 2020, the COVID-19 update of Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) (2020b) published that Nepal Government has tested 5,92,418 citizens through PCR and total Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDT) has been done to 3,12,402 peoples out of which 31,117 have tested positive; 11,658 people are quarantined; 12,621 people are kept in isolation ward; 146 have lost their life and 18,350 infected COVID-19 patients have already recovered. According to Koirala, Yadav, Yadav, Koirala, Khatiwada and Dhakal (2020), "Nepal has reached to third stage of pandemic" where the source of the infection is untraceable; this stage is identified by people who haven't had travel history getting affected by the virus; spread is extremely contagious and difficult to control (The Economic Times, 2020).

Objectives of the study

Most of the researches are focusing on immediate effects of pandemic; however, one has to take into account the long-term and indirect effects as well. Therefore, due to this hard to predict long-term and indirect effects, careful study with prediction, and more long-term research projects are needed (Zenker & Kock, 2020). The pandemic crisis is still continued and researchers are engaged in their in-depth study of this phenomenon. The main objectives of this study is to measure the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on tourism industry in Nepal and to expand the knowledge on this topic which will serve as a reference to students, researchers, tourism entrepreneurs and consultants. The study is confined to introduction, review of literatures, research methodology, findings & discussion and conclusion.

Review of literature

COVID-19 pandemic

The World Health Organization designated the name of virus disease as 'COVID-19' where the '19' in COVID-19 stands for the year, 2019, the virus that was first detected. The disease is caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Astuti, & Ysrafil, 2020, p.1; Gorbalenya, 2020; in Jayaweera et al., 2020, p.1). According to Guo, Cao, Hong, Tan, Chen, Jin, Tan, Wang, and Yan (2020),

the clinical characteristics of COVID-19 is an emerging acute respiratory infectious disease which primarily spreads through the respiratory tract, by droplets, respiratory secretions, and direct contact for a low infective dose. Wang and Du (2020; in Jayaweera et al., 2020, p.1) mentioned that it mainly transmits through aerosols and fomites. Aerosols are minute particles in atmosphere and fomites are inanimate objects that can carry and spread disease and infectious agents also called passive vectors (Zoppi, 2020). It is contagious during the latency period (Guo et al., 2020) as they can live up to 72 hours. It spreads primarily through contact with an infected person when they cough or sneeze; when a person touches a surface or objects that has the virus on it and then touches their eyes, nose and mouth (Baker & Rosbi, 2020).

The world has experienced numbers of major epidemic/pandemic in the last 40 years, yet none had similar implications for the global economy as the COVID-19 pandemic (Gössling et al., 2020). According to Ranasinghe, Damunupola, Wijesundara, Karunarathna, Nawarathna, Gamage, Ranaweera, and Idroos (2020, p.2), the impact of this deadly virus is severe than estimated by specialists and the most exciting pandemic in the recent history which has already taken down 200 countries around the world with more than 1.9 million infections and over 120,000 deaths by 14th April, 2020 (Ranasinghe et al., 2020). Mensah (2020) stressed that the tourism industry has always been hardest hit by pandemics like Plagues, notably, the Black Death (1346-1353), Spanish Flu (1918-1920), SARS (2002-2004), H1N1 Swine Flu (2009-2010) and Ebola Virus (2014-2016). The pandemic outbreaks in the last two decades are Malaria; Dengue Fever/ Yellow Fever; Ebola; Zika Virus; Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS); Bird Flu or Avian Influenza or H5N1; Mad Cow Disease or Creutzfeldt- Jakob Disease; H1N1 or Swine Flu; SARS; and COVID-19 where the mortality rate of COVID-19 (1%-3.4%) is found lower than those of the MERS and SARS which reached 34% and 10% respectively and the seasonal flu mortality rate is (<0.1%) (Menegaki, 2020)

The distinction between the words pandemic; epidemic; and endemic is regularly blurred, even by medical experts (Intermountain Health Care, 2020). For instance, the sudden emergence and rapid global spread of a novel H1N1 influenza virus in early 2009 has caused confusion about the meaning of “pandemic” and how to recognize pandemics when they occur (Morens et al., 2009). The difference between an epidemic and a pandemic is to remember the “P” in pandemic which means a pandemic has a passport. A pandemic is an epidemic that travels and spreads over multiple countries or continents; likewise, endemic is a disease which belongs to a particular people or country that affects a large number of people within a community, population, or region (Intermountain Health Care, 2020).

In the 21st century, there are two identified immense drivers of change to tourism industry are climate change and global health emergencies (Jamal & Budke, 2020).

Tourists are typically risk averse and, thus, any actual or perceived threat to their health, safety or security is likely to influence their decision to visit a particular destination (Sonmez & Graefe, 1998; in Speakman & Sharpley, 2012, p.1). For tourism destinations, a key success factor is the ability to provide a safe, predictable and secure environment for visitors (Volo, 2007; in Speakman & Sharpley, 2012, p.1). Therefore, the tourism industry tends to be highly sensitive to negative environmental factors (Hung, Tseng, & Petrick, 2007) like COVID-19 pandemic which has capability to persuade the mobility of tourism to immobility drastically. They are Zenker and Kock (2020) who argues that not all aspects of the current situation are novel and worth investing. Therefore, they have illustrated six paths of research area in their recently published article “*The coronavirus pandemic- A critical discussion of tourism research agenda*”. The six recommended paths of research area are; the level of complexity; change in destination image; change in tourist behavior; change in resident behavior; change in the tourism industry; and long-term and indirect effects. Therefore, the mentioned paths of study relate the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in tourism industry.

They are Mansfield and Pizam (2005; in Kunwar, 2016) who focused on the guarantee of tourist’s personal safety should perhaps be the most important prerequisite for any aspiring tourism destination. When people fear to travel, isolation begins, xenophobia reigns and cross-cultural fertilization ceases, if the world’s travel industry cannot promote safe and worry-free travel experience then nation...suffer economically, socially, morally and spiritually (kunwar, 2016, p.3). Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon, which represents the set of movements generated by the search for places and activities that are different from usual and have no economic motivation which underlines the “mobility” as essential to tourism (Rocca, 2015). Therefore, the pause of tourism activities due to halt of travelers’ mobility amid COVID-19 pandemic has brought devastating crisis for the industry. Many countries are combating the situation effectively and many countries are suffering very hard (Ulak, 2020).

Many scholars are advocating that the crisis brought by the COVID-19 is ‘Black Swan Event’ which was unpredictable or unforeseen event, typically one with extreme consequences without any head up. Taleb (2007; in Omelchenko, 2020) who has developed *black swan theory* is against the advocacy that COVID-19 crisis is ‘black swan event’. The black swan theory or theory of black swan events is a metaphor that describes “an event which comes as a surprise, has a major effect, and is often inappropriately rationalized after the fact with the benefit of hindsight” (Vice President News, 2020). As published in *Ihodl.com* (2020; in Omelchenko, 2020), the real black swan is the events of September 11th which was not predicted. The coronavirus pandemic was predictable, which means it is a “white swan”. White

swans are a financial crisis that doesn't happen spontaneously, but naturally. The pandemic was predictable, businesses and governments around the world have no excuses for such a low level of preparation for the spread of the virus; however, the further course of events is unpredictable. Governments in the initial stage were not spending a single penny in January; however, they are now going to spend trillions (Omelchenko, 2020). It is projected that this pandemic could cost the world \$2.7 trillion, equivalent to the UK economy (Mensah, 2020).

Impact of COVID-19 on tourism industry

Zenker and Kock (2020) argue that the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on tourism industry is tremendous even in its early stage. The ripple effect of this pandemic has reverberated through every corner of the globe, causing lives and jobs of many (Mensah, 2020; Menegaki, 2020) there are 75 million jobs in tourism at immediate risk and the industry are to lose more than 2.1 trillion US\$ (WTTC, 2020; in Zenker & Kock, 2020). Hung, Mark, Yeung, Chan, and Graham (2018) assumes that based on previous experiences, some hospitality-related stakeholders may be better prepared, in terms of emergency preparation and working with customers. However, there has been always a problem of humans that they do not learn a lesson from past event or they are least bothered after eradication of crises.

Bas and Sivaprasad (2020) studied on the impact of pandemic on tourism industry in the United Kingdom where they identified hospitality and leisure sector provide employment to 3.2 million people; produces £130 billion of economy activity and in terms of taxes; and generates £39 billion in taxation for the government (UK Hospitality Workforce Commission, 2018; in Bas & Sivaprasad, 2020, p.6). Based on the study, they anticipated 75 million jobs are at risk in the travel and tourism sector; similarly, 20% to 30% expected drop in international tourist arrivals; and the sustainability risk for 80% of small and medium sized firms amid COVID-19 in United Kingdom (Bas & Sivaprasad, 2020).

Folinas and Mextas (2020) assessed impacts on those countries that were initially affected by COVID-19 where China is the first country whose economy were adversely affected 70,000 theatre in Mainland China were closed down; the majority of airlines canceled or canceling flight to and from China; and all tourism activities have been disrupted. Similarly, they also focused their study in Italy and found almost 90% of hotel and travel agency bookings for March 2020 canceled in Rome; and up to 80% in Sicily (Faderazione Italiana del Turismo, 2020; in Folinas & Metaxas, 2020, p. 5) which contributes huge damage to the tourism sector and are estimated at €200 million for the first quarter of the year. Gold Coast or Cairns in Australia where visitors were reduced by 90%; and the estimated loss was 100 million Australian dollars by March 2020 and about a loss of 1800 local jobs (The Guardian, 2020; in Folinas & Metaxas,

2020, p.6). Destinations like Las Vegas, gambling tourism based economy, one of the most happening economic hub (Eadington, 1999; in Folinas & Metaxas, 2020, p.7) according to National Geographic (2020; in Folinas & Metaxas, 2020, p.7) has to suffer due to pandemic; they had also studied the impact of coronavirus on travel industry of U.S.A. where they found the impact is six or seven times greater than the 9/11 attacks, which is \$2 trillion in economic output and supports 15.8 million jobs in U.S.”.

A report published by UNWTO (2020b) forecasted that the pandemic could impact international tourism industry even much adversely. The report shows international tourist numbers have fall down by 22% just in a first quarter (Q1) of 2020 and could fall 60-80% in the whole year that translates into US\$ 80 billion loss. The UNWTO survey report also shows that the estimated recovery of the tourism industry will begin only from the year 2021 as domestic demand will recover faster than the international demand. The experiences from previous crises, leisure travel are expected to recover quicker, particularly travel for visiting friends and relatives, than business travel. The travel restrictions chain effect on air travel according to UNWTO (2020b), there is a massive decline in air bookings worldwide in Q1 which is 80%.

According to OECD (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered an unprecedented crisis in the tourism economy, the impact is estimated to 60% decline in international tourism and can rise to 80% if recovery is delayed until December; international tourism is expected to rebound first with specific geographic-regions (e.g. in the European Union); likewise, domestic tourism is expected to recover more quickly which will help to recover the tourism economy. Hence, the impact of crisis depends upon the duration of the crisis and the speed of rebounding travel and tourism industry. There are three different scenarios for tourism recovery; scenario 1: International tourist arrivals start to recover in July, and strengthen progressively in the second half of the year, but at a slower rate than previously foreseen(-60%); scenario 2: International tourist arrivals start to recover in September, and then strengthen progressively in the final quarter of the year, but at a slower rate than previously foreseen(-75%); scenario 3: International tourist arrivals start to recover in December, based on limited recovery in international tourism before the end of the year (-80%) (OECD, 2020; UNWTO, 2020b). The impact of COVID-19 in airline bookings in different region as presented in table.1.

Table.1: Estimated impact of three-month lockdown on 2020 air travel capacity.

S.N.	Region of Airlines Registration	Decline (%)	Capacity Change (% year on year)*			
			Q1 (JFM)	Q2 (AMJ)	Q3 (JAS)	Q4 (OND)
1	Asia Pacific	-98%	-18%	-50%	-25%	-10%
2	North America	-67%	-8%	-50%	-25%	-10%
3	Europe	-76%	-10%	-90%	-45%	-10%
4	Middle East	-65%	-23%	-80%	-40%	-10%
5	Africa		-10%	-60%	-30%	-10%
6	Latin Americas	N/A	-9%	-80%	-40%	-10%
7	World Total		-14%	-65%	-33%	-10%

Source: UNWTO (2020b); Gössling, et al. (2020)

*Q=Quarter of the year.

Asia and the Pacific suffered the biggest drop and started to decline, with the introduction of travel restrictions in China. Air bookings from Europe, the Americas, Africa and the Middle East all had suffered severe declines in the first quarter of 2020. ICAO data shows a sharp 38% decline in world total air capacity in March, with massive double-digit decreases across regions. The latest estimates for the full-year 2020 compared to baseline would be a reduction of 39% to 56% of seats offered by airlines if the recovery is in late May, 49% to 72% if the restart is in Q3 or later. International passengers would decline 44% to 80% in 2020; likewise, IATA estimates that revenue passenger kilometers (RPks) will be -38% lower than in 2019, with a resulting revenue loss of US\$252 billion (IATA, 2020; in Gössling, 2020; UNWTO, 2020c). Similarly, UNWTO (2020b) report shows a decline of 22% in international passenger demand (RPks) in January-March, with a 56% drop in March.

It is estimated to cross 40 billion Nepali Rupees (332 million U.S. Dollar) loss if the lockdown continued until July 21, 2020 in Nepal; a task force of NTB has estimated the loss of 10 billion Nepali Rupees (83 million U.S. dollar) each month during the lockdown in the hospitality sector such as hotels, travels and aviation. Nepali government relaxed lockdown on June 10, 2020 allowing most of the economic activities except tourism sector, particularly hotels and airlines sectors. Tourism entrepreneurs on June 12, 2020 submitted a memorandum to Nepal's Tourism Minister Yogesh Bhattarai with a demand of reopening the sector along with the permit to operate tourist vehicles, remove garbage from the mountains and carry out infrastructure development in tourism destinations in the mountain regions where there is not thick settlement. Likewise, they asked the government to reopen the hotels and airline sectors as they are struggling to pay staff amid continued closure.

They also seek certainty of reopening the sectors so that they could plan for the future as tourism season for trekking and mountaineering is near (Xinhua, 2020).

Tourism crisis

Mair et al. (2014) states that, “various tourism researchers have called for proactive crisis response and management planning based on learning from SARS”; however, Jamal and Budke (2020), did not found the proactive crisis response on this event (COVID-19 pandemic) and depict his view that “unfortunately, coordinated crisis management and communication plans have rarely been implemented effectively at the local or country level. The issues are not merely economic recovery, destination image management, media management and promotion (common industry-related themes).” WHO (2020) claims that Chinese authorities have acted swiftly and decisively since the breakdown of the COVID-19.

Eid and Arnout (2020, p.2) stressed that the crisis is an emergency that damages society and may bring it to its collapse, and it may be economic and may be social. Every crisis can bring emergency in tourism industry and should be combated with proper crisis management strategy in order to minimize crisis impact. “*Defining Crisis and Emergency*” an article published by Callahan (1994) puts light on the difference between crisis and emergency. The author has attempted to link the relationship between crisis and emergency as “a crisis is not an emergency and an emergency is not a crisis. It is a time of great disagreement, confusion, or suffering. Both are independent of each other, although they certainly coexist.

Flaunker (2001; in Kunwar, 2016, p.10) explain crisis as having detrimental or negative effects on the organizations as a whole, or individuals within it. Crisis due to biotic organisms (e.g. disease outbreaks-epidemics and pandemics) (Specht, 2006; in Kunwar, 2016, p.10) can create economic, physical and social damage. Crisis are chaotic and complex and their impacts can make long lasting changes to systems, but these changes they can be positive or negative (Ritchie, 2004; in Kunwar, 2016, p.15). In regards to the impacts of crisis in tourism, Beirman (2011) defined crisis as “...an event or set of circumstances which can severely compromise or damage the marketability and reputation of a tourism business or an entire tourism development region”.

Kunwar (2016, p.1) mentioned that crises are of different nature and crises are inevitable and their impacts do not leave the tourism industry untouched. Eid and Arnout (2020, p.6) highlighted four different types of crises; 1) Economic crises: such as poverty, unemployment, loans, etc; 2) Social crises: including the marriage crisis, divorce, marital infidelity, the housing crisis and others; 3) Political military crises: such as the battle, strikes; and 4) Health crises: such as disease, epidemics, and plague.

According to Al-Tayeb (1992; in Eid & Arnout, 2020, p.3), the crisis management has four stages; the stage of mitigating the crisis (the quality of the risks and the surrounding circumstances and the prediction of the surrounding hazards are determined); the stage of preparation (drawing up a complete plan to face the crisis); the stage of confrontation (a decisive stage in managing the crisis, on which the size of the losses depends); and the rebalancing stage (a relatively long-term plan is drawn up according to the effects of the crisis). Likewise, Institute of Public Relations (2007) highlighted crisis management is a process designed to prevent or lessen the damage as crisis can inflict the industry. As a process, crisis management is not just a single job; it can be divided into three phases; pre-crisis phase, crisis response phase, and post crisis phase.

It is not only threat and challenges this pandemic has brought since its existence, it has also given a chance to the human civilization to rethink and remodel their lifestyle as well as to the industry for changing the patterns of service and business which is an opportunity to enhance the strength of the human civilization and industries respectively. Innovation and digitalization in industries can bring new revolution for much progressive business and to combat crisis (UNWTO, 2020c)

Preparedness and response plan

Chang, McAleer and Ramos (2020) published an article on “*A Charter for Sustainable Tourism after COVID-19*” where they presents 10-point charter that is necessary to establish a balanced and sustainable tourism, travel, and hospitality industry are; 1) social distancing especially for religious, adventure, farm and MICE tourism; 2) travel and entry restrictions on tourism numbers should be applied at domestic and international destinations; 3) personal protective equipment (PPE) should be mandatory for medical tourism, air travel and sea travel; 4) the medical and health situation at the destination should be controlled to ensure safety by implementing frequent monitoring; identifying early indicators of the risk of resurgence; designing and implementing health and safety procedures; developing robust tests for tourists to control disease and pandemics; 5) transform any future crisis into an opportunity for sustainability by (monitoring the potential tourism demand; prioritizing segments and anticipating changes in tourist behavior; ensuring connectivity and strengthening relationships with range of distribution companies; guaranteeing links between potential visitors and destinations; restarting tourism activity to maximize economic, social, and environmental contributors; minimizing any negative impacts of restarting the tourism economy); 6) transport systems including air, sea, trains, buses, taxis should impose updated rules and regulations regarding social distancing and safety standards, especially for (tourist sources and destinations; boarding and disembarking; serving meals, on-board activities, and side-trips; improved medical facilities and highly trained on-board health workers;

seating arrangements on board); 7) major events tourism should impose updated rules and regulations regarding social distancing, especially for (sports events; musical performances; theatrical performances; concerts; fairs; expositions); 8) the trade-offs between domestic and international tourism for air, land and sea passage requirements; 9) hotel accommodation needs to take into account social distancing at (the lobby for check-in and check-out; serving meals; social activities); and 10) industry knowledge and experience should be used to control increases in insurance premiums and exclusions for pre-existing illnesses (Chang et al., 2020).

Nepal Preparedness and Response Plan (NPRP) have been designed in order to be prepared for responding and managing pandemic crisis tactfully. The main objectives of NPRP are; to support the government of Nepal in preparing and responding the COVID-19 pandemic of a scale that requires an international humanitarian response (including mitigation of social and economic impacts); and to ensure that affected people are protected and have equal access to assistance and services without discrimination, in line with humanitarian principles and practices (NPRP, 2020).

According to ADB (2020b), Nepal Government announced a series of measures to contain the spread of increasing COVID-19 cases and increasing fatalities on 20 March 2020 that includes; suspension of all international flights from March 22; closure of all public and private offices; halting the operation of long-route public buses; sealing all land border crossings; and contribution of NRs 100 million or about \$ 1.0 million to the recently established SAARC fund to combat COVID-19 pandemic (ADB, 2020b).

As per MoHP (2020a), the preliminary preparedness and response of Nepal for coping with COVID-19 pandemic are; Nepal established health-desks at the international airport and border check points starting in mid-January with India; Nepal government called lock down effective from 24 March, 2020 to 15 April, 2020; the lock down also sealed the land-borders with India and China along with all international flights suspended; schools/colleges and other educational institutions were closed; temporary hospitals and quarantine centers are being set up across the country; laboratory facilities are being upgraded and expanding; hospitals are expanding ICU units and isolation beds are adding; and required medicines and test-kits are arranging by the government.

Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) has prepared the guideline on the safety measures to be implemented for the tourism sector once the nationwide lockdown is lifted and business becomes normal (The Himalayan Times, 2020a). NTB is also promoting payments through the digital wallet for all kinds of transactions in the tourism industry, which helps maintain social distancing and also suggested that other activities be conducted electronically so that most dealings are paperless. The hygiene protocols

have been prepared for hotels, restaurants, vehicle operators and tour, trekking, mountaineering and rafting agencies aiming to prevent the COVID-19 cases.

Hotels and restaurants resumed their services from July 30, 2020 implementing highest standard of sanitation and hygiene protocol for safety; however, large parties and receptions are prohibited (Nepali Times, 2020). The hygiene protocol guideline has mentioned several action plans that the management team of the hotels and restaurants should follow strictly; any rooms occupied by sick persons must be cleaned and disinfected in order to manage the case and mitigate impact among clients and staff; recommended to use infrared thermometers for temperature screening of guests; installation of an automated sanitization tunnel or disinfection sprayer to sanitize the luggage; compulsory use of PPEs (face masks, gloves, protective apron (disposable) and full-length long-sleeved gown) and maintain social distancing measures by front desk staffs and other staffs; promote cleaning of hands and respiratory hygiene in hotel premises; table setups should ensure social distancing of more than one meter from one table to next; reduce contact/touch points as much as possible, arrange virtual check-ins and check-outs as well as halt room service facilities, closure of gym/health club facilities for a temporary period; hotel rooms must be vacant for 48 hours after the last guest checks out (The Himalayan Times, 2020a).

Meanwhile, the guideline for trekking, mountaineering, tour and rafting agencies has made it a must to disinfect the workplace and use PPE; mandatory health declaration form (COVID-19 negative); maintaining personal hygiene; ensuring social distancing during the tour or trek; and to follow safety measures of the MoHP and the WHO; manage and maintain the beds set up at a distance of two meters for each trekker; one camp must be set up at a distance of 30 meters from another camp; mandatory reporting of trekking guides at local government everyday during a trek; officials from Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) must maintain a log book; set up of emergency help desk on trekking trails operating round-the-clock (The Himalayan Times, 2020a). The participation of entire tourism stakeholders is required to follow the benchmark of the protocol post-pandemic crisis for gaining back guests' confidence to revive and sustain the industry.

Likewise, the guidelines for tourist vehicles stated that the seat next to the driver must be vacant and a two-meter distance must be maintained between passengers; seats that can be taken must be clearly marked and personalized pick up and drop service to the extent possible must be provided. The draft of the board has already been submitted to the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation as well as other stakeholders for suggestions (The Himalayan Times, 2020a). The vehicle should be disinfected by spraying disinfectant after service; sanitizer at the entry point of vehicle is must; check the temperature of individual; wearing effective PPE all the

time by staffs; barricade the driver seat and passenger seat of taxis by shielding using plastic materials to avoid the transmission.

The employees of TIA have undergone extensive training for achieving highest standard and following procedure to maintain hygiene and safety along with establishing standard operating procedures (SOPs). Sanitization for the travelers is set from runways to arrival lanes. All the employees will be geared with personal protective equipments (PPEs) (Mask, face visors, gloves, body suit). They have special alertness system adopted in the passenger crowded area of airport terminal building. To minimize the risk of virus transmission, highest vigilance system is being adopted so as to keep and maintain social distancing in between or among passengers. They have set special awakening for health check up and technical arrangements at the airport. TIA is sensitive enough for disinfecting all sides and corners of airport premises for safe exist of travelers landing to Nepal and to the safe destination from the airport complex, transportation management and infrastructure development is already equipped within this lockdown period has been effective to get prepared to response and combat COVID-19 crisis (NTB, 2020).

Similarly, the domestic & international flights will resume services following safe-travel guidelines. All passengers will be required to take health precautions during flights. Airline companies are preparing themselves during this time in order to serve the passengers safely when it resumes applying and implementing all the SOPs and guidelines.

Buddha Air, a domestic airline of Nepal is conducting a mock drill at the airport regularly to help understand and better implement the protocol in much effective way once it resumes; frontline staffs will be provided with standard PPE to maintain safety and hygiene including sanitizers, masks and gloves; contact details of the passengers along with IDs scan will be recorded for tracing if required; aircrafts and ramp buses will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized using standard solutions as suggested by CAAN and WHO; the premises and check-in counters as well as baggage areas will be regularly sanitized; sanitizer and face shield will be provided to the passengers with mandatory body temperature scanning; magazines and catering services will be suspended for time being (Buddha Air, 2020).

Developed countries like U.S.A., Italy, Spain, South Korea, Japan, China, and others were significantly affected by the COVID-19; however, with the better preparedness and response to the COVID-19 crisis, those countries have succeeded to resume tourism activities following hygiene and safety protocols. The lockdown restrictions in European countries seems eased from June 1, 2020 as there were people flocking from Athens to Amsterdam to visit museums and bar for the first time in months

(DW, 2020). Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) has also prepared the guideline on the safety measures for the tourism sector to manage and combat the COVID-19 crisis after the lockdown is eased and businesses are resumed. Associations of tourism sectors of Nepal have started providing training to their employees on the protocol and its benefits. The Nepal Department of Immigration (DoI) Kathmandu resumed their services from June 15, 2020. Therefore, all visa holders requiring any visa-related services should consult DoI for information about visa matters. According to Tourism Mail Crew (2020), Nepal is planning to implement the following rules for international travelers amid COVID-19 are; compulsory certificate of COVID-19 negative issued within past 72 hours of arrival to Nepal; quarantine at the booked hotel till PCR test report is issued (6 estimated days).

Methodology

The research design is qualitative in its nature and followed fundamental type of research to expand the knowledge on the subject. The research is based on both primary and secondary data. Altogether, it took four weeks (July 3, 2020 to July 30, 2020) for the researcher to complete series of interviews (unstructured) with the intended stakeholders (Nepal Tourism Board; Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal; Hotel Association Nepal; Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents; and Nepal Mountaineering Association) of tourism industry. Each interview lasted about 40-60 minutes. The questions were related to interviewees' experience of pandemic and their reflections on the crisis management of COVID-19 pandemics, with the same questions about the impacts on tourism industry and its stakeholders were included. Pseudonyms are used to address the interviewee. The data collected from the stakeholders are analyzed and presented in findings.

Similarly, secondary data were extracted from published journals; articles and emerging media coverage sources. The first step of secondary research is to develop a research question on which investigation will be carried out. The research question is –“what are the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on tourism industry of Nepal”. The second step involves in collecting the relevant data; similarly, third step in this study is collected data were evaluated for the study and finally in the fourth step, the evaluated data is concluded.

Findings and discussions

Asian Development Bank (ADB) Report (2019; in Ulak, 2020) shows that tourism industry earns on an average 25% of the total foreign exchange. China is the second highest source of tourist in Nepal contributing 20% to the hotel occupancy (Shrestha, 2020) and Chinese tourists have drastically decreased in February and March, coinciding with the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic (Khadka et al., 2020). According to Ulak (2020), tourism industry in Nepal was gradually shifting from

passive-impetus to active-impetus with many mega projects initiation including; Gautam Buddha International Airport in Lumbini; Pokhara Regional International Airport; Tribhuvan International Airport Capacity building; and Fast-track road to Nijgadh were under construction to cater the tourism industry of Nepal. Likewise, numbers of hotels and restaurants as well as new destinations development were on pipelines which are partially halted amid COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Hoque, Shikha, Hasanat, Arif and Baker (2020), the impact of COVID-19 on human body has grown significant fear among travelers. The tourism industry is fragile and sensitive; thus, it will take longer time to return to normalcy as tourists need confidence to travel. Tourism recovery is not based on lifting of lockdown (imposed travel bans); the sector will recover only when the situation is safe to travel; recovery of the tourism industry can be through a travel concession for employees to revive the domestic tourism. Domestic tourism cannot revive just by advocating; it requires proper roadmap and strategy. It is very important to survive only then revival is possible in this situation. There is a chance of tourism entrepreneurs to go bankruptcy as only few can survive till 2020 in this situation but they cannot hold to 2021 if there is no recovery plan of the government and the stakeholders in this phenomenon. Therefore, it is obvious that the industry will experience some degree of slump if there is no proper roadmap in time. The consequences will be severe as thousands of people will be jobless. The stakeholders of tourism industry of Nepal shared their experiences of COVID-19 pandemic impact on their business and provided suggestions for managing this catastrophic crisis strategically and mitigate its ramifications.

Mr. Rana (pseudonym) opined that “COVID-19 is an unexpected crisis for global tourism industry. Hotels in Nepal have suffered a lot due to this sudden and unforeseen event. Many hotels are not being able to provide salary to their staffs had brought significant effect to the employees. HAN however has come up with 12.5% salary to their employees even in this pandemic to support the employees financially. There are many small and medium sized hotels which are about to close due to not being able to pay rents to the landlords. With the permission to open the hotel, there is a spectrum of hope that the industry can revive following the guidelines of the hygiene protocol. The employees are trained to follow the SOPs guided by the protocol and maintain all the standard of sanitation and hygiene to minimize chance of transmission of coronavirus. The association is very hopeful that the domestic tourism market will flourish soon as Nepalese loves travelling which could help revive the industry to its feet once again.”

There are altogether 1254 registered hotels (star and tourist standard categories) (Ulak, 2020) which are impacted adversely with no businesses in the hospitality sector such as hotels, travels and aviation as a result of travel restrictions and pause

of mobility for months has resulted in 332 million U.S. Dollar loss until July 21, 2020 in Nepal (Xinhua, 2020). The hotels, restaurants and other tourism subsectors has already started to train their staff to follow the hygiene guidelines (The Himalayan Times, 2020b) to mitigate the virus transmission and safe-guarding both the hosts and the guests. The industry shall start with the domestic activities and then regional tourism movement will come to existence and finally the international tourists movement can be seen (UNWTO, 2020b) which is been advocated by many tourism entrepreneurs in Nepal too.

Mr. Chhetri (pseudonym) opined that, *“we raised the voice for overall tourism industry by suggesting the government to address it in the Government Budget for Fiscal Year 2077-2078 as a strategy to mitigate and manage the crisis. Therefore, the association is advocating for providing loan in lowest interest possible; however, government has agreed to reduce the interest by 5%. But still our voice is that, the collateral should be revalued by the bank for the added loan at this time. We have also requested all the landlords to waive off 50% rent and majority of the landlords have agreed upon. The major problems of members accredited to IATA and inbound tour operators in Nepal are; they have to refunding the booking amount as there is no possibility of the activities; paying salary and clearing rent is another major issue. Finally, the association has been educating the agents and agencies to follow the hygiene protocol as a guidelines and a ground to resume the operation. He further added all the operators should follow the protocol starting from the airplane, airport, transport, hotel, sightseeing, trekking and expeditions and other tourism related activities so there will be a minimized chance of the transmission”*.

The situation had gone worst that the impact of the pandemic has spilled over everywhere causing multiplier effects. The employees and daily wages staffs are suffering the most as they are not getting full salary which brings a situation that is very hard to even manage their daily necessities. To cope with the situation, the tourism stakeholders have urged government to come with some relief packages so that they can sustain their business and contribute to the nation in future. Majority of the landlords have agreed upon the waiving of the rent by 50% amid the lockdown which is a great initiation for supporting the tourism businesses. Meanwhile, deduction in the interest rate of the bank loan would be a great relief to all the tourism-related businesses. Besides, following of hygiene guidelines would definitely disseminate a positive message to tourists and built a trust upon the nation's preparedness to invite tourists again.

Mr. Sherpa (pseudonym) opined that, *“trekking agencies of Nepal are having significant effect of this pandemic; however, there has not been any support from the government. Provision of soft loan for the sustainability of the business has*

been proposed to government; NRs. 2 million loans for at least one year without collateral or loan on the basis of registration and tax clearance for salaries, rent, and other debts. He clarified that no agencies have reached the worst condition to shut their business; however, if the pandemic continued and crossed the upcoming autumn season then there is a high chance of closure of businesses. Following the hygiene protocols by the stakeholders to operate the business is must, he adds that government should also help the agencies to survive until they revive as tourism industry is the most fragile industry which gets impacted fastest and requires the longest time to revive. After the government approves to resume the trekking, the porters will be provided all the necessary gears mentioned in the protocol to maintain sanitation and hygiene during trekking, camping, and dining”.

There are 2649 registered trekking agencies which generated NRs. 46,92,26,347.7 (MoCTCA, 2019; in Ulak, 2020) which are being severely affected. Therefore, soft loan of up to 2 million on the basis of registration and tax clearance as they have proposed to the government can be a preliminary relief package to the tourism businesses. It not only helps to sustain the business and mitigate the immediate impact of the crisis rather it can be used in employee's welfare and can retain the employees. As stated by the respondent, it is obvious that tourism industry unlike any other businesses is most fragile as it gets impacted the most in any negative events and takes the maximum time to revive. Hence, it might leads to job losses of maximum employees that will impact society significantly as a repercussion.

Mr. Waiba (pseudonym) expressed his view on COVID-19 that, *“he would like to first thanks Government of Nepal for lifting the lockdown and allowing to open the tourism industry; however, opening the business will not bring tourism to the country. Tourists are reluctant to travel due to fear of the pandemic as no vaccine is yet introduced in the market; hence, he stressed on the proper implementation of protocol is must, as fail to do so can bring a very disastrous repercussion to the industry. NMA is ready to implement all the protocol and he adds they are capable to follow all the SOPs and guidelines. Nepal government should disseminate the protocol to each and every one so that it could be followed and not just uploading on websites will work since many guides and porters are not in a position to browse and understand.*

Nepal generated NRs. 240 million/US\$ 1.6 billion in 2019 through mountain expedition (Wengel, 2020); and the royalty received by the peaks in 2018 was US\$ 1,062,816 (MoCTCA, 2019; in Ulak, 2020). International tourists are willing to visit Nepal for trekking and expedition as 20 percent of the bookings are still not cancelled (The Kathmandu Post, 2020c); however, they are concerned about the safety. Brining tourist is a one challenge in this scenario but in other hand the challenge would be the

impact they bring if the protocol is not followed properly and minutely by individuals in the field. There are employees who are illiterate working in the mountaineering associations should be trained and educated about the protocol so that they prioritize during the activities in the field.

Mr. Kahtiwoda (pseudonym) opined that *“this is an extra-ordinary and devastating event brought by COVID-19 pandemic in Nepalese tourism industry. It has created a fear to tourists and investors which have made millions of employees jobless. NTB has prepared hygiene protocol as guidelines to operate the industry (hotels, restaurants, vehicle operators and tour, trekking, mountaineering and rafting agencies) safely after the lockdown is lifted. He further added NTB should focus on the branding of Nepal as a healing, natural and wellness destination which would be a strategic response to tackle the crisis during the recovery period”*.

Government of Nepal had permitted hotels, restaurants and other tourism activities to operate effective from July 30, 2020 and had been planning to open international & domestic flights along with the long distance transportation by following standard of hygiene and safety protocols (maintaining safe-distance and putting masks) (Nepali Times, 2020; The Himalayan Times, 2020b). Nepal's only International Airport (Tribhuvan International Airport) had upgraded its facility and has arranged all the requirements to welcome the visitors with the highest level of safety and hygiene. The international flight operation was set to resume from August 17, 2020. However, with the rise of infection in Nepal, the schedule were postponed and the government decided to resume chartered flights and regular passenger flights from September 1, 2020 only, where tourists won't be allowed to arrive in Nepal until next notice. There is a prohibitory order in Kathmandu valley from August 20, 2020 and dozens of other districts (The Kathmandu Post, 2020a, The Kathmandu Post, 2020b). After three weeks of lifting the lockdown, the federal government has given local administrations and governments the authority to decide on restrictions and lockdown measures as COVID-19 cases continue to rise (Prasain & Pradhan, 2020).

The major findings of this study confirms that every subsectors of tourism industry in Nepal have been affected adversely by the pandemic which has multiplier effects on the economic and social systems; however, support/relief packages in terms of (soft loan, collateral-free loan based on registration and tax clearance, tax subsidies) from the government can provide oxygen to the business who is suffering from the COVID-19. Likewise, all the sectors should unite to follow the rules and regulations of hygiene protocol will definitely help in combating the pandemic and regain the confidence amongst both the hosts and the guests. Discipline of the hosts and the guests in following the norms of hygiene is a must, wearing mask, gloves, maintaining social distancing will be a “new normal” after the pandemic.

There is an estimated loss of 10 billion Nepali Rupees (83 million U.S. dollar) each month during the lockdown (Xinhua, 2020). Comparing the number of tourists in the previous year (2019), there were increasing numbers from the month of January till March, while in the current year the number has declined gradually. The number of tourists arrival till February were fairly good but the number of tourists drastically declined after the month of March, 2020. According to Khadka, Pokhrel, Thakur, Magar, Bhatta, Dhamala, Aryal, Shi, Cui, and Bhuju (2020), the tourist numbers as compared to the previous year, 2019, the declining rate of the tourist was 1.96% in January, 1.00% in February and 73.26% in March. Prasain (2020) published a report which shows only 30 foreign arrivals to Nepal in the month of May, 2020. This is a precipitous drop of more than 99.9 percent in tourist numbers compared to the same month in the year 2019 as there were 70,000 arrivals.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic is having far reaching impacts beyond the health crisis, and it seems to get escalated. Nepal was least prepared for the pandemic of this nature and scale because limited quarantine service and health-related services were only developed in the initial stage. The performance of government on managing the crisis and deescalating ramification of the pandemic seems challenging with the increasing numbers of infection (Ulak, 2020). Thus, the lockdown strategy to eliminate the transmission seemed effective in the initial stage; however, it could not be the permanent solution. Therefore, Government of Nepal should trace the chain of transmission to control the pandemic as it has already reached the third stage (Koirala et al., 2020). Addition of health related service, PCR test facilities, quarantines and isolation wards were increased and upgraded with the help of WHO which is still felt inadequate with the rise of infected patients.

NTB has prepared a *hygiene protocol* as guidelines to be maintained strictly for resuming the tourism industry. Altogether, 270 travels and tour agencies, restaurants, curio shops and hotels have been closed in the past three months and around hundreds of hotels and around 10,000 tourism subsectors are facing problem to sustain their businesses amid COVID-19 crisis (Ojha, 2020). For the recovery of tourism industry, tourism sub-sectors' employees need extensive trainings and orientations to maintain highest standard of sanitation and hygiene; there should be strong monitoring mechanism for the actual implementation of the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for sanitation and hygiene guided by the protocol in the field; if any breaches or gaps are identified then immediate corrective actions must be taken; it is very essential to keep the employees in discipline to mitigate and eliminate the chance of coronavirus transmission. Hence, this practice will boost up the confidence level of flaccid travelers and motivates them to travel once again. There will be a behavioral change of both the hosts and the guests as the footprint of the pandemic which

will be experienced in tourism sectors in coming days. Avoiding contact and social distancing; wearing mask and PPEs will definitely decrease the charm of hospitality. Scholars are advocating tourism will revive through the domestic tourist movement and gradually international tourist mobility will help provide oxygen and spectrum to the tourism industry which has gone to coma being a patient of COVID-19.

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Impact of the COVID-19 in Tourism Industry in Nepal and Policy Recommendation

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Abstract

For the first time in history, almost all the domestic and international tourism destinations have restrictions for travel worldwide because of coronavirus pandemic. Coronavirus disease calls the COVID-19 pandemic is an ongoing problem in more than 210 countries in the world. The purpose of this study is to find the tourism impact of COVID-19 in Nepal and purpose recommendations for the preparation of evidence-based policy and strategies for further development of the tourism industry in Nepal. Secondary data used in this study were obtained from the ministry of tourism in Nepal and other various web sources and primary data were collected from the online survey and collected 52 samples. They are involved in the hospitality, education & consulting, travel & tours, adventure & expedition, trekking agencies, and government officials from national tourism originations. The study highlights that the tourism contribution in Nepal's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) as a significant sector that has a linkage with other sectors. Also, the Nepalese tourism industry is dependent on international factors and the Nepal tourism industry highly relies on foreign tourists and cancellation of the mountain climbing permits for the year 2020, affects the income of foreign currency as well as the local economy, the loss of thousands of jobs in the tourism sector and others sectors. Overall analyses suggest that

Keywords

COVID-19,
impact on tourism,
tourism in Nepal,
travel & tourism,
policy implications

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building the capacity of stakeholders and public-private partnership initiatives to promote and work together to develop and manage in future tourism fields.

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a public health emergency of international concern (WHO, January 2020; Mahtani et al., 2020) on 30 January 2020 and a pandemic on 11 March 2020 after which lockdown measures began to be taken. (WHO, March 2020). Such measures have allowed the functioning only of essential sectors to decrease the speed of virus transmission in the country. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The First confirmed case has been traced back to 17 November 2019 in Hubei, China (Ma, 2020).

COVID-19 has given a significant impact on economic development worldwide. With large-scale quarantines, travel restrictions, and social-distancing measures drive a sharp fall in consumers and business expenditure. This situation was created as an economic recession globally. However, many efforts have been done by the government to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus (Nashira & Sofia, 2020; Darryl, 2020). For example, a few countries were performing a lockdown approach as well as declared emergency for control human movement both domestic and overseas travel. As a result, the impact of this approach is that consumers stay at home, the business loses revenue and lay off workers, and the unemployment rate increases day by day (Nashira & Sofia, 2020). According to Tourism Economic Report (2020), The effects of Covid-19 are expected to extend for eight months and result in a decrease of 39% in the global tourism volume. The tourism industry is expected to recover to 2019 pre-crisis levels, not before 2023 (*Tourism Economics*, 2020).

COVID-19 outbreak in Nepal

The first case of COVID-19 pandemic was confirmed in Nepal on 23 January 2020 when a 31-year-old student, who had returned to Kathmandu from Wuhan, China on 9 January, tested positive for the disease (Shrestha et al, 2020). After two months the second case was confirmed on 23 March 2020 in Kathmandu. On April 4 in Kailali District the first case of local transmission was found. And after 111 days of a first confirmed case, the first death occurred on 14 May caused by COVID-19. Till July 31, 2020, the Ministry of Health and Population announced, a total of 19771 COVID-19 positive cases have been confirmed, 14399 of them have been recovered, 5315 cases still active and 56 people have died.

Effects of travel restriction and lockdown in the tourism industry

In a bid to fight this global pandemic, countries have implemented necessary preventive and control measures, including lockdowns to reduce the spread, mortality

rate, and in general the effect of the virus on the global economy (Qiu et al., 2017). Global restrictions on travel have dealt a devastating blow to Nepal whose tourism industry depends on international tourists and their hard currency to support an industry that employs millions of people. Informal workers are more vulnerable and immediately affected by the intensity of lockdown measures (ILO, 2020).

In 2019, the number of international visitors to Nepal was about 1.19 million, which was the 24% growth compared with the year 2018. The picture changed when the Nepal government imposed a lockdown from March 20, 2020, and arrivals for April, May, June, and July were almost zero.

On March 7, 2020, the government of Nepal announced the suspension of On-Arrival-Visa for nationals of China, South Korea, Japan, Italy, and Iran which countries badly affected by COVID-19. Later on, March 14, 2020, the government of Nepal decided to suspend On-Arrival-Visa for all countries with exception to diplomatic and official visas. The government closed land border entry points for third-country nationals and canceled all mountain climbing expedition permits including Mt. Everest. On March 22, 2020, the Government of Nepal has stopped all international flights and on March 23, 2020, vehicular movement on long routes in Nepal also closed. Same day Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) announced the suspension of issuance of trekking permits and the government decide to close its land border with India and China on the same day. On March 24, 2020, the Government of Nepal decided countrywide lockdown.

The travel restrictions affect hotels, camping sites, or other types of accommodation, but also restaurants, museums, and other activities frequented by local as well as international tourists alike. The pandemic is also expected to have a longer-lasting effect on international tourism, while other economic sectors might recover more swiftly. The “Visit Nepal 2020” campaign, officially introduced on January 1st, 2020, aimed to attract 2 million tourists, generate \$2 billion and create thousands of new jobs, also canceled because of COVID-19.

Tourist source markets in Nepal and the impact of COVID19

During the last few years, the Nepalese tourism industry was heavily dependent on mass tourists from India, China, the USA, UK, and Sri Lanka. In 2019, Indian tourists made for the biggest share of the Nepali tourism industry with a contribution of 21.23% of the total tourists arriving in the Himalayan nation. Followed by China (14.16%), United State of America (7.79%), United Kingdom (5.11), Srilanka (4.67%), Thailand (3.48%), Australia (3.26%), Germany (3.06%), Myanmar (3.03%) and France (2.56%) (Table 1.1). Out of those countries only China, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar have recorded an early recovery from the impact of COVID-19. In Table 1.1 shows Nepal's source markets of international tourists and the impact of COVID-19 on them.

Table 1.1: Top 10 tourist source markets in Nepal and the impact of COVID19

Country	Total Tourist Arrival in 2019	Total Confirmed Cases	Total Recovered	Total Deaths	Active Cases	Death Rate
India	254150	1697054	1095647	36551	564856	2.2%
China	169543	84292	78974	4634	684	5.50%
USA	93218	4705455	2327572	156771	2221112	3.33%
UK	61144	303181	N/A	46119	N/A	15.21%
Sri Lanka	55869	2815	2391	11	413	0.39%
Thailand	41653	3310	3125	58	127	1.75%
Australia	38972	16905	9978	201	6726	1.19%
Germany	36641	210665	192300	9224	9141	4.38%
Myanmar	36274	353	296	6	51	1.70%
France	30646	187919	81500	30265	76154	16.11%
Nepal		19771	14399	56	5316	0.28%

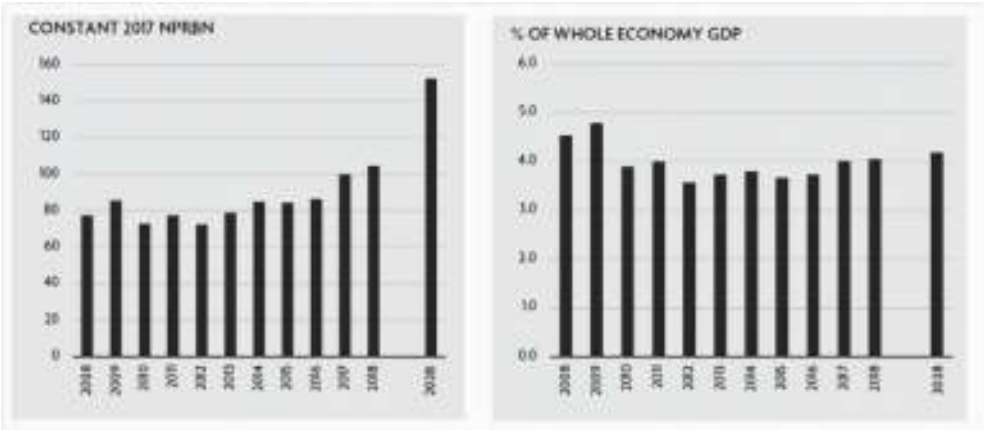
Source: Developed by the author using Tourism Statistics Nepal 2019 and world meter (Up to July 31, 2020) data

Table 1.1 shows, about 68% of the foreign tourists arrived in Nepal from ten source countries in 2019. Out of these 10 countries, China, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Myanmar have been successful in combatting the COVIS-19 as of now. From the above table Buddhist countries, China, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Myanmar contributed to 22.31% of the total tourists arriving in Nepal.

Economic contribution of tourism industry

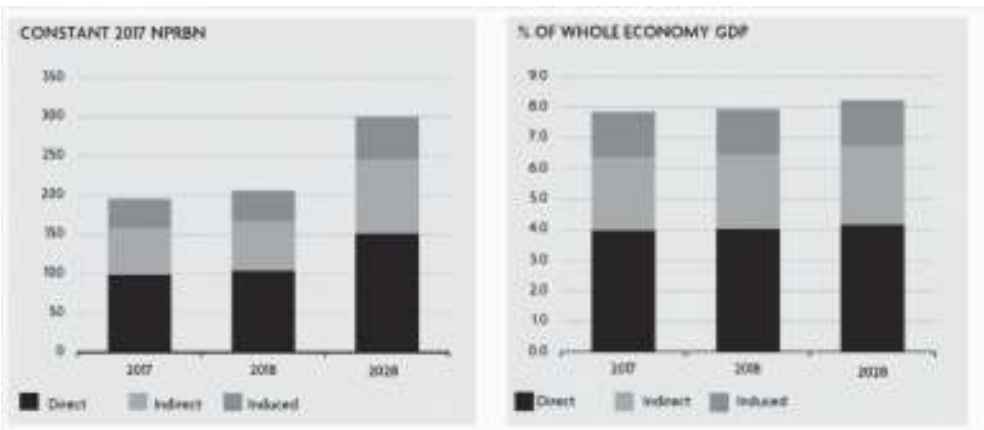
According to the WTTC, the direct contribution of travel and tourism in the GDP of Nepal was NPR 99.8 billion (USD 982.5mn) in 2017 which covers the 4.0% of the total GDP of the country. It is forecasted to rise to NPR 104.7 billion in 2018 which is 4.9% more than in 2017. The money generated by hotels, travel agents, airlines, and transportation services is the major contributors here (WTTC, 2018).

Figure 1.1: Direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP (WTTC, 2018)



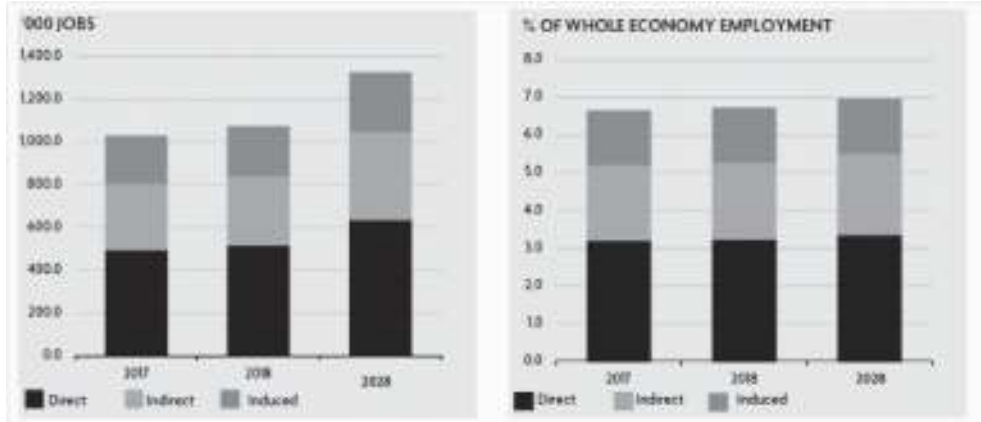
In the year 2017, **Figure 1.2** shows, the total contribution of travel and tourism to the GDP of Nepal was NPR 195.0 billion (USD 1,919.8mn) which covered 7.8% of the total GDP of the country. It is estimated to grow by 5.2% more than 2017 which would result in NPR 205.2 billion in the year 2018. This would cover the 7.9% of the total of GDP that year.

Figure 1.2: Total Contribution of travel and tourism to GDP (WTTC, 2018)



According to the report of WTTC, **Figure 1.3** shows, travel, and tourism generated 497,500 jobs in the year 2017 which is 3.2% of the total employment of Nepal. It is estimated to grow by 3.9% in 2018 which would result in 638,000 jobs. This would cover 2.1% of total employment in Nepal.

Figure 1.3 Direct contributions of travel and tourism to employment of Nepal (WTTC, 2018)



Research objectives

The main purpose of this research study is to analyze the impact of COVID-19 in the tourism industry of Nepal. The following research objectives are formulated to guide this research work;

1. To evaluate the economic implications of the Corona outbreak on the Tourism industry in Nepal.
2. To purpose recommendations for policy implications based on the findings.

Data and research methodology

A mixed-method was employed by using both qualitative and quantitative approaches for this study. In this research work with secondary data collected from various sources and primary data from an online survey, this was conducted from March 2020 to July 2020.

Research design

This was a quantitative research design that employed a survey design. The information gathered from the various respondents was rendered measurable through the method of data analysis. Questionnaires were administered as an instrument to collect the data from the chosen respondents. The subjects of the study were provided with a self-administering the questionnaire which was both closed and open-ended to enable the collection of as much and rich data as possible.

The sample size

The targeted sample for this study was stakeholders in the tourism industry in Nepal, namely tour operators, hoteliers, trekking agencies, and other tourism

providers. From March 2020 to July 2020, the total 65 sample data got from the online survey but only 52 useable respondents' samples for this study.

Sampling technique

The sampling technique employed in this study was the stratified sampling technique. The study sample was selected from a pool of tour operators, hoteliers, trekking agencies, and other tourism stakeholders.

Data collection instrument

This study used a closed and open-ended questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire was administered to the sampled population by online google form. The questionnaire was, however, pre-tested on a smaller sample drawn from the hoteliers and tour operators which will enable correction and validation.

Data analysis

The data collected was collated and sorted based on different and emerging thematic issues as outlined in the study objectives. The data were coded and analyzed. The findings of the study have been presented in the form of a narrative in conformity with the qualitative study being undertaken. To analyze data SPSS 25 was used.

Results and discussion

Demographic profile of respondent

In this research Table 1.2 shows the gender of the respondents, out of 52 respondents, the majority of respondents, 92.30% were male and 7.70% were female.

As per the findings illustrated in Table 1.2, the respondent majority of industry involvement was travels & tours were 28.85%, followed by trekking (26.92%), Adventure & Expedition (15.38%), Hospitality (13.46%), others (5.77%) and the National Tourism Organization (3.85%).

Table 1.2 also shows the type of organization of the respondent, private sectors (82.69%), Public sector (7.69%), Non-Profit organizations (7.69%), and others was 1.92%.

Respondents are requested to indicate their job rank in the organization. The findings were indicated in Table 1.2. The position of the respondents was Top Level Managers (13.46%), Business Owner (7.5%), Middle-Level Manager (5.77%), Normal Employee (3.85%), and Low-Level Manager (1.92%).

As per the findings illustrated in Table 1.2, the experience of employees was found Less than 5 years (40.38%), 5 to 10 years (26.92%), 11 to 15 Years (7.69%), and Over 15 years (2.5%).

From the study findings in Table 1.2, the number of employees in the organizations was less than 5 (21.15%), 5 to 25 (53.85%), 26 to 50 (11.54%), 51 to 75 (3.85%), 76 to 100 (7.69%), Over 101 (1.92%).

Table 1.2 Demographic profile of respondent

Group	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	48	92.30%
	Female	4	7.70%
Type of Business	Tourism Education & Consulting	3	5.77%
	Hospitality	7	13.46%
	Travel & Tours	15	28.85%
	Adventure & Expedition	8	15.38%
	Trekking	14	26.92%
	National Tourism Organization	2	3.85%
	Others	3	5.77%
Type of Organization	Public Sector	4	7.69%
	Private Sector	43	82.69%
	Nonprofit Organization	4	7.69%
	Others	1	1.92%
Role in the Organization	Business Owner	39	75%
	Top Level Manager	7	13.46%
	Middle-Level Manager	3	5.77%
	Low-Level Manager	1	1.92%
	Normal Employee	2	3.85%
Duration of Work	Over 15 Years	13	25.00%
	11 to 15 Years	4	7.69%
	5 to 10 Years	14	26.92%
	Less than 5 Years	21	40.38%
The employee in the Organization	Over 101	1	1.92%
	76 to 100	4	7.69%
	51 to 75	2	3.85%
	26 to 50	6	11.54%
	5 to 25	28	53.85%
	Less than 5	11	21.15%

Data source: Online Questionnaire Survey, from March 2020 to June 2020

Economic implication of Covid-19 on tourism industry in Nepal

Respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements about the economic impact of COVID-19 outbreak on Nepal's tourism industry. The findings were shown below in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3 Respondents opinion on economic implication

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tourism is a major contributor to Nepal's GDP.	4.02	1.09
The Nepalese tourism industry is dependent on international factors.	4.02	1.24
A big number of the Nepalese population is employed in the tourism sector.	3.54	1.23
The other sectors in Nepal depend on the growth of the tourism sector in Nepal.	3.58	1.05
Nepal tourism industry highly relies on foreign tourists.	3.94	1.38
Most of the star hotels in Nepal are dependent on inbound tourism.	3.62	1.46
Cancellation of the mountain climbing permits for this year affects the income of the foreign currency.	3.98	1.41
Total	26.70	8.86
Average	3.81	1.27

Data source: Online Questionnaire Survey, from March 2020 to June 2020

From the findings, the respondents agreed that the tourism industry is a major contributor to Nepal's GDP (Mean 4.02), this was followed by the Nepalese tourism industry is dependent on international factors (Mean 4.02). Respondents further agreed that cancellation of the mountain climbing permits for this year affects the income of the foreign currency (Mean 3.98) and this was followed by the Nepal tourism industry highly relies on foreign tourists (Mean 3.94).

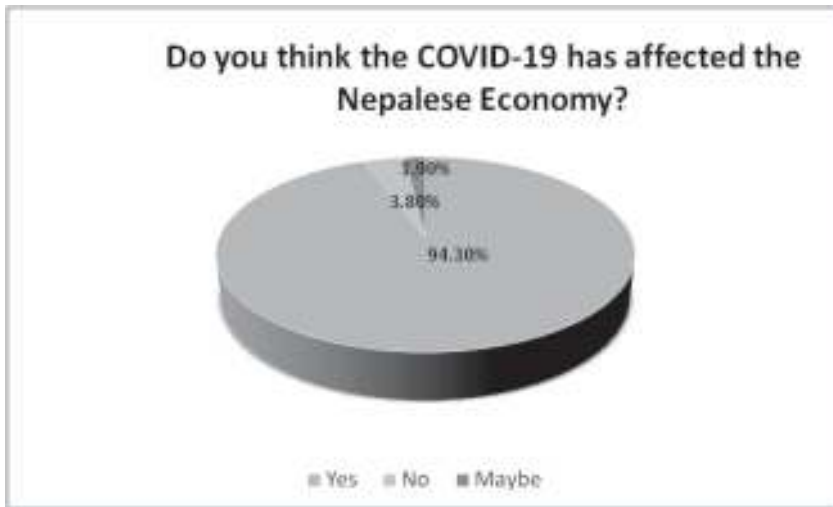
Respondents had no opinion of a big number of the Nepalese population is employed in the tourism sector (Mean 3.54) and the other sectors in Nepal depend on the growth of the tourism sector in Nepal (Mean 3.58), this was followed by most of the star hotels in Nepal are dependent on inbound tourism (Mean 3.62).

However, Most of (Average Mean 3.81) respondents agreed that there are economic implications of the COVID-19 outbreak on the Tourism Industry in Nepal.

Effect of COVID-19 in Nepal

The respondents were requested to indicate whether the outbreak of COVID-19 in Nepal has affected the Nepalese economy. The findings are as presented in Figure 1.4 below.

Figure 1.4 Effect of COVID-19 in Nepal



As per the findings in Figure 1.4 majority 94.3% of the respondents indicated the outbreak of COVID-19 in Nepal has affected the Nepalese economy, where 3.8% of the respondents indicated maybe it will be affected, while 1.9% were of a contrary opinion. This depicts that the outbreak of COVID-19 in Nepal has affected the Nepalese economy.

Among the respondent in Figure 1.4 who indicated yes, they revealed that the government announced the lockdown and issued to travel bans for domestic and international tourists cause substantial revenue losses to the tourism industry.

The restrictions on movement, including lockdowns as well as the high level of families, worldwide, thrown into bereavement, job loss, and the general economic downturn, any expected revenue from the theatrical release are also postponed, if not lost (Olaniwun, 2020). Commending the effect of COVID-19 on tourism industry respondent R4 revealed:

“Since tourism is one of the largest employment generating industries of Nepal, it affects the livelihood of many people across Nepal. There is no plan from the government to address it.”

And also, respondent R16 revealed:

"Because no tourists are allowed by the government so many people are jobless."

The travel restrictions imposed by governments subsequently led to the reduction in the demand for all forms of travel which forced some airlines to temporarily suspend operations (Ozili & Arun, 2020). Commending the economic impact respondent R34 revealed:

"More than 1600 trekking agencies who have been serving in Nepal are badly affected because more than 98% of booking has been canceled due to the coronavirus problem. It affected the Nepalese Economy."

And also, respondent R46 revealed:

"I think it will difficult to come down normal situation, coronavirus hits minimum 1 year to be control and that time many businesses can be bankrupt and create worldwide economic crises, no job, no saving, no tourism, ultimately it directly impacts to revenue generation, unemployment, poverty increment, so it's hampered GDP and especially the tourism industry."

Hotels across the world witnessed booking cancellations worth billions of dollars, and the hotel industry sought a \$ 150bn bailout (Ozili & Arun, 2020). Commending the impact in hotel industry respondent R7 revealed:

"Corona has badly hit the tourism industry. There has been almost 90% cancellation in tourist arrivals. The most affected is the airline segment and the hotel industry."

And also, respondent R10 revealed:

"Tourism and Hospitality Industry is the most important factor that affects the economy in Nepal."

From our findings, The Tourism business is already affecting quite badly and this will affect the coming season. And, tourism sector support to the Nepalese economy is big. When the tourism business is down, that affects many other businesses. So definitely this will impact to Nepalese economy.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings the study recommends preparedness should be strengthened by developing, evaluating, and revising response plans based on a comprehensive risk analysis considering all prevalent hazards. In the tourism industry, there is a very low flow of tourist and most of the bookings are canceled. Most of the hotels are offering their services at a nominal price. Even the travel agency lack business from within and fully closed for outside the country. And most of the small-scaled travel agencies are on the verge of closing permanently. Thus, there is a profound need for all tourism stakeholders to take a far-sighted view and plan how

best tourism industry of Nepal can, the government need to support private sectors with survival, revival, and restart package.

Tourism has become a major and integral part of the economic, social, and physical development (Vijaya, 2016). The importance of creating loyal clients will be more crucial for tourism service providers as trust will play a major role in the decision-making process (Pektas & Hassan, 2020). Here are some recommendations based on our findings for survival, revival and post corona policy implications:

S.No.	Issue	Stage	Responsibility
1	This is a need for government intervention by way of palliative measures to assist key stakeholders in tourism and other sectors. Such intervention will include granting loan repayment waiver and moratorium to business and soft loans with a low-interest rate. Established a Travel & Tourism Stabilization Fund- to avoid monetary and job loss.	Survival	Public Sector
2	The tourism industry will require a government bailout. This is because many tourism stakeholders were in a weak financial state which was further exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic. Even though, to revive the tourism business continuing the government of Nepal has to come out with relief Package cooperating with the tourism entrepreneur of Nepal.	Survival	Public Sector
3	Government need to work on, what could be the possible plan to restore the Nepali tourism from this pandemic (Like; value maximization Techniques, sustainable way out of such tragedy, the confidence level of employee which determined the future of the tourism industry).	Revival	Public Sector

S.No.	Issue	Stage	Responsibility
4	Post lockdown- Instead of international destination domestic travel will be preferred, at least for a year or two. Need to promote domestic destinations and offer suitable package and offer for domestic tourists with safety and security.	Revival	Public/Private Sector
5	Develop national norms and standards for safe tourism operations inspired by globally- recognized Biosecurity protocols across the value chain to enable safe travel and rebuild traveler confidence.	Revival	Public/Private Sector
6	Hygiene will be the topmost priority; clean and virgin places will be the first choice for both domestic and international tourists.	Revival/ Post Corona	Private Sector
7	There will be fewer people willing to go to a travel agency for booking. Hence online channels will be an even more important focus on digital marketing.	Revival/ Post Corona	Private Sector
8	The Nepal tourism industry has not brought important sessions on the education & preventative measures regarding the COVID-19. In the earlier stages of the spread, Nepal was still encouraging tourists to visit Nepal. Tourism stakeholders and government never did the risk assessment of these sort of pandemic. The tourism industry has a good lesson. The government should be prepared and thus include a disaster like this on the training of tourism manpower.	Post Corona	Public/Private Sector
9	After the pandemic Corona Virus down, Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiative to promote and work together to develop and manage in future tourism fields. Nepal Government Should work together with the private sectors in tourism fields.	Post Corona	Public Sector

S.No.	Issue	Stage	Responsibility
10	Based on our findings Nepal can attract tourists from Buddhist countries and promote Lumbini (The birth Place of Lord Buddha) and introduce new tourism products like meditation, yoga as wellness tourism.	Post Corona	Private Sector
11	Review and transform the tourism policy and institutional architecture to deliver efficient, effective and purpose-led support for sector growth and development	Post Corona	Public Sector

Conclusion

Because of COVID-19, Visit Nepal 2020 was postponed amid the threat of the Virus. Tourism is interconnected in all aspects, from employment, hotels, restaurants, transportation, etc., with the cancellation of all Nepal travel and now the lockdown there has been a chain reaction economically. Instead of an international destination, domestic travel will be preferred, at least for a year or two, the recovery is expected to start from domestic tourism, after than south Asian countries, and continue with recovered destinations which were usually first affected (Asia, Europe than Americas).

This study evaluated the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry in Nepal using tourism stakeholders' opinions. Result shows, that respondents agreed that tourism is a major contributor to Nepal's GDP. We also find the Nepalese tourism industry is dependent on international factors and the Nepal tourism industry highly relies on foreign tourists. And respondent also agreed, Cancellation of the mountain climbing permits for the year 2020, affects the income of foreign currency. Further, it states that the country also experienced the loss of thousands of jobs in the tourism sector.

The significance of this study is the findings of this research help the government to manage the dynamic behavior of the economic sector in the tourism industry. At the same time, government policy needs to address a proper solution in preventing the spreading of COVID-19 and elevating the status of economic activity in the tourism industry.

Further study can be extended to analyze the impact of Covid-19 on tourism, recovery, mitigation, and adoption strategies during and after Covid-19 for different tourism stakeholders, the role and actions of governments to subsidize tourism

industry, possible changes in customer behavior and transformations in tourism services and tourist markets.

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**COVID-19, Tourism, and Nepalese Leisure Travelers'
Willingness to Travel**

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Article

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Abstract

The paper aims to explore and understand COVID-19 and its effect on tourism in Nepal. More specifically, the study intends to find out Nepalese leisure travelers' past traveling behavior and their willingness to travel once the government of Nepal relaxes the COVID-19 related lockdown and measures. The study used exploratory research design and used a survey method to find out respondents' opinions on aspects of COVID-19 and tourism. The use of convenience sampling for collecting responses yielded 316 responses through email and social media platforms that lasted for three weeks in June - July 2020. The research revealed that most of the respondents are less affected by COVID-19 and are willing to take a holiday/vacation once there is relaxation of the COVID-19 measures. The majority of the respondents believed tourism as a significant part of the Nepalese economy, and expected tourism in Nepal would recover from the COVID situation.

Keywords

COVID-19,
mobility, leisure
travelers, travel
behavior,
willingness to
travel

Introduction

Nepal, a landlocked country, between the world's two giants – China and India, attracted a little over 1 million inbound travelers in 2019. There has been a constant surge of Nepalese traveling within the country and outside. One such estimate is - over 5 million visitors traveling within

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Nepal for sightseeing purposes (Prasai, 2019). However, there is a lack of data on the exact number of Nepalese visitors traveling for touristic purposes. The year 2020 was marked as the takeoff platform to build Nepal's future as a viable tourism destination. The event was marked by the Government of Nepal (at all levels) with the aim of 2 million international visitors. However, the effort lacked serious preparation to position Nepal as one of the competitive tourism destinations in South Asia, if not the world.

With regards to Nepal's tourism strength, Nepal is considered one of the most sought after destinations but lacks a competitive edge over many established tourism destinations. Nepal, with a score of 3.3, ranked 102 out of 140 countries in the Global Travel and Tourism Competitiveness in the year 2018 (see Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019). Similarly, in South Asia, it ranked 3rd out of 5 countries. Nepal held a competitive positioning in terms of - 'price competitiveness,' 'safety and security,' 'prioritization for travel and tourism,' and 'human resource and labor market' in the South Asia Region. However, Nepal strongly lacks and needs drastic improvement to compete in South Asia as well as the global market in the area of- 'air transportation infrastructure,' 'tourist service and infrastructure,' and 'cultural, residential and business travel.' The report clearly shows that Nepal has a long way ahead to compete globally in the travel and tourism market. Additionally, Nepal has been witnessing the crisis of varied nature, from disasters to political unrest, and COVID-19. The latest epidemic has paused Nepal's aspiration for prosperity through tourism growth and development.

The historical development of tourism in Nepal has shown a continuous impact of crises on tourism. Politically there has been a decade-on change in the political setup of the country, which has had tremendous economic and cultural effects. Similarly, calamities like - earthquakes, avalanches, and flooding have been impacting tourism growth and development in Nepal. International events such as - September 11 attack on US soil, disease outbreak (such as Chikungunya, Dengue, Influenza, Ebola virus, SARS, Avian flu, etc.), Tsunami in Asia, and the Pacific, and presently the COVID-19 pandemic. Nepal had witnessed an outbreak of disease and disaster in the past. Still, the COVID-19 is one of its kind as this has impacted mobility of goods and services, stressed people economically/financially, and caused significant mental and physical challenges, prompting global closure and shutdowns.

There have been some researches on the impact of disease and disaster on travel and tourism in Nepal, primarily based on secondary sources. There has been no such research-oriented output on COVID-19 and tourism, and willing to travel post-pandemic. In this sense, this research is of greater importance to policy planners, government officials, tourism academicians, researchers, industry associations, etc. in understanding tourism through the lens of Nepalese leisure travelers' mindset, their

travel behavior, and their future travel plans. This research uses exploratory design whereby the author has tried to explore the COVID-19 situation and its impact on the leisure travel market in Nepal.

Tourism in Nepal has gained lots of attention domestically, too, with many Nepalese traveling within the country for leisure, recreation, and relaxation. There has been a significant surge in domestic tourists lately. In an interview to a newspaper, ex-CEO of Nepal Tourism Board, Deepak R. Joshi, approximately 5 million Nepalese traveled domestically for sightseeing purposes (see Prasai, 2019). With the COVID-19, tourism in Nepal is at a crossroads. Like many tourism destinations around the world, Nepal is waiting for the new normal to be soon to build back tourism better in the country.

This study aims to understand and explore the COVID-19 situation and its impact on tourism. The scope of the study is to examine and understand the past travel behavior of Nepalese leisure travelers and their willingness to travel once the government of Nepal relaxes travel and mobility-related restrictions. The research does not take into account other types of travelers, such as - business, religion, etc.

Literature review

Tourism in Nepal

Owing to its diverse natural and cultural resources, Nepal has carved a name for itself among the top tourist destinations of the world. Endowed with eight of the world's highest peaks, an exotic range of flora and fauna and rich mystical heritage and culture, the prospects for leveraging tourism as a critical driver for the nation's economic development are limitless.

Understanding the early days of tourism in Nepal, it is essential to discuss the context of the Great Adventure to the mountains and the mapping activity. In those days, visitors' pursuit usually involved exploring the untouched and unhindered mountain areas. Most of the land was unexplored, unmapped, and uncontaminated then. Such gave rise to increased interest among explorers and adventure seekers towards Nepal and its terrain. According to Gurung (1991), the first climbing activities in Nepal were the opening up of the border of Nepal to outsiders. Nepal opened its border to foreigners in 1950 with the end of the century-old dictatorship Rana regime and the subsequent establishment of democracy in the country.

It was a historic first ascent of Mt. Annapurna I by Maurice Herzog in 1952 that helped in the initiation and popularization of mountain-based tourism in Nepal. Another milestone was the climbing of the world's highest peak of Mount Sagarmatha (Everest) by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa in 1953. These extraordinary human feats placed Nepal in the world's tourism map, but even in the

next ten years, the number of visitors to Nepal was limited. In the latter days, mainly after the establishment of the Tribhuvan International Airport, other types of visitors followed-suit.

With over 6000 in the first ten years, the number of travelers visiting Nepal increased nine-fold in the ten-year period that is 1962 to 1972 (Indian visitors not accounted for) (see MOCTCA, 2009). With few exceptions, there has been a steady growth of tourism over the years. There was a decline in visitor numbers between 2000 and 2006, mainly because of the unrest in the rural areas of Nepal by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) CPM. However, with CPM joining the mainstream politics and formation of the later government, tourism in Nepal has seen the better part. The much-awaited peace process has indeed increased people's aspirations and hopes for continued political and economic stability, thereby enabling better conditions for tourism and other commercial activities. There was a decline in tourist visitation to the country between 2000 and 2006, mainly due to the people's war led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPM) in the rural areas of Nepal. With the CPM clinching the majority of seats in the Constitution Assembly Polls last year (2008) and subsequently forming and leading the present coalition government, the country has shown a positive sign towards national reconciliation and the peace process. The much waited-for peace process has not only given hope to the people of Nepal but has equally enthused travelers to visit the country. It has been a steady growth of tourism in Nepal in the last 60 years. In the previous decade, only the tourist arrivals increased from 385297 in the year 2004 to 940218 in 2017 (MOCTCA, 2020). Political stability for the last few years has resulted in increased tourism numbers in Nepal. In 2019 alone, Nepal witnessed a record of 11,197,191 visitors that created more than 1034000 jobs and brought USD 833.3 million (NPR 93.9 billion) to the economy (see WTTC, 2020; MOCTCA, 2020). This number has been 2.01 % greater in comparison to the previous year 2018. Out of the total number of tourists, 83% had arrived by air and 17% by land. The top five in terms of tourist arrivals are - India, China, USA, United Kingdom, and Sri Lanka (see MOCTCA, 2020). The recent National Tourism Statistics 2019 shows that cross foreign exchange earnings from tourism rose from USD 158.7 million in 2000/01 to around USD 670.6 million in 2018/19.

The travel and tourism sector is a primary source of revenue, foreign exchange, and employment for the country, contributing 7.9% to the total GDP and 6.6% to the overall jobs (translating into ~1,027,000 jobs) as at 2018 (WTTC, 2019). Nepal's travel and tourism sector brought NPR 195 billion into the economy and supported 497,500 jobs that are 3.2% of total employment in 2019 (WTTC, 2020).

Before the COVID-19 situation, Nepal was gearing up for 2 million visitors in 2020. A report by PATANepal (2018), predicted that Nepal would receive 5 million tourist arrivals by 2030. The report shows a promising future for Nepal's tourism.

With an assumption of 13.18% growth rate per year, it would help Nepal achieve the target of 5 million visitors by 2030 (PATANepal, 2018). Tourism in Nepal was witnessing a stunning rebound from the earthquake of 2015, some of such could be attributed to: (i) stable political condition in Nepal; (ii) macroeconomic situation of the country; (iii) increased air services, connectivity and subsequent reduction in airfares; (iv) initiation and completion of 3 major international/regional airports; (v) expanded road networks in the country; (vi) development and initiation of railways; (vii) progress of some critical Nation's Pride Projects development, including – Fast-track linking Kathmandu to Terai; Mid-hill Highway, East-West Railway, North-south Corridor, etc.; (viii) increased tourist traffic post-earthquake; (ix) Rise of Asian economies (increased GDP, disposable earnings, and willingness to travel), mainly – India, China and the ASEAN countries; (x) increased tourism growth in Asia and the Pacific (mainly India, China and the ASEAN market); and (xi) restructuring of state policy, and other associated reforms in line with the federal structure of the country (PATANepal, 2018).

Numerous international travel websites have listed Nepal among one of the leading tourist destinations. According to Lonely Planet's Annual "Best in Travel List," Nepal is the Best Value Destination to travel in the year 2017 (Kathmandupost.com, 2016). Lonely Planet, a significant global travel guide book publisher, ranked Nepal 5th in the Top 10 countries 'that you cannot afford to miss' list. Trip Advisor, an online travel company that operates a global platform with an average of 500 million visitors monthly, has listed Kathmandu city in the Top 25 travel destinations in the year 2019 (Prasai, 2019). It has set a target of a 25% contribution from the tourism sector within five years. Currently, tourism contributes 2.2% to its GDP, and it earns around US\$ 703 million from one million tourists annually. In the same line, the Forbes Magazine named Nepal as 'top destinations for travelers to visit in 2020 and beyond' (Kathmandupost.com, 2019). The paper states that Nepal has been defined as a once-in-a-lifetime experience to book in 2020 under the theme – '2020 Travel Goals: Ten Bucket List Trips for the Next Decade'. There has been a significant change in Nepal's tourism post-earthquake of 2015. The positive change has increased tourists and revenues from tourism. The National Tourism Strategy 2016–2025, envisages a fivefold increase in annual arrivals by 2025 (see MOCTCA, 2016). To achieve the objective, the Government of Nepal has stepped up efforts to promote travel and tourism through arrays of activities. Few such are – amending policies to make it market-friendly, enhancing targeted marketing campaigns, and drawing investment programs and activities. One such effort was the Visit Nepal 2020 Initiative to attract two million tourists and generate one million job opportunities in the sector by 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic affected such plans, and the government has shelved the initiative as of now.

Disease, mobility, and tourism

Several factors will shape human and their activities (including tourism) in the 21st century. As per Jamal & Budke (2020), climate change and health emergencies will be the two most important drivers of change to tourism industries. With climate change, countries like - the US, India, China, Brazil, and others, are yet to accept it as a significant one. However, disease and outbreaks are the clearest and received one. There have been several cases of illness and epidemic in the past that had significantly impacted travel, mobility, and tourism globally. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Chikungunya, Dengue, Influenza (both seasonal and pandemic), Animal and vector movement diseases, Ebola virus, etc. have impacted humans and their associated activities (see Baker, 2015). The recent being the COVID-19.

On the other hand, travelers are equally the cause of the spread of such diseases globally. Travelers have been reported to be both carriers of such conditions and also victims. That is what makes disease, tourism, and mobility an essential consideration for research during this troubling time and even in the future. There have been more significant debates over disease and its impact on travel mobility and vice versa. A report by Baker (2015) indicates that travel patterns influence disease outbreaks and help see the growth of such diseases (Hollingsworth et al., 2007). Travel for tourism purposes entails more meaningful mobility, such as - railways, airways, land transportation. The use of such systems and services by travelers equally contributes mainly to the spread of such diseases. Several studies point out the emergence, proliferation, and containment of such conditions at places of tourist contact (see Yang & Chen, 2009; Hufnagel et al., 2004; Hollingsworth et al., 2007). One such case is the spread of Hong Kong Influenza. As per Rvachev & Longini (1985), the HongKong influenza strain of 1968 and 69 quickly spread throughout the world, mainly through the air network and connectivity (as cited in Baker, 2015). A similar study by Tatem et al. (2006) presents that transport networks such as - air, sea and land, contribute to the reach and spread of diseases, primarily carried through passengers and goods. There are several historical examples of viruses and outbreaks, such as - global influenza pandemics, *Anopheles Gambiae* invasion, malaria, SARS, HIV/AIDS, Cholera, etc. (Tatem et al., 2006)

There were a record 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) worldwide in the year 2019 (UNWTO, 2020a). There has been an increasing trend of people visiting the world for the last couple of decades. However, the increased risk of COVID-19 due to mishandling has led to the shutdown of the economy world over. Additionally, this has impacted the mobility of people, goods, and services, including the tourism system. Airports, seaports, railways, hotels, restaurants, and all those services points of tourist contact have been closed down since January 2020. Studies by Monterrubio (2010), Pavli et al. (2014), Gostin & Berkman (2007), Tuite et al. (2020), Lean & Smyth (2009), Kuo, Chang, et al. (2009), Chinazzi et al. (2020), Baker

(2015), Farzanegan et al. (2020), Fang et al. (2020), Hollingsworth et al. (2007), Haque & Haque (2018), WTTC (2018), Kuo, Chen, et al. (2008), Ruiz Estrada et al. (2019), Page et al. (2012), Korstanje (2011) show visitors to/from disease-affected areas are a primary source of spread in outbreaks world over, including COVID-19.

The world today is very dynamic; in a sense, there is a dynamic interaction between the visitor, community, and the outbreaks. Tourists play a significant role in transmitting diseases, flu, and viruses when they come in contact with the local population (Baker, 2015). These visitors become carriers, leading such conditions to their country of origin or places they stop through their journey. The situation becomes much more fatal when such viruses could get transmitted through blood and body fluid exposure (Baker, 2015). It is a norm that tourism destinations provide facilities and services to cater to the interest of travelers. In this sense, travelers indulge in sexual activities, perform extreme adventurous activities (such as hiking, trekking, mountaineering, jungle safari, paragliding), and other injury-prone activities that increase the risk of getting infected. Conversely, there are higher chances of tourists affecting people and places they associate within their course of journey or holidays (Zuckerman & Steffen, 2000).

Correia et al. (2001), in their study based in Canada, reported that tourists and the host interaction had a higher risk of getting exposed to blood and body fluids through intimacy with a new partner. Additionally, sharing instruments such as shaving kits, receiving medical equipment and being injected, getting a tattoo, body piercing, and use of acupuncture and other traditional medicinal practices and equally specific injuries. Generally, young travelers pose a more significant risk of such bloodborne pathogens. Young travelers are more free-minded, independent, and reckless at many times, increasing the chances of such encounters and activities. There are higher chances of sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B acquired during sexual encounters at places of visitation and carrying such through transit or destination, and ultimately being brought to their home (Baker, 2015). Similar is the case of COVID-19. With many unchecked and uncontrolled international flights to/from Wuhan province of China in the early days of the COVID19 outbreak, led to the contract and broader spread of such worldwide (Lai et al., 2020). Such has led to the present-day crisis throughout the world.

Past studies have suggested that pandemics such as COVID-19 and others have brought a more significant financial crisis to a country, region, and the whole world. Such a crisis eventually affects the viability of tourism in the areas of crisis and takes lots of time and effort in reviving tourism at those destinations. One such example is the study by Lean & Smyth (2009), where they investigate the effect of the financial crisis, avian flu, and terrorist threats in the context of Malaysia. The study shows an impact of diseases and deaths in the various regions of Malaysia: outbreak of dengue

fever in mid-1997 in the Penang region, Coxsackie B virus in Sarawak region, and the Cholera epidemic in the Sabah region. In events like these, the source markets and the destinations alike issues inevitably travel restrictions to contain the widespread effects of such diseases. The same was evident when the Chinese government stopped receiving visas and other necessary travel requirements to Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand on the onset of the SARS outbreak (see Lean & Smyth, 2009). An estimate by UNWTO, tourist arrivals would decline by 60% to 80 % in 2020, leading to a loss of US\$ 910 billion to US\$1.2 trillion in export revenues from tourism, and risk of 100 to 120 million direct tourism jobs (UNWTO, 2020b). There will be enormous economic peril to Nepal (heavily dependent on tourism) if COVID-19 pandemic does not slow down or if no cure is possible.

COVID-19: an overview

Coronavirus seems to have a very long history. It's been more than 50 years since the term 'coronavirus' got coined (see Ulak, 2020). According to Weiss & Navas-Martin (2005), it was in the year 1968; the word coronavirus got invented. COVID 19 started from Wuhan City of Hubei Province of China in December 2019 and spread globally at an alarming rate (Ruiz Estrada et al., 2019). According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), "Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus" (WHO, 2020a). People infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and medical sickness without going through special treatment. As per WHO (2020a), people with cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illnesses. Older people with such problems and symptoms are greatly affected by COVID-19. However, there are unusual cases, too, where any age group might be vulnerable to COVID-19 if the immune system is weak, and they suffer from medical problems. COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through saliva droplets or gets discharged from the nose when an infected person coughs/sneezes (WHO, 2020a; Jayaweera et al., 2020). That is why WHO and other health organizations globally have been recommending proper respiratory etiquettes and practices (such as coughing into a flexed elbow and using a mask when in contact with other humans) (see WHO, 2020e; UN Nepal, 2020; CDC, 2020).

The COVID-19 is more severe than preceding diseases and outbreaks. In two months, the COVID-19 cases exceeded that of SARS. On January 31st, 2020, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 reached 11791 in China (that is double the number of SARS infections), and in the immediate next three days, the number of confirmed cases reached 20000. By the 10th of February, the number reached 42,638 in China alone (see Ruiz Estrada et al., 2019). The WHO declared COVID-19 health emergency on 30 January 2020, and governments worldwide started taking measures to minimize the spread of COVID-19. The outbreak was traced to the Seafood

Market in Wuhan City in China. The people who visited the market developed early symptoms like Pneumonia. Since then, as of 20th August 2020, 4:17 p.m. Nepal Standard Time, there have been 22,60,5041 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 7,91,568 deaths (WHO, 2020b).

According to the Government of Nepal's Ministry of Health and Population, from 23rd January 2020 until 20th August 2020, Nepal has seen 29,645 confirmed cases of COVID 19 with 126 deaths (see MOHP, 2020). Many countries, including Nepal, applied strategies such as lockdown to minimize the spread of COVID-19. The effectiveness of lockdown in containing COVID-19 is still unclear. However, many countries have successfully proven this as a strategy to reduce the effect of the outbreak. The earliest one was China, followed by Taiwan, Hong Kong, Philippines, and others. According to Chinazzi et al. (2020), the COVID-19 did not gain much public attention globally until the imposition of the travel quarantine of Wuhan. Since then, countries like the United States, Brazil, France, Italy, India have faced immense effect due to the spread of the disease. It is unfortunate that until a medical cure is possible, humans will have to live with the virus.

There has been no specific medicine or vaccine for COVID-19 until now. There have been several reports that show medical and pharmaceutical companies working tirelessly to come up with vaccines to boost the immune system. Targeting and strengthening immune system seems to be the only primary and the most effective way to counter COVID-19 in a patient (see WHO, 2020d; Catanzaro et al., 2020; Florindo et al., 2020; Yazdanpanah, Hamblin & Rezaei, 2020; Felsenstein et al., 2020). The Oxford University's Jenner Institute and the Oxford Vaccine Group have been pioneering the efforts towards the discovery of a safe, effective, and accessible vaccine against coronavirus (University of Oxford, 2020). They have conducted trials on ten volunteers, and the initial response and data show that they are very confident the vaccine will work and have them plan to manufacture vaccines at a larger scale. Besides the Oxford University, MODERNA (USA), SINO-VAC (China), Wuhan Institute Of Biological Products (China), Beijing Institute Of Biological Products (China), are conducting Phase-3 clinical trials of their vaccines (see Gavi, 2020). Presently, there are over 170 teams of researchers racing to develop a safe and effective Vaccine (Kommenda & Hulley-Jones, 2020). Russia has become the first country to license a COVID vaccine, named -Sputnik V, which has received mixed reactions (Aljazeera, 2020). Many countries like Vietnam, Brazil, Germany have shown interest in purchasing and producing the Russian vaccine together (see Nguyen, 2020; Fonseca & Boadle, 2020; Tass, 2020). Even the WHO is in talks with the Russian government mainly for information about the Sputnik V vaccine trials. Meanwhile, Russia is further testing the vaccine to around 40,000 persons in the coming week (Beaumont & Agencies, 2020).

Going by the effort and progress of vaccine trial campaigns on humans, there might be a vaccine soon. However, the WHO is very skeptical of the chances of new vaccines coming out this year, and might take as early as 2021 to come up with a safe and successful vaccine that can help the human race overcome COVID-19 (The National, 2020). From the rate of competition amongst states and pharmaceutical companies, it could have a double effect: first, there could be misfiring out of rush with the human trials, and secondly, this will significantly fuel countries to monopolize the supply of such even if the tests get successful. However, there remains the socio, economic, political debates over the sanctioning, accessibility, and affordability of such to ordinary people throughout the world.

COVID-19 and the socio-economic impact

There are several impacts associated with diseases such as COVID-19 and socio-economic impacts. Studies have shown significant economic, social, cultural, and environmental effects of outbreaks. Brahmabhatt, in 2005 (cited in Kuo et al., 2009), points to the economic impacts of diseases arising mostly by the efforts of state and industry players. These actors play a significant role in avoiding the rapid spread of such diseases rather than the actual conditions and its consequence of sickness or death (see Kuo et al., 2009). Such economic impact arises from demand shocks in sub-sectors of the economy, such as - tourism mass transportations, hospitality, retail sales, etc. (Brahmabhatt, 2005 cited in Kuo et al., 2009).

Nepal was the first country in South Asia to have a reported case of COVID-19 (NDTV, 2020, as cited in Poudel & Subedi, 2020). The first such case in Nepal had mild symptoms, got admitted to the hospital and later discharged because preliminary tests showed no such effect of COVID 19 (see Bastola et al., 2020). The increasing number of people with COVID-19 prompted the Government of Nepal to enforce lockdown since 24th March 2020 (see Wikipedia, 2020). After nearly four months, the government has ended lockdown but with restrictions (Pradhan, 2020). All international and domestic flights are to resume starting August 17. The lockdown brought several difficulties to people, and the government's continuous request to adopt measures to counter COVID-19 has multi-dimensional effects.

A recent study by Poudel & Subedi (2020) states that with COVID-19 and the measures to counter them by locking down and maintaining social distancing has affected Nepalese in many ways. People have been affected physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. The pandemic equally has brought tremendous economic impact. A recent study by REANDA (2020) states that industries and companies had already felt the effect of COVID-19. In the short run, namely – halt in production due to supply chain disruption and workforce dislocation, leading to the cost of production and ultimately increase in the price of products.

Similarly, in the mid-term, the project that industry will be affected by decreased demand. The long-term assessment projects reevaluation of strategies to minimize risks and have a competitive edge over competitors to procure raw materials to run the production efficiently. The report highlights a significant change in investors' mindset, mainly – (i) deferring investments; (ii) reevaluation of potential risks; (iii) rethinking over product manufacturing choices. Nepal is heavily dependent on neighboring countries (China and India); importing raw materials are likely to decline. Nepal lacks a competitive advantage over other countries in South Asia to procure raw materials, thus will make Nepal more dependent on other countries to meet the void created by such. There will be an increase in fuel imports, widening the gap between export-import even more, thus bringing undesired problems in the balance of payment condition. Similarly, there will be a significant decline in remittance in the immediate future. Remittance and Tourism were two main pillars of the national economy before COVID-19 situation, bringing much need for foreign currencies to counter trade deficit and pressure of import.

COVID-19 will impact the overall sector of the economy, and tourism will be the worst-hit sector (see REANDA, 2020). Nepal's main two source markets have been the greatest affected by the COVID-19 crises. India and China ranked Number 1 and 2 respective countries in 2019, with 254150 (21.2 % of total arrivals) and 169543 (14.2%) (MOCTCA, 2020). Combinedly, Nepal received 35.4 of total tourist arrivals from these markets. On the other hand these both countries are the most affected ones in the world. China is where the COVID-19 originated and is one of the worst affected areas. India, another source market, is on the world's top five most affected counties. It's doubtful that long-haul tourism will restart anytime soon. The COVID-19 situation has affected the tourism sector severely, resulting in the suspension of the Nepal Tourism Year 2020 campaign by the Government. Also, there is a loss of revenue and employment from tourism. REANDA (2020) points out that the close of the Everest expedition alone causes 20,000 trekking and mountaineering jobs, with induced effect on hotels, restaurants, leading to layoffs of staff. Even tourism and mobility restarts, it will take a long time to recover to the pre-COVID situation. In the present context, Nepal would naturally rely on these two large markets. However, the lackluster approach from the concerned authorities seems very unlikely to fuel leisure travelers' willingness to travel.

Travel behavior

Travel behavior is the execution of anticipation, planning, and decision making of a tourist. Van Vuuren & Slabbert (2012) explains 'travel behavior' as a concept whereby a tourist is subject to behave in specific ways, before and after traveling. Several personal and interpersonal factors affect such behavior. Additionally, the

interaction between individual and environmental factors results in the continuation of such action (Van Vuuren & Slabbert, 2012).

An approach to understanding travel behavior and demand is through the concept of 'human activity.' This concept elucidates that the activity decision process leads to travel. Similarly, activities and involvement plans influence travel decisions (Recker et al., 1986). The tourism demand comprises a willingness to travel for activities travelers who wish to participate. As per Builiung & Kanaroglou (2007), this tourism demand arises because of individuals and family need for involvement in activities. Understanding tourism demand and variations are essential for destination managers and industry players. Market segmentation based on lifestyle, activities, and sociodemographic variables serves as the key to understanding tourism demand. In this context, Chen et al. (2009) provide useful insight into vacation lifestyle and travel behaviors, with a focus on the Taiwanese market. They state that there have been fewer deliberations on lifestyle variables that serve as an essential basis for market segmentation. Chen et al. (2009), using cluster analysis in the paper, conclude with three groups of travelers: (i) family, (ii) social, and (iii) stylish. A considerable difference existed in the trip characteristics, frequency of travel, accommodation choices, and the average money spent on lodging, due to varied demography of the respondents.

Axhausen (2007) states that "travel behavior research studies the physical movement of persons outside their reference locations for any purpose" (p. 166). The time of movement is - a day spent out of reference location. At the same time, the reference location refers to the place of origin, where people return at the end of the day. Axhausen (2007) identifies such reference could be the person's home, the place they reside during their holiday or any temporary station. Furthermore, the framework of such a person's daily program outlines the duration a person spends out of their residence until the end of the trip. As per Axhausen (2007), few other essential components while indulging in an activity that needs consideration by a traveler are (i) purpose, (ii) timing, (iii) duration, (iv) location, (v) number of participants, (vi) cost, and (ii) plans and programs. These elements complete the scope of the 'activity' which Axhausen (2007) states a progression emerging out of interaction in a given spatial and social context while interacting with each other. That is why understanding travel behavior requires considerable research time and effort.

Predicting travel behavior is a complicated and challenging activity (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002). It requires rigorous research into individual characteristics and situations to predict such behavior, like destination and holiday choice (see March & Woodside, 2006; Laws, 1995; Holloway, 2004). Studies by MacCannell (1973), Plog (1974), Crompton (1977), Pearce & Caltabiano (1983), Pearce (1993), Hung & Petrick (2011), Huang & Xiao (2000), Cooper et al. (2008), Saayman & Saaactyman (2009)

helps to understand travel behavior in details. These studies present tourists' diverse motivations to travel, ranging from - relaxation to escape from day to day environment or to discover and recognize oneself. In a greater sense, tourist motivation helps in understanding travel behavior and willingness to travel. Xie & Ritchie (2019) states that "tourist motivation, travel constraints, and constraint negotiation (overcoming constraints) are important components of travel decision-making" (p. 111). These components affect each other and also travel behavior; that is why it is crucial to understand these components (Xie & Ritchie, 2019).

Travel motivation is an essential tool in assessing market needs, wants, and demands. Understanding such motivation influences tourist behavior and activities at a destination, thus helping tour operators with adequate data to reach potential travelers (Crompton, 1979; Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987; Cha et al., 1995 cited in Xie & Ritchie, 2019). Understanding of travel motivation and behavior helps destination managers, policy planners in estimating and managing tourism demand. Such factors equally assist tourists in the travel decision-making process (see Van Vuuren & Slabbert, 2011; Ng & Ho 2018; Chen et al., 2009).

Willingness to travel

Willingness to Travel (WTT) is a tool that helps in understanding people's travel choices and activities (see Hanemann, 1991; Poor & Smith, 2004; Abuamoud et al., 2014). As per Abuamoud et al. (2014), this method helps in estimating the impact of economic decisions and activities, like cultural heritage resources. WTT also helps in determining the number of potential visitors to a destination or a site (Navrud & Ready, 2002; Samdin, 2008). Several factors affect or might affect people willing to travel to a given destination.

There are several studies undertaken to understand peoples' willingness to travel to a destination. However, very few researches present an elaboration of the use of such a tool during the time of disease outbreak. One such study was undertaken by Aro et al. (2009) on Finnish tourists during the Avian Influenza outbreak in Asia. The research focussed on understanding the Finnish tourists' willingness to avenge travel-related health risks. From the study, it was evident that these travelers had immense belief in fate and god while on holiday and business trips. They were willing to take such risks by even neglecting the precautionary measures, such as avoiding handshaking. From the research, it was evident that holiday tourists were risk-takers compared to older ones, and also those on holidays took more risks compared to those on business. Despite the dangers of Avian Influenza, SARS, HIV, and other infectious diseases, holiday tourists were more of a risk-taker compared to business travelers. Young travelers opined that any risk should not outshine holiday plans at any cost. Holiday trips were prone to health risks compared to a business trip, considering

the independence and freedom of choices. Business travelers are confined to set-programs and are rational evaluators of risks in life (see Aro et al., 2009).

Smith (1985), while analyzing US Vacation Travel Patterns, has identified and used variables associated with willingness to travel, mainly – social and geographic. As per Smith, these variables are broad and have categories that overlap each other, though partially. The social variables comprise of – income, race, education, age, and % of the population living in urban regions. These are highly related to vacation patterns. Similarly, geographic variables constituted – population density, proximity (distance), availability of major tourist attractions, weather conditions, accessibility (extensive and efficient highways), the relation between origin and destination, percentage of vacation person-nights made in-state and opposed to out-of-state, and vacation quotient. This research has used the variables explained by Smith (1985), but with changes to suit the research subject.

Research methodology

Globally, there are significant studies on leisure travelers, tourist motivation, past traveling behavior, willingness to visit a destination, and disease and mobility. However, there is a lack of research on the context of outbreaks, leisure travelers, and their desire to travel. With regards to Nepalese leisure travelers, Baniya & Paudel's (2016) work can be considered substantive. Baniya & Paudel's (2016) work provides insight into the motivation of Nepalese travel markets, using push and pull factors. No other papers have focussed on the aspect of Nepalese travelers' motivation and behavior. In this sense, this paper seeks to bridge the gap in the area of Nepalese leisure travelers and their traveling behavior.

This paper aims to explore Nepalese leisure travelers' past traveling behavior and their willingness to travel post-COVID-19, once the government of Nepal releases the travel restrictions. To achieve these goals, the researcher uses exploratory research design and quantitative technique (survey). The use of questionnaires helps in avoiding biased opinions and in deriving a reasonable conclusion. The study was administered in the 4th week of June, the 1st and 2nd week of July 2020 (total for three weeks). A convenience sampling approach technique was used primarily because of the COVID-19 situation and the restriction on mobility. Naturally, the use of electronic media and the use of social media was the most appropriate tool to employ for the distribution of such a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of - (i) the importance of tourism to Nepal; (ii) past travel behavior; (iii) COVID-19 and its impact on respondents; and (iv) willingness to travel once the government of Nepal relaxes travel and mobility restrictions.

The researcher approached people from diverse social, economic, and educational backgrounds. Nepalese nationals from the travel trade; hospitality, and catering

services; developing agencies (NGOs and INGOs); academia; protected area consultancy and professions; manufacturing and retail businesses; construction sector; banking and financial sectors; marketing and administrations; and university students were selected and approached for the study. There were two essential criteria set for selecting respondents: (i) Nepalese nationals residing in Nepal; (ii) one who traveled for at least one leisure pursuit in the last three years. Altogether 700 persons were contacted via email and through social media (Facebook Messenger and LinkedIn). Few who did not use Facebook messenger and LinkedIn were targeted over Facebook posts for five days (in the 1st and 2nd week of July). Out of the targeted sample, 325 responded with a filled questionnaire. Nine responses did not comply with two criteria (mentioned above), thus, discarded from the analysis. Out of 325 surveys, only 316 were considered usable for analysis.

The data collected was analyzed with the help of tools such as SPSS and MS-Excel. The data collected from the respondent were coded and tabulated into SPSS, worksheet, and analyzed using descriptive statistics. From the analysis, it was evident that most of the respondents ($n=316$) were between the ages of 18 and 30 (70.3%). Similarly, gender distribution showed that the majority of respondents were male (71.8%). Half of the respondents (50%) had Bachelor-degree and employed in different sectors. On marital status, the majority of the respondents were 'single' (65.2%).

Results and discussions

Past travel behavior

Past travel behavior provides an insight into the travel pattern and factors that enable such trips (see Hanson & Hanson, 1981; Handy, 1996; Van Vuuren & Slabbert, 2012; Axhausen, 2007; Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002). The study of past travel behavior provides insight into travel purposes, travel choices, and their willingness to specific types of holiday and activities. Such information is essential from the perspective of destination managers, planners, service providers, and researchers. The following section presents a brief overview of their holiday/vacation and their interest.

Number of trips taken and days spent

Out of total respondents ($n=316$), it was evident that almost 61% of the respondents had "1 trip" every year for the last three years. Similarly, 28.5% stated they had taken "2-3 trips" in the past three years, followed by 8.2 % who took "1 trip" in the past three years. From the survey, it was evident that the majority of the respondents had been taking up leisure travel in the past three years. Regarding the number of days spent on tour holidays, 42.7% ($n=316$) of the respondents spent 3 to 5 days on holidays, followed by 14.2% who spent six days and more on their last holiday trip. Only 17.1% of the respondents spent less than three days on their recent holiday trip.

Amount spent on last holiday (in NPR)

From the research it was evident that out of total respondents (n = 316), more than 27.8% of respondents spent the amount (in Nepalese Rupees) NPR 10,001-20,000, followed by 27.2% who spent 40,001 and more, and 19% spent less than NPR 10,000. Similarly, 16.8% spent NPR 20,001- 30,000, and remaining 9.2 % spent NPR 30,001 - 40,000.

Travel - pattern, behavior, and purpose

Regarding respondents' vacation patterns, it was evident that 78.2% of the respondents (n=316) had taken their holidays within Nepal, and the remaining 21.8% traveled outside Nepal. Analysis of open-ended responses shows popular destinations as - Pokhara, Ghorepani, Poonhill, Langtang, Lumbini, and Mustang. It's exciting to find that the popular destination remained Pokhara and the Annapurna region because of a well-established tourism destination, provisioning of better facilities and services, provisioning of promotional and informational sources, air and road connectivity, etc. Similarly, 64.6% of the respondents (n=316) traveled with family. The majority of the respondents (69%) went for a holiday, leisure, and recreation purposes, followed by 18.4% for education and training, 7% to visit their friends and relatives, 1.6% for religions/pilgrimage, and 1.3% for health/medical care.

Regarding the organization of the trip, it was evident that 72.8% (n=316) traveled independently, arranging all components of the trip and services by themselves. Similarly, 24.7% of the respondents traveled on pre-packaged tours, purchased from travel/tour operators. Remaining 2.5% of respondents traveled through other mechanisms whereby organizations they worked or associated with had taken care of such arrangements. The responses show travel agents/tour operators will suffer more if they do not try to accommodate Nepalese travel behavior and choices.

Effects of COVID-19

There has been growing concern over the pandemic effect on society on several fronts. In this sense, respondents had four dimensions to respond, namely: (i) health-wise (involving physical and psychological); (ii) economically/ financially; (iii) socially; and (iv) mobility of goods and services. Additionally, three scales - 'greatly,' 'slightly,' and 'not at all,' used to measure such an effect. About health, more than 45% of respondents were 'slightly affected' by COVID-19. Regarding economically/ financially, 52.5% of the respondents said that they were 'slightly affected,' followed by 33.9% stated that they were 'greatly affected' by COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, 48.7% of the respondents were 'slightly affected' 'socially,' followed by 30.7% who were 'greatly affected.' With regards to 'mobility of goods and services,' it was found that 53.8% responded that they were 'slightly affected,' followed by 31.3 % who were 'greatly affected.' 14.9% were 'not at all affected' in terms of mobility of goods and services.

Tourism in Nepal and COVID-19

About the importance of tourism for Nepal more than 88.9% of the respondents believed that tourism to be 'very important' for Nepal, followed by 8.5% thought tourism as 'important.' 1.9 % of the respondents were 'neutral' to the question posed, and less than 1% responded that they do not believe tourism to be essential for Nepal.

Regarding the 'future of tourism in Nepal,' 39.6% of the respondents were found to be 'very optimistic,' followed by 31.6% who stated to be 'optimistic.' Similarly, 22.5% of the respondents were 'somewhat optimistic,' and less than 2% were 'not at all optimistic' regarding the future of tourism in Nepal.

While understanding respondents' perception of tourism recovery in Nepal from the present situation of COVID-19, it was clear that 63.6% believed tourism would recover, followed by 'maybe' with 31.3%. Only 5% think tourism will not recover in Nepal from the present situation of COVID-19.

Role of organizations involved in tourism

World over, the government and their bodies have been instrumental in leading their country to contain COVID-19 and stimulating economic sectors, including tourism. In this context, respondents were to present their views on the government and their bodies' role in tourism recovery and promotions in Nepal.

Regarding awareness of the Government's initiative of promoting tourism (both domestic and international) in Nepal, 65.8% of respondents were unaware of the government's action of promoting tourism to both local and international markets. Only 34.2% stated that they were aware of such. However, only a few could mention such. Upon analysis, it was evident that most of the respondents indicated government initiative and activities undertaken in the past before COVID-19 (such as - visit Nepal 2020) and not present policies and or incentives for reviving tourism in Nepal. Respondents were to rate the role of the Federal and provincial governments and the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) (apex body related to marketing and promotion of tourism) in tourism recovery. Similarly, five aspects with regards to organizations' role, namely - i) adequacy, ii) appropriateness, iii) responsible, iv) influencing, and v) overall satisfaction was to rate on 5-point Likert scales.

Regarding 'adequacy' of the role of government and their bodies, it was evident that 34.2% of the respondents found the Federal government's role to be 'slightly adequate,' followed by 31.3% who stated 'not at all adequate.' Similarly, with regards to the Provincial government's role, 41.5% said 'not at all adequate,' followed by 28.8% stated to be 'slightly adequate.' Similarly, with regards to 'adequacy' of the role of Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), 29.7% of respondents stated to be 'slightly adequate,' followed by 6.6% who thought 'somewhat adequate,' and 21.5% 'not at all adequate.'

Regarding the 'appropriateness' of government and their bodies' role in these troubled times, 36.7% found the part, of the Federal government as 'slightly appropriate,' followed by the Provincial government's role as 'appropriate' (34.8%), and that of NTB as 'slightly appropriate' (30.1%). 24.1% of respondents opined the role of the Federal government as 'not at all appropriate.' Governments and their bodies' responsibility are enormous during a troubled time, such as COVID-19. Industry, travel professionals, and tourists alike are expecting the government and their bodies' role to be proactive, timely, and efficient. In this sense, respondents were to present their opinion on the 'responsibility' of organizations. 33.5% of the respondents stated that they found the Federal government 'not at all responsible,' followed by the Provincial government 'not at all' (38.6%). Similarly, 26.3% of the respondents state that they found NTB to be 'slightly responsible.'

The Government and NTB play a significant role in influencing tourism recovery, motivating industry, and presenting an appropriate image of tourism and the destination in the market. In this sense, respondents were to rate the role of these bodies in influencing positive tourism growth in the country. 30% of the respondents found the Federal government's role as 'slightly influential,' followed by 'not at all influential' (27.8%). Similarly, with regards to the Provincial government, 42.4% of respondents found 'not at all influential.' 29.7% of the respondents found NTB's position to be 'likely influential,' followed by 22.2% who stated 'not at all influential.'

Willingness to travel

56.3% of the respondents stated that they are 'willing to travel' for a vacation/holiday trip once the Government of Nepal relaxes travel and mobility restrictions. Similarly, 27.8% of the respondents were 'not sure' of taking a holiday/vacation trip as the stated 'maybe' responses. 15.8% reported that they would not make any such vacation/holiday trip.

There were varied reasons for the willingness or unwillingness to take a holiday/vacation. Most respondents (n=244) stated that they were tired and bored stuck at homes. Some respondents mentioned that they have been working from home during this lock time. As per respondents, it has become essential to take a break and get refreshed by indulging in recreation and relaxation activities.

Regarding financial and nonfinancial resources available to take holidays in the days to come, 60.4% of the respondents have the necessary funds. However, 39.6% stated they did not have such support. The reason for this was they were unemployed or are skeptical about the jobs post-COVID-19. It would be too early to think about taking any such holiday vacation by spending the resources that would be scarce then.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 has severely impacted the mobility of people, goods, and services in Nepal, including tourism. Nepalese leisure travelers are very willing to travel, once the government of Nepal relaxes restrictions related to travel and mobility. The majority of the respondents have required financial and non-financial resources to take a holiday/vacation once the COVID-19 situation becomes normal. From the responses, it is evident that they are frequent travelers and organize trips by themselves. Such behavior could be a crucial indicator for the travel trade industry, who, at the loss of the international market, might find it essential to consider. International tourism in Nepal will take some years to get back to normal, even if scientists find a vaccine for the COVID-19. The research found that travel agents/tour operators need to understand and appreciate Nepalese leisure tourists. Most of the Nepalese leisure tourist arrange their tours. Most importantly, Nepalese leisure travelers are inclined to spend more and travel to new destinations within the country. When Nepalese are willing to take holiday trips as soon as the government relaxes COVID related restrictions, it would be beneficial for the Nepalese tourism industry to come up with appropriate strategies to target this lucrative market.

Further research needs to generalize the findings. Additionally, the study needs to be done at the national level to ascertain Nepalese leisure travelers' tastes, preferences, and behavior by all levels of governments, Nepal Tourism Board, and the Industry to harness the opportunity and benefits that the Nepalese market segment will bring in the future. Understanding Nepalese tourists' choices and motivational factors will be an essential milestone in sustaining the ailing overall tourism economy and individual operators alike.

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Understanding Multisided Platforms, Circular Economy and Tourism

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Article

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Abstract

A multisided platform is a model that creates value by facilitating exchanges between two transaction partners which means the platform plays an intermediary role between the two groups. This is also called “knowledge economy” or “third globalization” which has been brought into one platform through technology and information. In business, the platform is recognized as a marketing terminology. Comparatively the state, government, and civil society are influenced by various technologies in several fields of human activities and provide beneficiaries to human beings. This study aims to introduce the multisided platforms and their respective fields in businesses on one side and the other side, it shows the link between tourism and circular economy and explains why is circular economy becoming a key factor for contributing to keeping the balanced environment in highly industrialized, urbanized, overpopulation including over-tourism. These days the circular economy has become closely associated with sustainability and sustainable tourism and development.

Keywords

Multi-sided platforms, knowledge economy, technologies, circular economy, tourism

Introduction

International tourist arrival has increased from 25 million globally in 1950 to 278 million in 1980, 674 million in 2000, and 1,235 million in 2016. International tourist

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arrival worldwide is expected to increase by 3.3% a year between 2010 and 2030 to reach 1.8 billion by 2030, according to UNWTO's long-term forecast report "Tourism Towards 2030". The market share of emerging economies increased from 30% in 1980 to 45% in 2016 and is expected to reach 57% by 2030, equivalent to over 1 billion international tourist arrivals (Kurtagic, 2018, p.13). In 2019, Travel & Tourism's direct, indirect and induced impact accounted for: US\$8.9 trillion contributions to the world's GDP (10.3% of global GDP), 330 million jobs, 1 in 10 jobs around the world, US\$1.7 trillion visitor exports (6.8% of total exports, 28.3% of global services exports), US\$948 billion capital investment (4.3% of total investment) (WTTC, 2020). With the growth of tourism impacting the economy, many developed countries are now talking about sustainability to cope with climate change. For this to achieve the use of technology has been increased than before and a new idea of circular economy has been developed as a tourist (defined by the World Tourism Organization as a person traveling and staying at least one night and less than one year to a destination outside his usual environment) (Luciano, 2019) can contribute a lot in reducing the waste while consuming tourism products throughout his journey.

With the pace of tourism mobility in the world, travel operators are working on managing this industry with technology. The advancements in information and communication technology have a direct effect on the economy, business, daily routines, and lifestyle of people at large. It has touched almost all the sphere of human life. Similarly, the travel and tourism industry also have such impacts in both supply and demand sides. The evolution of the internet brought a major shift and change in the travel industry with the launch of direct-booking websites by airlines and hotels, Online Travel Agencies (OTAs), metasearch engines, Application Programming Interface (API) connectivity, New Distribution Capability (NDC), etc. (Gholami *et al.*, 2017; Loureiro, 2016).

The author of this paper accumulated all information through the secondary source of information. The paper has been divided into two parts. The first part deals with multisided platforms while the second part deals with the circular economy. The first part of this study sheds light on the introduction to different platforms and its second part is based on umbrella review. Out of fourteen types of review, umbrella review refers to compiling evidence from multiple reviews into one accessible and usable document. Focuses on the broad conditions or problems for which there are competing interventions and highlights reviews that address these interventions and their results (Grant & Boot, 2009, p.95). The objective of this study is to understand how the previous scholars conducted research and developed the concepts of the multisided platform and circular economy. Although this topic has been extensively studied outside Nepal, particularly in China, Europe, and other independent countries, it is still untouched in Nepal. Therefore, to disseminate knowledge on the multisided

platform, circular economy to the students of various disciplines, it is quite essential to have the studies carried out on this important topic.

Multisided platforms

Multisided Platforms (MSPs) have been around for several centuries. Only recently, however, MSPs have become prominent in the economy, especially due to the internet and digitization wave across many industries. The idea behind MSPs is to connect two or more interdependent user groups, by playing intermediation or a matchmaking role (Gawer, 2014; Evans and Schmalensee, 2016).

Multisided platforms could be conceptually differentiated from other organizational forms that involve two or more transaction partners and highlight different streams of platform research that are relevant to the proposed activity system perspective. Prior literature characterizes multisided platforms as hubs or intermediaries for value exchanges between two or more markets of users and producers (Gawer, 2014; Hagiu & Wright, 2015; Rochet & Tirole, 2003; Parker & Van Alstyne, 2005). For example, Cennamo and Santaló (2015, p. 12) define multisided platforms as “networks that bring together two or more distinct types of users and facilitate transactions among them”, and McIntyre and Srinivasan (2017, p. 143; in Zhao & Buck, 2019) conceptualize multi-sided platforms as “interfaces that can serve to mediate transactions between two or more sides”. Implicit in these definitions is the notion that value creation through multisided platforms is dependent on enabling interactions between different sides of the market, or as Chakravarty et al. (2014, p. 3; in Zhao & Buck, 2019) note: “a core benefit that each side seeks from the platform is access to participants on the other side.” An example of a multisided platform is the e-commerce marketplace eBay that facilitates consumer-to-consumer and business-to-consumer sales. eBay’s role is to attract participants to join, consummate matches between buyers and sellers, and facilitate value-creating exchanges by providing transactional architecture, and setting rules and standards.

The MSPs are technologies, products, or services that create value primarily by enabling direct interactions between two or more customer or participant groups (Evans & Schmalensee, 2016, p.4). A multisided platform is a business that operates a physical or virtual place (a platform) to help two or more different groups to find each other and interact. The different groups are called “sides” of the platform. For examples of MSPs and the participants they connect include Alibaba.com, eBay, Taobao and Rakuten (buyers and sellers); Airbnb (dwelling owners and renters); the Uber app (professional drivers and passengers); Facebook (users, advertisers, third-party game or content developers and affiliated third-party sites); Apple’s iOS (application developers and users); Google’s Android operating system (handset manufacturers, application developers, and users); Sony’s PlayStation and Microsoft’s

Xbox gaming consoles (game developers and users); American Express, PayPal and Square (merchants and consumers); shopping malls (retail stores and consumers); Fandango (cinemas and consumers); and Ticketmaster (event venues and consumers) (Hagiu, 2013 <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article>). The multisided platforms are recognized as the new economics of the 21st century which has been variously heralded as a knowledge economy, the data economy, the eCommerce economy, and so on. The new economy is commonly believed to have started in the late 1990s, as high tech tools, particularly the internet and increasingly powerful computers made their way into the consumer and business market place. This study begins with various new economies and finally discussed on circular economy under the theme of environmental economics, tourism, and sustainability.

Digitization and economic models

Tourism is an important global industry. The advancement in the cloud-based technologies in the world has gained momentum in this industry to make it more accessible and convenient. According to the Global Tourism Economic Forum (2020), the travel industry has been at the forefront of digital innovation and continues to be transformed at an exponential rate across the globe. According to the World Economic Forum's Digital Transformation Initiative (DTI), from 2016 to 2025, digitalization in aviation, travel, and tourism is expected to create up to US\$305 billion of value for the industry through increased profitability, migrate US\$100 billion of value from traditional players to new competitors, and generate benefits valued at US\$700 billion for customers and the wider society. International tourism essentially refers to the activities undertaken by visitors also known as visitor economy. The tourism industry encompasses all activity that takes place within the visitor economy. While studying Airbnb, a rental platform, the researcher encountered with several terminologies such as "moral economy" (Bauman, 2003; Bauman & Rogers, 2010), "resistive economy" (Golmohammadi, 2015), on-demand economy" (Gurvich, Lariviere, & Moreno, 2016), "platform economy" (Kenny & Zysman, 2016; Hands, 2013), "shut-in economy" (Stainton, 2020), "experience economy" (Pine & Gilmore 1999), "sharing economy" (Belk, 2010, 2014; Matofska, 2016), "gig economy" (Friedman, 2014), "collaborative economy" (Dredge & Guimothy, 2015), "peer-to-peer economy" (Bauwens, 2012), and "circular economy" (Naydenov, 2018).

For Bauman (2003), a moral economy is a community, a neighborhood, a circle of friends, partners in life and partners for life, a world where solidarity, compassion, sharing, mutual help, and mutual sympathy...A world whose residents are neither competitors nor objects of use and consumption, but fellows (helpers and helped) in the ongoing, never-ending joint effort of shared life- building and making shared life livable (p.70; in Germann Molz, 2013; Bauman & Rogers, 2010).

The resistive economy is a way to circumvent sanctions against a country or region experiencing sanctions. This can involve increasing resilience by substituting local inputs for imported inputs, the smuggling of goods, and an increasing imports. A country may even attempt to turn these pressures into opportunities. In some ways, sanction economies bear some resemblance to an economy on war or emergency footing (Golmohammadi & Min, 2015). Historically, the term resistive economy was first introduced in 2005, following the blocked of Gaza by Israel (Isaac, Hall, & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2015; in Seify & Hall, 2018) to describe attempts to maintain the regional economy. The term was then adopted in Iran by the leader of the country in 2010 as a response to toughened international sanctions imposed over Iran's economic lifeline oil exports along with restrictions on international activities of the central bank (Smyth, 2016; in Seify & Hall, 2018). Over the years, sanctions have taken a serious toll on Iran's economy and people. In general, resistive economic policies are aimed at reducing vulnerability to external economic pressures, including such events as the global financial crisis along with domestic production. To meet the needs of the country, Iran developed a policy of "knowledge economy" (Toumaj, 2014) in which vocational and technical education was given high priority. It was believed that education decides on innovation and competitive ability in the economy (Golmohammadi & Min, 2015). This can involve increasing resilience by instituting local inputs for imported inputs, the smuggling goods, and increasing imports. A country may even attempt to turn these pressures into opportunities. In some ways sanction, economies bear some resemblance to an economy footing (Golmohammadi & Min, 2015). As far as sanction and tourism were concerned, Iran adopted three major resistive strategies. First, Iran attracted friendly countries such as Russia, China, and neighboring countries which they could ignore American sanctions. Second, increased attention was given to attract members of the diaspora abroad. Third, currency devaluation was utilized as a means of encouraging more tourists to visit a 'cheap destination' (Seify & Hall, 2018).

The terms "On-demand economy" or "access economy" (Gurvich, Lariviere, & Moreno, 2016) are sometimes used in a broad sense, to include all activity from transaction platforms, and much else. The term "platform" simply points to a set of online digital arrangements whose algorithms serve to organize and structure economic activity. In the IT world, the term means a set of shared techniques, technologies, and interfaces that are open to a broad set of users who can build what they want on a stable substrate. As used more widely, the term also points to a set of digital frameworks for social and marketplace interactions (Kenney & Zysman, 2016).

"Platform economy" or "digital platform economy," a more neutral term that encompasses a growing number of digitally enabled activities in business, politics,

and social interaction (Kenny & Zysman, 2016). The application of big data, new algorithms, and cloud computing will change the nature of work and the structure of the economy. But the exact nature of that change will be determined by the social, political, and business choices we make. Platforms and the cloud, an essential part of what has been called the “third globalization” reconfigure globalization itself (Kenney & Zysman, 2016).

The platform economy is economic and social activity facilitated by platforms. Such platforms are typically online matchmakers or technology frameworks. By far the most common type is “transactions platforms” also known as “digital platforms” (Kenny & Zysman, 2016; Hands, 2013). Examples of transaction platforms include Amazon, Airbnb, Uber, and Baidu.

Since the early 2010s, the platform economy has been the subject of many reviews by academic groups and NGOs by national governments and by transnational organizations like the EU. According to Hands (2013), “Platform is a useful term because it is a broad enough category to capture several distinct phenomena, such as social networking, the shift from desktop to tablet computing, smartphone, and ‘app’ based interface as well as the increasing dominance of centralized cloud-based computing. The term is also specific enough to indicate the capturing of digital life in an enclosed, commercialized and managed realm”.

The shut-in economy is an economic model that is based on the principles of home-based consumerism. Whilst many of us did not realize that in the shut-in economy existed last decade, it has been growing and evolving for some time. In essence, the shut-in economy revolves around the concept of staying at home. This includes eating at home, working at home, socializing at home, etc. People swapped supermarket trips for online grocery shopping.

The term “Experience Economy” was first used in a 1998 article by B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore describing the experience economy as the next economy following the agrarian economy, the industrial economy, and the most recent service economy. The concept had been previously researched by many authors. The Experience Economy is also considered the main underpinning for customer experience management. Pine and Gilmore (1999) argue that businesses must orchestrate memorable events for their customers, and that memory itself becomes the product: the “experience”. More advanced experience businesses can begin charging for the value of the “transformation” that experience offers, e.g., as education offerings might do if they were able to participate in the value that is created by the educated individual. This, they argue, is a natural progression in the value added by the business over and above its inputs (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Although the concept of the experience economy was initially focused in business, it

has crossed into tourism, architecture, (Lonsway, 2009) nursing, urban planning, and other fields.

The 'Sharing' in the Sharing Economy refers to the use and access to shared physical or human resources or assets, rather than the fact that there is no monetary exchange (Matofska, 2016). A sharing economy enables different forms of value exchange and is a hybrid economy. It encompasses the following aspects: swapping, exchanging collective purchasing, collaborative consumption, shared ownership, shared value, cooperatives, co-creation, recycling, upcycling, re-distribution, trading used goods, renting borrowing, lending, subscription-based models, peer- to- peer, collaborative economy, circular economy, on-demand economy, gig economy, crowd economy, pay-as-you-use economy, wkinomics, peer- to- peer lending, micro-financing, micro-entrepreneurship, social media, the Mesh, social enterprise, futurology, crowdfunding, cradle- to- cradle, open-source, open data, User Generated Content (UGC) and public services (Matofska, 2016).

The Congressional Research Service defines the "gig economy" as: the collection of markets that match providers to consumers on a gig (or job) basis in support of on-demand commerce. In the basic model, gig workers enter into formal agreements with on-demand companies to provide services to the company's clients. Prospective clients request services through an Internet-based technological platform or smartphone application that allows them to search for providers or to specify jobs. Providers (gig workers) engaged by the on-demand company provide the requested service and are compensated for the jobs. (Kalleberg & Michael 2016).

A peer-to-peer (p2p) economy is a decentralized model whereby two individuals interact to buy sell goods and services directly with each other or produce goods and services together, without an intermediary third-party or the use an incorporated entity or business firm l, in a peer-to-peer transaction, the buyer and seller transact directly with each other in terms of delivery of the good or service and the exchange of payment. In a peer-to-peer economy, the producer is usually a private individual or independent contractor who owns both their tools (or means of production) and their finished product (Chappelow, 2018; in Bauwens & Iacomella, 2012). The solution of contemporary capitalism, according to Bauwens and Iacomella (2012), needs to address these three issues integrally, i.e., a production that allows the continued survival, sustainability and flourishing of the biosphere; protecting and promoting the free sharing of social innovations and knowledge, and the recognition that social and economic justice will not be achieved unless we first recognize the actual scarcity of nature and the actual abundance of knowledge and innovation (p.7). The peer- to- peer vision relies upon the three major sectors of society- the state, market, and civil society- but with different roles and in a revitalized equilibrium. At the core of the new society is civil society, with the commons as its main institution (Bauwens & Iacomella, 2012).

A collaborative economy is a market place where consumers rely on each other instead of large companies to meet their wants and needs. Collaborative economics consist of giving, swapping, borrowing, trading, renting and sharing products and services for a fee, between an individual who has something and individual who needs something generally with the help of a web-based middleman. A collaborative economy may also be known as a “sharing economy”, or a “peer-to-peer economy”. (Frankenfield, 2018; Dredge & Gyimothy, 2015).

The current state of the environment is still decreasing, as several indicators are showing. Without going into all the details, we can conclude that especially the old economies are using and continue to use the natural resources of planet Earth faster than nature can regenerate them. The UNEP Yearbook 2012 indicated that in 2011 the world population reached 7 billion. It is expected to grow to 9 billion by 2043, placing high demands on the Earth's resources (UN DESA, 2011). Climate change exacerbates pressure to meet a growing and wealthier population's need for food. Global agricultural production may have to increase 70 percent by 2050 to cope with this demand (FAO, 2011a, ...)(UNEP, 2012, p.5; in van Rheede,). During the past decades, many concepts and approaches such as ‘sustainability’ or ‘sustainable development’ and ‘green growth’ have been introduced to tackle the serious global problems connected with the prevailing growth-based production and consumption models, such as resource scarcity, climate change, and pollution of land and oceans. These changes gave birth to the concept of sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development adopted by the Brundtland committee (1987; Kunwar, 2017) emphasizes “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. This has also focused on the environment, social and economic sustainability. Environmental sustainability refers back to themes such as pollution and limited resources (for example, energy, waste, and water), social sustainability is “how individuals, communities and societies live with each other and set out to achieve the objectives of development modes, which they have chosen for themselves taking also into account the physical boundaries of their places and planet earth as a whole”(Colantonio, 2009; in van Rheede, 2012) and it is linked to themes such as “equity, poverty reduction, and livelihood, are increasingly being complemented or replaced by more intangible and less measurable concepts such as identity, sense of place and the benefits of social networks...” (Colantonio, 2009; in van Rheede, 2012). Finally, economic sustainability refers to the way the companies combine the effects on the environmental and social aspects in day-to-day business decisions. The fundamental principles of sustainable development are holistic (both environmental and development goals), futurity (long time capacity Global ecosystem), and equity. Also, more specific objectives are formulated for development: concerning: quality of life for all people, a satisfaction of basic needs,

self-reliance (including political freedom and local decision making for local need and indigenous development. The specific objectives formulated for sustainability are sustainable population levels, minimal depletion of non-renewable resources, and pollution emission within the assimilative capacity of the environment. Important to realize is that the concept of sustainability and sustainable development also creates confusion. Sharpley (2000; in van Rheede, 2012) compared the concept of 'sustainable tourism' with 'sustainable development' and concluded: '...whilst it embraces the objectives of environmental sustainability, sustainable tourism does not appear to be consistent with the developmental aspects of sustainable development. This is, perhaps, not surprising. Neither the inherently imperialistic, dependent nature of tourism products on a global scale nor the characteristics of tourism consumption fit easily with the principle of endogenous, alternative development' (Sharpley, 2000, p.14; in van Reede, 2012).

While following Evans and Schmalensee (2005), Sanchez-Cartas and Leon (2019) describe that "a platform is a technology that minimizes transaction cost, or a technology that creates a value allowing transactions that otherwise would not occur." While reviewing the six seminal papers, Ardolino, Saccani, and Perona (2016), have identified the terms used for the research as follows: "two-sided platform"; "multisided platform"; "platform business model"; the two-sided market"; "multisided market"; "multisided network"; "two-sided network". Among these various terminologies, Ardolino et al. (2016) use the term multisided platform and define that it is an economic model enabled by a product, service, firm or technology with all the related relationships; the single term platform is instead referred only to the element which enables the interactions among the different group of users. The authors write, all the definitions seem unanimous on the fact that multisided platforms aim at facilitating enabling interaction between different groups of users. The platform acts as a mediator between a group of end-users and one (or more) group of actors which hold the owners of the products sold or the resources to deliver services (through the platform). Therefore, since MSP could be considered as a particular case of a network good characterized by a network benefit which depends on participation or usage actions of other users (Bhargava & Choudhary, 2004; Bhargava, 2014; in Ardolino et al. 2016).

Circular economy and sustainable tourism

Nearly two decades ago, there was also talk of sustainable tourism. According to World Tourism Organization (2005), sustainable tourism is "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, the host communities. The Circular Economy (CE) has many similarities with other concepts and approaches which address the relationship between humans and their environment. It does,

however, have a distinctive usage and does generally have more radical implications than, for instance, the concept of sustainability, as defined and used in seminal Brundtland Report reported to the United Nations (Brundtland, 1987; in Manniche et al., 2017).

The origin of the CE term dates back to the 1920s, through different perspectives and schools of thought. Leontief (1928; in Rodríguez, Florido & Jacob, 2020, p. 3) introduces the concept in his research 'The Economy as a circular flow', Von Bertalanffy (1968; in Rodríguez et al., 2020, p. 3) developed in 1937 the first breakthrough of 'The general system theory' and Lyle (1996, in Rodríguez et al., 2020, p. 3) promoted recovery and systems regeneration (materials and energy) through regenerative design. However, it was at the end of the 1990s when the CE concept was first coined by the environmental economists Pearce and Turner (2003, in Rodríguez et al., 2020, p. 3) who claim that the term was first used in Western literature in the 1980s to describe a closed system of the economy–environment interactions.

Nowadays, this term has received a great impulse with the work of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, founded in 2010 to spread these innovative ideas and to accelerate the transition towards a circular regenerative and restorative economy (Rodríguez et al., 2020, p. 3). Other schools of thought related to the CE concept are Degrowth theory, Economy for the Common Good, Collaborative Economy, and Social Economy (Rodríguez et al., 2020, p. 3). Circular Economy as a new economic model has its origins in Environmental Economics, whose aim is the integration of science into sustainability and sustainable development (Andersen, 2007; Rodríguez et al., 2020, p. 4).

While searching about circular economy and tourism, Rodríguez et al. (2020, p. 8) found many keywords such as 'circular economy and tourism', 'circular tourism', 'circular tourists', 'hotel and circular economy', 'circular hotels', 'green practices and tourism', 'environmental practices and hotels, tourists or tourism', 'eco-innovations and hotels, tourism or tourists', and so on.

The vast majority of the publications found are from Chinese authors; this may be because the government of China has chosen CE as its sustainable development strategy. This strategy, formally accepted in 2002, has been already implemented and developed in several pilot areas in the country (Su, Heshmati, Geng & Yu, 2013; Rodríguez et al., 2020, p. 8).

Literature mainly focuses on the construction, energy and water consumption, utilization and new uses, and less on other relevant aspects, such as the need for a change in the business model, reuse of organic waste and synergies with agriculture, the circularity of tourist destinations, the application of CE as a model to achieve sustainable development of the local economy through synergies with tourism or

the use of CEas a model to achieve inclusive and sustainable tourism with local development (Rodriguez, Florido,& Jacob,2020,p.21).

Origin of the circular economy concept

Year	Author	Topic/School of Thought
1928	Leontief	'The Economy as a circular flow'
1937	Von Bertalan_y	'The general system theory'
1966	Boulding	Improved durability
1977	Stahel and Reday	Performance economy
1989	Frosch and Gallopoulos	Industrial ecology
1990	Pearce and Turner	A closed system of economy-environment interactions
1991	Robèrt	'Most environmental problems are based on the same systemic error, linear processing of material'
1994	Pauli	Blue economy
1996	Lyle /regenerative design	Regenerative design
1997	Benyus	Biomimicry
1999	Hawken et al.	Natural capitalism
2002	McDonough and Braungart	Cradle to Cradle
2011	Mathews and Tan	'Closed-loop economy'

Source: Rodríguez, Florido & Jacob, 2020, p. 9

Johnston et al. (2007; in Geissdoerfer, Savage, Bocken, & Hultink, 2017) estimated that there are around 300 definitions of sustainability. To cite but a few, sustainability can be defined as a situation in which human activity is conducted in a way that conserves the function of the earth's ecosystems (ISO, 15392, 2008), a transformation of human lifestyle that optimizes the likelihood that living conditions will continuously support security, well- being, and health, particularly by maintaining the supply of non- replaceable goods and services (McMichael et al., 2003; in Geissdoerfer et al., 2017), or an indefinite perpetuation of all life forms (Ehrenfeld,2005; in Geissdoerfer et al.,2017). Sustainability concerns are increasingly incorporated into both the agendas of policymakers and the strategies of companies. The term sustainability itself originates in the French verb soutenir, "to hold up or support" (Brown et al.,1987; in Geissdoerfer et al., 2017) and its modern conception has its origins in forestry. Later, it was transferred to the context of ecology, as a principal of respecting the ability of nature to regenerate itself (Duden, 2015; in Geissdoerfer et al.2017), from

where the modern definition of being “able to be maintained at a certain rate or level” (Dictionary 2010) developed.

Though the term sustainability comes together with a circular economy, it is increasingly gaining attraction with academia, industry, and policymakers. The concept of circular economy has been gaining momentum since the late 1970s (EMF,2013b). Several authors, like Andersen (2007), Ghisellini et al. (2016), and Su et al. (2013) attribute the introduction of the concept to Pearce and Turner (1989; in Geissdoerfer et al.,2017). By describing how natural resources influence the economy by providing inputs for production and consumption as well as serving as a sink for outputs in the form of waste, they investigate the linear and open-ended characteristics of contemporary economic systems. This is influenced by Boulding’s (1966) work, which described the earth as a closed and circular system with limited assimilative capacity, and inferred from this that the economy and the environment should coexist in equilibrium (Geissdoerfer et al,2017).

The contemporary understanding of the circular economy and its practical applications to economic systems and industrial processes has evolved to incorporate different features and contributions from a variety of concepts that share the idea of closed loops. Some of the most relevant theoretical influences are cradle- to-cradle (McDonough & Braungart,2002; in Geissduerfer et al.,2017), laws of ecology (Commoner, 1971; in Geissdoerfer et al, 2017), looped and performance economy (Stahel,2010; in Geissdoerfer et al, 2017), regenerative design (Lyle, 1994, in Geissdoerfer et al., 2017), industrial ecology (Graedel & Allenby, 1995; in Geissduerfer et al.,2017), biomimicry (Benyus, 2002; in Geissdoerfer et al., 2017) and the blue economy (Pauli, 2010; in Geissdoerfer et al., 2017).

According to Kirchherr, Reike & Hekkert (2017), there are more than 100 different definitions of a circular economy are used in scientific literature and professional journals which portray so many different definitions in use, because the concept is applied by a diverse group of researchers and professionals (Kirchherr, Reike &Hekkert 2017). A philosopher of science emphasizes a different aspect of the concept than a financial analyst. The diversity of definitions also makes it more difficult to make circularity measurable

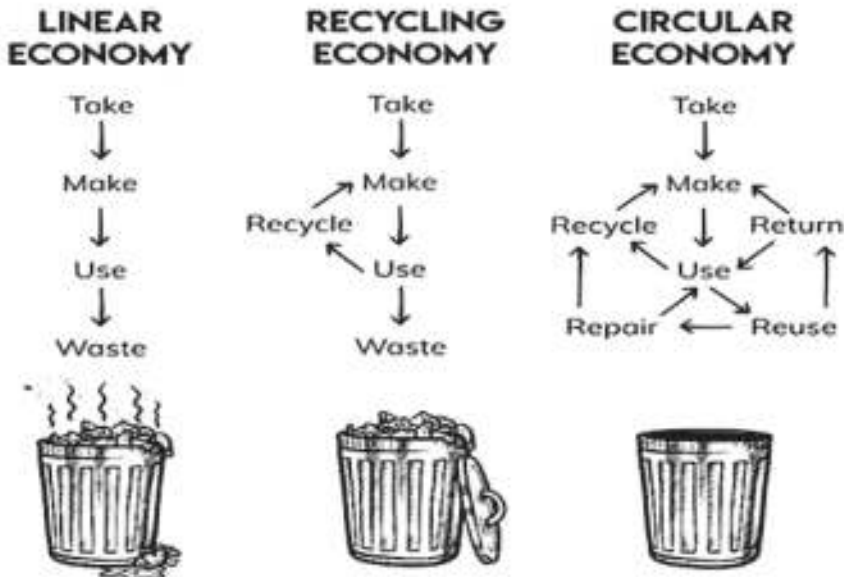
According to M. Ellen (2011; in Kirchherr, Reike & Hekkert, 2017), a circular economy is an economic system of closed loops in which raw materials, components, and products lose their value as little as possible, renewable energy sources are used and systems thinking is at the core. Kirchherr, Reike&Hekkert (2017) define: “A circular economy describes an economic system that is based on business models which replace the ‘end-of-life’ concept with reducing, alternatively reusing, recycling and recovering materials in production/distribution and consumption processes,

thus operating at the micro-level (products, companies, consumers), meso level (eco-industrial parks) and macro-level (city, region, nation and beyond), intending to accomplish sustainable development, which implies creating environmental quality, economic prosperity and social equity, to the benefit of current and future generations.” (pp. 224-225). The most renowned definition has been framed by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, introducing the circular economy as “an industrial economy that is restorative or regenerative by intention and design” (2013b, p.14; in Geissdoerfer et al., 2017). Based on the different contributions of Ellen MacArthur (2013b), Geng and Doberstein (2008,p.331), Webster (2015,p.16), Yuan et al., (2008,p.5), Bocken et al. (2016, p.309), Geissdoerfer et al. (2017) define the circular economy as a regenerative system in which resource input and waste, emission, and energy leakage are minimized by slowing, closing, and narrowing material and energy loops. This can be achieved through long-lasting design, maintenance, repair, reuse, remanufacturing, refurbishing, and recycling.

World Economic Forum (2020) states that a circular economy is an industrial system that is restorative or regenerative by intention and design. It replaces the end-of-life concept with restoration, shifts towards the use of renewable energy, eliminates the use of toxic chemicals, which impair reuse and return to the biosphere, and aims for the elimination of waste through the superior design of materials, products, systems, and business models.

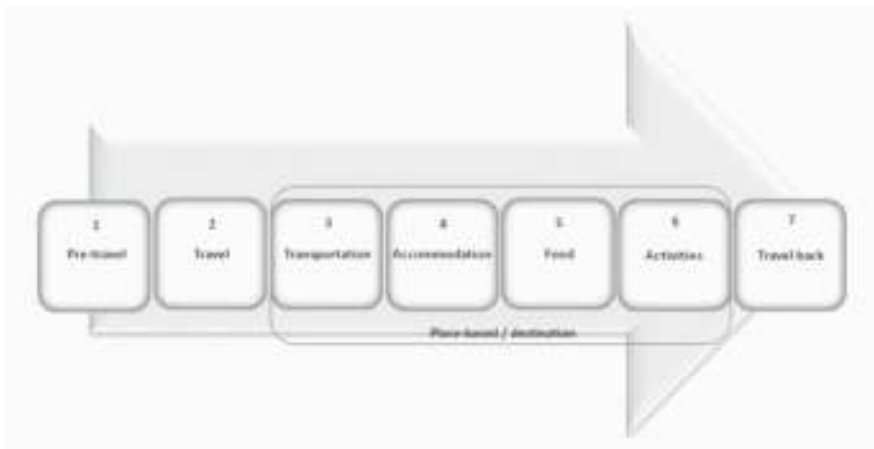
The circular economy is gaining increasing attention worldwide as a means to reduce dependency on primary materials and energy, while at the same time becoming an economically viable alternative to the linear economy and recycle economy. A linear economy is more about using products and then disposing of them, recycle economy is using the product and reuse if possible otherwise dispose of them but still creating the waste.

A circular economy is an alternative to both linear economy and recycles economy in which we keep resources in use for as long as possible, extract the maximum value from them whilst in use, then recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of each service life. These three types of economy can be best described in the figure below.



Source: Luciano (September 27, 2019)

From the figure above, it can be said that the circular economy aims to close the loops. In this model nothing is waste: it is opposite to the linear model and a more advanced version of the recycling model. A circular economy is one in which resources are used efficiently to gain the most value from them. What is leftover at the end of their life is recycled or reused to reduce waste? The importance of a circular economy is growing to mitigate the impact of climate change which is mostly discussed topics in media these days. This is also trying to combat some of the problems linked to overconsumption, continuous growth, and resource depletion. The overall goal is to achieve a better balance between people, planet, and economic growth. Often the concept circular economy associated with the tourism sector is essentially related to goods and services production without wasting and to the using of sharing platforms (Airbnb). The latter is part of the sharing economy that is different from the circular one. The sharing economy is an economic model based on assets of exchange and sharing practices, both material goods and services and knowledge. It refers to the sharing of goods or other resources by multiple people (Naydenov, 2018). The tourism sector for a long time did not show much attention to analyze of a circular economy. But, the importance of a circular economy is increasing, especially in developed countries. This is because of the link between a circular economy and the tourism sector. This link has been connoted as circular tourism. There are mainly seven steps in the tourism process for any individual as shown in the figure below



Source: Luciano (September 27, 2019)

This paper analyzes, first, all the publications on circular economy and tourism and classified them into eight streams according to their keywords and the topics covered, as can be seen in the following table (Rodríguez et al., 2020, p. 8).

Circular economy and tourism by streams

Circular Economy and Tourism	
Stream	Keywords
Agriculture and rural tourism	Leisure agriculture, agro-tourism, forestry economy, eco-agriculture, agro-circular economy, Phyto-depuration, fertilizer
Application of renewable energy in the tourism sector	Renewable energy, waste-to-energy, low carbon economy, cleaner production, sustainable energy, smart technology
Cultural tourism and circular economy	World heritage sites, cultural urban landscape, alternative tourism, scenic spots
Hotels and tourists' circular practices	Circular hotels, tourists, hotel business case, eco-innovations, hotel sector's competitiveness,

Maritime sector and tourism	Marine debris, marine litter, microplastics, blue growth, maritime economy, development of seaport cities, aquaculture, seagrasses
Resources consumption in the tourism sector	Use of resources, environment, infrastructure
Sustainable Development Goals	Sustainable Development Goals, climate change, sustainable jobs, governance, sustainability
Tourism and waste generation	Waste management, septage management, solid-waste management, secondary raw materials, recycling materials

Source: Rodríguez, Florido & Jacob, 2020, p. 9

At a given destination both producers and tourists are concerned with the circular economy. Tourists are the ones who decide which transportation mode to use and what activities to be done there.

Applying the principles of the circular economy to tourism means asking how we either redesign our systems to avoid causing these externalities or rethink them so they can be factored productively back in. As Alexandre Limille (Smith, 2018, p. 14), a circular economy expert working to add a social perspective to current models, writes: These externalities also exist at societal levels in our unequal- unable- inaccessible model: inequality, unemployment, factious capital(debt) creating poverty so that wealth could be built for others, people living with disability seen as less 'performing', and so on. How about taking this opportunity to also see poverty as the result of a wrongly designed system? How about claiming that - like waste-poverty is an externality of our current model? Like waste, shouldn't it be designed out too?

Seen in the context of sustainable development, circular tourism can combine tourism and sustainable resource management. Its purpose is to produce goods and tourist services while limiting the impact on the environment (including consumption and renewable energy). It aims to balance the interests of tourists and the local population. For example, impacts on health and well-being can both be beneficial to residents and tourists. Nowadays many destinations have developed the concept of this type of tourism through sharing platforms (Naydenov, 2018; Kunwar, 2020). In many countries, tourists are urged to purchase products, materials, and services that are renewable and sustainable, recycled, or recyclable, biodegradable. Most hotels have an eco- friendly laundry policy. Organic cleaning products are

also commonly used in them (Naydenov, 2018). On the one hand, the whole circular tourism is mainly concerned with the management of the waste cycle. On the other hand, it can be dealt with and further developed toward a broad urban economy, its social system, and its management and urban productivity. Circular tourism follows the logic of the circular economy, a business model consistent with the principles of sustainable development. In the same way, circular tourism proposes a model in which each actor of tourism (traveler, host, tour operator, and supplier) adopts an eco- friendly approach. Circular tourism is a general term for mass tourism that is designed or intended to restore nature. Material flows are two types: organic nutrients designed to safely reintroduce into the biosphere and technical nutrients that are of high quality without entering the biosphere. Environmental education and the environment are still important for sustainable development training. Besides the circular economy, there is also a sharing economy. On the same principle, there is Circular Tourism and Shared Tourism. They are inherently different, but they are connected and can be integrated. While circular tourism refers to the life span of tourist goods and services, shared tourism refers to the way tourist goods and services can be used during their lifecycle. The sharing economy referred to as the collaborative consumption, represents one of the various business models able to drive the circular economy and thus contribute to making tourism sustainable. The shared economy associated with joint consumption is one of the different business models capable of managing the circular economy and thus contributing to the sustainability of tourism to help the reorientation system, the use of materials is changing and manufacturers are transforming their behavior (leasing and sharing of durable goods) (Naydenov, 2018).

A circular economy can be integrated into the tourism value chain at all stages of the value chain, through resource extraction, processing, manufacturing at industrial and service scale, storage and distribution, and use. The concept is calling not only for more resource-efficient manufacturing but also for resource- efficiency after use in terms of extension of the product life- span through use, reuse, and repair. Products of every industry linked to the tourism sector, such as the food industry, construction industry, textile industry, or furniture industry have to be designed to allow repair, reuse and recycle. Designers, contractors, and suppliers will need to consider longer-term relationships. Valenturf and Purnell (2020) write, the idea of a circular economy is simple; to make better use of resources, close loops of resource flows by fully recovering materials instead of wasting them, and prevent waste and pollution by better design of products and materials and keeping them in use of longer.

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended normal economic activity, dipping the global economy into what may become the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Rather than try to revive a system that's inherently wasteful to European

Commission has vowed to build a sustainable circular economy post-pandemic (Valenturf & Purnell, 2020). There is significant potential for the circular economy to change the existing value chain around the design, construction, operation, renewal, and repurposing of tourist facilities. For the circular economy in the construction of tourism facilities, the following different types of circular business models are relevant: Circular design; Circular recovery; and Circular use (Kurtagic, 2018). The circular economy concept does not have a single origin or originator. Contributors from several sources are noted. Theoretically, the CE concept is mainly rooted in ecological and environmental economics and industrial ecology (IE). Since its very beginning, CE presented itself as an alternative model to neoclassical economics both from a theoretical and practical point of view as it acknowledges the fundamental role of the environment, including its functions and the interplay between the environment and the economic system. Moreover, CE looks at the environment as a system to imitate when redesigning production activities, in particular industrial or development patterns (Ghisellini et al., 2015; in Manniche et al., 2017).

The concept of CE defines a set of principles for production and consumption, radically different from the linear 'take- make - dispose of' regime prevailing in today's market economies, based on continuous economic growth and increasing throughput. The CE goes further than calling for the implementation of 'sustainable', 'green', resource-effective, and environment- friendly technologies in isolated links of production systems. It requires a broader and more comprehensive design of radically alternative solutions over the entire life cycle of products and adoption of closing - the-loop production and consumption patterns within the entire economic system. The CE relies on value creation through restoration, regeneration, and reuse of resources, enabled by new types of business models and forms of consumption that discard of ownership and rely on active 'users' rather than passive 'consumers'. Thus, the CE concept introduces an agenda for radical change, which involves and integrates the production and consumption sides of our societies (Manniche et al., 2017). Circular economy -take- make- use- remake-is: 'an industrial system that is restorative or regenerative by intention and design. It replaces the 'end -of- life' concept with restoration, shifts towards the use of renewable energy, eliminates the use of toxic chemicals, which impair reuse, and aims for the elimination of waste through the superior design of materials, products, systems, and, within this, business models.' (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2013; in van Rheede, 2012). To help take- make- use- remake system, the ownership of materials changes. Producers are transforming to usage over ownership: e.g. leasing and sharing of durable goods. Looking at the core business of hotel operations make you realize that this is 'business as usual' for the hospitality industry, but only in the offer of hotels rooms or conference facilities. We have not seen much follow up and applying the aspects in other business models. The

concept of a circular economy is very to, for instance, the Cradle to Cradle principle (McDonough & Braungart, 2010; in van Rheede, 2012) and some other theoretical approaches.

The principle of the circular economy is (Ellen MacArthur Foundation): Design out waste; Build resilience through diversity; Rely on energy from renewable sources; Think in “systems”; and Waste is food (upcycling). A central aspect of transition toward a circular economy is the innovation of circular business models. A business model is a conceptual tool used to depict how an organization creates, delivers, and captures value (Renswoude et al., 2015a; Renswoude, Wolde, & Joustra, 2015b; in Manniche et al., 2017). To obtain a circular business model, a business does not need to close all its resource loops in the firm. A circular business model can also be one in which the company operates as part of a larger system and adds to other companies' circular business models, which together create a closed-loop system (Manniche et al., 2017). In more and more countries, attempts have been made to pursue sustainability acceptance through circular business models which are as follows:

- Short cycle: Pay per use, repair, waste reduction, sharing platforms, progressive purchase
- Long cycle: Performance-based contracting, maintenance, take back management, next life sales, refurbish & resell, product-based services
- Cascading: recycling, upcycling, collaborative production, biomass cascading
- Pure circles: Cradle to cradle, circular sourcing
- Digitization: physical to virtual, subscription-based rental
- Produce on-demand: Produce to order, 3D printing, customer vote (design) (Naydenov, 2018; Manniche et al., 2017).

These circular business models lead to the creation of a circular economy concept. Thus, the circular economy is regulated. So far as sustainability is concerned, it is related to how individuals should act towards nature and how they are responsible for the other and the future. The vision of sustainability aims at “justice” is the domain of the individual - nature relationships and given the long- term and uncertain future including three specific relationships such as justice between individuals of different generations, justice between different individuals of the present generation and justice between individuals (Oyku & Iyglin, 2015; in Golmohammadi & Min, 2015, p.72).

Conclusion

Tourism resources are the foundation of the tourism industry and the pillar of the tourism economy. A circular economy is based on the limitations of the earth's

resources, it requires that the environmentally friendly way to use natural resources and environmental capacity, to realize the economic activities of the ecological turning. It is an entirely new way of economic growth, to realize the effective utilization of material and the sustainable development of economy and ecology. The circular economy the requirement and relying on the tourism resources of the tourism development model are the same. Therefore, to realize the sustainable development of tourism, the need to develop the tourism cycle economy.

While searching about circular economy and tourism, Rodríguez et al. (2020, p. 8) found many keywords such as 'circular economy and tourism', 'circular tourism', 'circular tourists', 'hotel and circular economy', 'circular hotels', 'green practices and tourism', 'environmental practices and hotels, tourists or tourism', 'eco-innovations and hotels, tourism or tourists', and so on.

CE is a crucial way to contribute to a more sustainable tourism industry. For this, the involvement of all academics, tourists, resident population, public administrations, and DMOs are required. The hotel sector is a major consumer of resources and a generator of waste. Therefore, governments need to support circular tourism and focus on defining circular tourism and focus on defining circular strategies and designing circular certifications for hotel establishments. Also, tourists have to be aware of the importance of this transition to the CE model. Hotels can carry out some actions to reduce their waste generation, such as composting organic waste, prioritizing repair over replacement or offering closed menus at restaurants to reduce food waste, among others. Laws and common rules to reduce the waste generation in the tourism sector need to be designed and implemented (Rodríguez et al. 2020,p.21).

In a word, walk the road of a circular economy is the inevitable requirement of a transformation of the model of economic growth. Tourism circular economy system construction is an effective carrier, promote the healthy development of the circular economy is the realistic choice to enhance the comprehensive competitiveness of national tourism (Zhang & Tian, 2014, p. 2093).

As propagated by Mac Authur E. (2011), underpinned by a transition to renewable energy sources, the circular model builds economic, natural, and social capital. It is based on three principles: Design out waste and pollution, keep products and materials in use, Regenerate natural systems. Similarly, the sustainability theories also relate to Social, Environmental, and Economic factors in accounts. Therefore, there is a coherence between the sustainability studies and the circular economy. There is a link between the tourism industry and the circular economy and the importance of the circular economy in the tourism industry is increasing. This paper gives a futurist approach to the multisided platform and circular economy and their coherence in the travel and tourism industry. In the current situation like COVID-19, where

there is complete immobility in tourism, there is a serious question as to how these platforms could be helpful in the future. Further research is recommended to analyze the relevance and importance of concepts like multisided approach and circular economy to overcome the impact of the current crisis in tourism from immobility to staycation and globalization.

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Exploring Circularity: A Review to Assess the Opportunities and Challenges to Close Loop in Nepali Tourism Industry

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Article

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the important sectors in Nepali economy and gains high priority from the government sector as well owing to its contribution in the economic, social and environmental front. Despite these benefits, the tourism sector comes with negative externalities, providing rationality for shift towards a more sustainable approach. Despite this, the circular economy is yet to gain recognition, both at the academic and industrial level in Nepal. Thus, this article aims to fulfill that gap by introducing the concept of circular economy, application of circular economy to the tourism industry and barriers for their implementation in Nepal. In different parts of the world, transition towards circular economy, which integrates the concepts of restorative economy, sharing economy and service economy, from the linear one have been identified as an approach for sustainable economic development. Innovation and application of the 4R principles have been identified as the key to the shift towards the circular economy. Innovation implies the use of new, innovative and more durable products, innovation in the production process and innovative organizational process. Innovation of business models, reduction of the resources used, reuse of the old products thereby reducing the demand for the new ones and recycling of waste products generated are some of the

Keywords

Circular economy, innovation, reduce, resources conservation, tourism

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strategies of the circular economy that are applicable to the tourism industry. As Nepali tourism sectors are largely based on take-use-dispose form, they are unsustainable. Circular economy can address the problem associated with the tourism sector thereby making the sector sustainable. But, adaptation of circular tourism is hindered mainly by financial and knowledge constraints. The study is expected to introduce and initiate academic discourse about circular tourism in Nepal.

Introduction

Climate change, loss of biological integrity, disruption in biogeochemical cycle, depletion of freshwater resources, ozone layer depletion, land use change, acidification of ocean and introduction of novel entities into the atmosphere are problems mainly caused due to exceedance of natural planetary boundaries by economic activities, i.e. production, distribution and consumption of goods and services (Tonelli & Cristoni, 2019). The consequences of these changes are not limited to environmental impacts, rather they pose questions on the existence of humanity itself. Moreover, as the resources are limited and mostly of non-renewable nature, the economic system will be greatly impacted by the linear approach of the 'Produce-use-dispose model'. Thus, there is a need to make changes in approach in the exploitation of raw materials from the nature, process involved in the production of goods and services, utilization of the goods and services thus produced and management of residues and unutilized goods at the end. Additionally, there is a need to make convergence between the environmental protection, social equity and economic development to ensure sustainable development (Pattanaro & Gente, 2017).

Environmental impacts of the economic activities have been realized in the past and efforts have been made to address that. Modern environmental movements were thought to be in the peak in the late 1960s and early 1970s particularly after the publication of Silent spring (Kroll, 2001). Gradual progress of the concerns led to the development of the concept which aims to establish synergies between social, economic and environmental concerns in a holistic manner, which is termed as sustainable development (Blewitt, 2008). Additionally, the concept of a green economy was endorsed by UNEP as a low carbon, resources efficient and socially inclusive economic model which results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities (Fedrigo-Fazio & Brink, 2012). Both sustainable development and green economy are reported to be vague things and lack conceptual clarity (Pesqueux, 2009; Turok & Borel-Saladin, 2013). Also, the concept of sustainable development has claimed to be 'malleable' to those who were already benefiting from business as usual scenario (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018). Those benefiting from the business as usual scenario are just rebranding their activities in the name of sustainable development and continuing their usual activities without significant change in their environmental

impact. Thus, circular economy has been identified as the approach to provide an operational framework and paradigm for sustainable development (Ávila-Gutiérrez et al., 2019; Corona et al., 2019).

Tourism has been identified as one of the drivers of Sustainable development (World Tourism Organization & United Nations Development Programme, 2018). Travel and tourism is one of the largest economic sectors in the world contributing roughly 10.4% of the global gross domestic product (GDP) and creating 313 million or 9.9% of global jobs in the year 2017 (WTTC, 2018). The impact of the tourism sector would be much greater if the indirect impacts are accounted for. But, these benefits of tourism are also usually associated with some form of negative externalities. Tourism sector was found to be responsible for nearly 8% of the global Greenhouse Gas (GHGs) Emission in 2013 and was reported to increase by a significant rate during the assessment period (Lenzen et al., 2018). Furthermore, the tourism industry has resulted in environmental consequences witnessed through the resources depletion, loss of biodiversity and dislocation of local people in some areas (Soan et al., 2009).

Sustainable tourism is analogous to the concept of sustainable development applied to the tourism industry but, in most cases it is misinterpreted as an approach of sustaining tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018). Sustainable tourism should be interpreted as a form of tourism which operates within the economic, social and environmental limits of a particular system and helps to strengthen these pillars of sustainable development. Sustainable tourism is the balanced trade off of social, economic and environmental interest while conducting tourism activities (Janusz & Bajdor, 2013). This implies that, tourism activities which fosters environment conservation, promotes social well-being and where benefits are shared in equitable manner are sustainable tourism. In other words, structural management of the mobility perspectives which involves recreation and leisure for social cohesion, inclusivity and wellbeing and works as the facilitators of education, cross-cultural engagement, ecological appreciation and spiritual development should be understood as sustainable tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018). But, as most of the tourism activities are currently framed under the framework of linear economy, negative externalities of the sector are being expanded (Girard & Nocca, 2017) making the tourism sector unsustainable. There is a need to adopt circular tourism to make the sector more sustainable.

Transition from the linear to the circular economy requires the overhaul change in all aspects of the economy including product itself, production process and organizational process (Frodermann, 2018). This implies that we need complete understanding of the subject. But, the discussion on the aspects of circular economy in Nepal is in primitive stages with most focus on the aspects of solid waste management. In September, 2019 a dialogue was organized by Nepal Economic

Forum to discuss the ways to mainstream circular economy into the economy of Nepal (NEF, 2019). The program has emphasized to initiate the circular economy in Nepal through adaptation of the 3R (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) principle at the beginning and recommended to explore additional opportunities for closing the loop (NEF, 2019). Though circular economies are applicable to various aspects of the economy, the program solely discussed the aspects of solid waste management. It is essential to create awareness for adaptation of the circularity in the business (NEF, 2019) and motivate them to adopt the innovative business model (Parajuly, 2019). Some innovative business models such as Doko recyclers (<https://dokorecyclers.com/>), blue waste to value (<https://bw2v.com/>) and Tootle (<https://tootle.today/>) are running. But, circularity in the business approach of these firms are yet to be explored. Airbnb (<https://www.airbnb.com/>) which has been known as a model of collaborative economy and shares the characteristics of circular economy are in operation in the hospitality sector. But the circular economy is completely new to the Nepali tourism sector. Along with this, though volume of literature relating circular economy to tourism are increasing rapidly particularly within China and European Union (Michellini et al., 2017; Pattanaro & Gente, 2017), how the topic can be applicable to the tourism industries of developing countries like Nepal are largely limited.

In this article, reviews of the literature have been used as an approach to fill the knowledge gap in the aspect of circular economy in tourism literature of Nepal. The discussion will start with the conceptualization of circular economy. This will be followed by the status of tourism in Nepal highlighting the linear approach embedded in that and problem associated with this linear approach. Introductory note, conceptualization of the circular economy in the tourism sector, applicability and barriers to circular economy in tourism has been discussed in the forthcoming part. The article ends with the implications of circular economy to make the tourism sector more sustainable. As the implementation of the circular economy in case of Nepal is almost non-existence or informal with the information on circular economy in the hospitality sector in Nepal are unavailable, literature from other parts of the world have been reviewed. The article will explore the possible opportunities and challenges for implementation of circular economy in Nepali tourism industry to make it more sustainable.

Review and discussion

Circular economy

Circular economy is defined as the economic system that replace 'end-of-life' approach with reducing, alternatively reusing, recycling and recovering materials in production, consumption and distribution of product and services with the aim

to accomplish sustainable development, through creating environmental quality, economic prosperity and social equity and by maintaining intergenerational equity (Kirchherr et al., 2017). Linear approach in production of goods and services are the major cause of the environmental problems and social problems. Circular economy refers to the use of natural resources and environmental capacity in an environmentally friendly way considering the limitations of the earth resources (Zhang & Tian, 2014). In a circular economy, the processes such as extraction of raw materials, production and consumption and management of the residues thus generated are changed by renovation of the overall process to reconcile social, economic and environmental concerns. Circular economy helps to reduce the demand for the virgin raw materials and energy input and even when virgin raw materials are extracted from nature they are predominantly or to the possible extent are renewable from the productive ecosystems (Korhonen et al., 2018). Though some form of investments in infrastructures and policy measures are essential to adopt the circular economy, the adaptation is still attractive. A study has estimated that the adaptation of circular economy can help the countries to increase their workforce by 4% and reduce the waste produced alongside their contribution in reduction of Carbon dioxide reduction by up to 70% (Stahel, 2016).

Circular economy encompasses the properties of collaborative economy, restorative economy and service economy (Frodermann, 2018). In a circular economy, we try to utilize underutilized assets to extract economic benefits, which is the feature of collaborative economy or sharing economy which is also termed as peer economy (Petropoulos, 2017). Sharing of the resources helps to reduce the demand for the resources and ultimately decreases pressure in the source (Vargas-Sánchez, 2019). As in the case of the service economy, in the circular economy, the consumption pattern of the consumers gets shifted from buying products to own and use them, to buying services (Frodermann, 2018). Furthermore, the resources that are used in circular economy are mostly based on renewable resources which include both renewable energy and renewable and non-toxic resources (Sørensen et al., 2019). As in restorative economy, refuse, reuse, rethink, reduce, recycle etc. are used to ensure the uses of the resources are made in the best possible way to maintain harmony with nature. Nature is important from the perspectives of the welfare economy as they perform four basic functions: amenity function, source of the raw materials, sink for the residuals and serves as a life support system (Andersen, 2007). The strategies used in the circular economy reduce the pressure on the source of raw materials and waste accumulated in nature and maintains the life support intact. A restorative or regenerative economic system requires the redefinition of the relationship between business and natural system which results in restoration instead of degradation of the natural system by imitating the efficient practice of nature (Frodermann, 2018).

Transition towards Circular economy or any other forms of sustainable economy requires innovation (Table 1), a process of realizing and creating new values for customers (Ritzén & Ölundh, 2017). Many of the initiatives and strategies practiced under the circular economy are not novel. But, circular economy provides a framework in which societies can create cross sectoral policy to support different initiatives to move away from the linear and extractive models to a more sustainable mode of production and consumption by identifying and closing the gap in the circle (Jurgilevich et al., 2016). The innovation made helps to design the products and services by considering the future and mostly make the use of the regenerative resources. For this, different technological applications are made in the different aspects of business. Once the product is made, they are preserved and utilized to maximize their utility through collaboration and creation of joint value. Furthermore, business models are renovated to use waste products as resources.

Table 1: Different types of innovation to move towards circular economy (Frodermann, 2018)

Innovation Type	Circular Economy Approach
Product Innovation (Changes the product)	<p>Circular supplies (e.g. creation of products which are fully circutable)</p> <p>Resource recovery (e.g. creation of new products to use left- overs from the production line)</p> <p>Remanufacturing (e.g. implementation of new products which can be built from reusable parts of original products)</p>
Process Innovation (Changes the process)	Circular supplies (e.g. use of renewable energy for the production line)
Organizational Innovation (Changes or adds a business model)	<p>Sharing platform (e.g. enable customers to extend the use of their products)</p> <p>Product as a service (e.g. sell access to the product, internalize the lifecycle management)</p> <p>Product life extension (e.g. gather used products and resell them if possible, repair broken products)</p>

Circular tourism: Circular economy of tourism

Tourism is a catalyst of the global economy, still there are negative consequences associated with tourism mainly rooted on the linear approach adopted by the sector highlighting the need to shift towards circular tourism (Rodríguez et al., 2020). Transition of the tourism activities to align them with the credentials of the circular economy can be found elsewhere and most of the efforts have given emphasis to

waste management and energy efficiency (Pattanaro & Gente, 2017). Besides these, changes in there are opportunities to change accommodation practices, buildings and construction work and materials used inside buildings and accommodation services (Cornejo-Ortega & Dagostino, 2020). The transition towards circular tourism is possible when the guests and staff of tourism industries become aware about the essence of the behavioral changes to be made. To attain circular economy in tourism sector, there are three building blocks, leadership with purpose, a focused strategy and collaboration for education and innovation, supported by number of key tactics identified through destination benchmarking and best sharing practice (*Sustainable Destination Management : The Road to a Circular Economy*, 2017).

Proper management of the waste and waste water produced, increasing efficiency in the use of natural resources including energy and increasing the resiliency (Table 2) is necessary to manage sustainability in the tourism and hospitality sector (Jones & Wynn, 2019).

Table 2:Strategies within the circular economy that are applicable to tourism and hospitality sector (Rodríguez-Antón & Alonso-Almeida, 2019)

Strategies	Examples
Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic Initiative: Reduction on energy, water and plastics use and CO₂ emission through the change in operation and maintenance• Special initiatives: reduce food waste, inorganic fertilizers and pesticides use, and enhance sustainable mobility and healthy issues
Reuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reuse strategies are focused on two aspects:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. utilities: energy and water and2. furniture, small appliances and amenities <p>Reuse of the old machines such as coffee machines Preparation of the bedding materials from recycled products Treating and reusing the waste water Promotion of the use of renewable energy resources</p>
Recycling	Materials such as pillows and other can be made using the recycled products.
Redesign, replace and rethink	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• These are less applicable to tourism sector. But, interior design can be changed to reduce energy and water demands• Some of the equipment which relies on non-renewable energy can be replaced with the one that depends on renewable source.• Behavioral changes in the tourist and staff are also essential.

Tourism in Nepal

Nepal has high geographic and cultural variation. In the short span of nearly 200 Km, the altitude variation of Nepal ranges from 62 m to 8848 m resulting in variation in climatic and associated ecological zone and cultural zone, offering diversifying products to the tourism industry. Mountaineering is one of the major attractions of Nepal, as it is home to eight mountains with elevation in excess of 8000 m. Additionally, Nepal is home to 118 ecosystem types, 212 species of mammals, 886 species of birds (accounting nearly 10% of total birds in the world), 650 species of butterflies (accounting 3.72% of world's butterflies) and 12 of global 867 ecoregions along with 125 ethnic groups and 92 languages (GoN/MoFSC, 2014). Most of the ethnic groups have their own cultural practices. Furthermore, there are ten UNESCO world heritage sites in Nepal which includes eight cultural heritage sites and two natural heritage sites. These all help Nepal to offer a multitude of unique attractions for tourists. In the fiscal year 2017/18, Nepal was able to earn 67.09 billion foreign currency which is 2.2% of the total GDP of the country (GoN/MoF, 2019). Tourism in Nepal is known to play a substantial role in poverty alleviation (den Braber et al., 2018).

Tourism associated problems in Nepal

Tourism does not always bring positive benefits to the economy and society. Social, economic and environmental problems often are received as the negative externalities while conducting tourism activities. The negative impacts are more pronounced on environmental fronts. Increasing the dependency on fossil fuel, emergence of the solid waste management problems and other forms of pollution often grow gradually with tourism activities and are evident in Nepal as well. In the Annapurna Conservation area, the problems of solid waste management is increasing with an increase in the number of tourists in the region (Magditsch & Moore, 2011). Plastics have been the problem of the majority of the tourist destinations. Tourism development in rural mountains of Nepal are over reliant on fossil fuels leading to the enhanced level of Greenhouse gas emission (Nepal et al., 2019). In Everest region, the amount of Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbon with high molecular weight (HMW-PAH), which are mainly originated from anthropogenic combustion, were found to be increase by 48% in 2012 compared to 2008 indicating the impact of tourism in the air quality of the region (Guzzella et al., 2016).

Transition to circular tourism in Nepal: How?

We have limited information about the problem associated with linear approach in tourism in Nepal. Innovation is essential to deal with these sorts of problems which can be applied at three levels i.e. product innovation, process innovation and organizational innovation are applicable to the tourism industry (Rodríguez-Antón & Alonso-Almeida, 2019) in Nepal. While selecting and using the products, choosing

the durable products which can be used for a longer time or that are made with the recyclable products should be selected. Process innovation involves change in the way the resources are used, (Florido et al., 2019). Organizational innovation involves the change in approach of carrying out business and searching for new markets. In the age of digital technology, using the approach of peer to peer business models such as that used by Airbnb can be beneficial both from the business and sustainability perspectives (Midgett et al., 2017). Furthermore, the approaches such as reduce, reuse and recycle can be part of organizational innovation.

Reduction

Water and energy used in the hospitality sector can be reduced by making some interventions. Traditional houses in Nepal were reported to be climate friendly as they were more warmer in winter while cooler than modern houses in summer (Kandel, 2019). Even in modern houses, the use of passive heating systems was found to reduce the energy demand by about 20% (Kandel, 2019). As the contribution of the sharing economy in the tourism industry especially through Airbnb is growing gradually in the country (Kunwar, 2020), the use of traditional buildings for housing and use of passive heating and cooling systems can take those economics towards circular paths. Even the accommodations provided by hotels can take advantage from this approach. Further, replacing the existing technology with the more efficient one, the benefits can be enhanced further. On the basis of the study done on seven five star hotels and one four star hotels of Kathmandu valley, a study have suggest instead of sticking to the business as usual scenario, if efficiency in in lighting, cooking and air conditioning is increased and if diesel generator are replaced, in 2025 those hotels can save 101 thousand GigaJoule of energy can be saved (Table 3) (Timilsina et al., 2015) thereby reducing the service generation cost and increasing the profitability.

Table 3: Amount of energy that can be saved in 2025 by increasing efficiency in eight (five and four) star hotels of Kathmandu valley compared to business as usual scenario (Source: (Timilsina et al., 2015))

Sector	Saving
Efficient Lighting	695 Thousand Kilo Watt hour (kWh)of Electricity
Efficient Cooking	66.3 Thousand Giga Joule (GJ) of energy
Improved Air Conditioner	2366 thousand kWh of electricity
Diesel Generator Replacement	14 thousand GJ of energy in 2025
Total	101 Thousand GJ

The potential application of circular approach is not limited to reduction in energy use. Hotels generate a significant fraction of municipal solid waste in Nepal.

These wastes can be managed using the principle of 4R principles. A large fraction of the waste can be reduced by making staff and tourists about the waste reduction behavior.

Reuse

Waste water generated in the tourism sector can be used to irrigate the farms nearby thereby reducing the wastages of water. Even in hotels, the water can be purified and used for other purposes. Plastic pet bottles and other instruments can be used to make wall gardens for decoration purposes. These are the general examples; case specific analysis can be done to determine reuse potential.

Recycling

By recycling the waste generated in the tourism sector we can make other products. For example we can use anaerobic digestion to generate energy from waste. In a study done at Dhulikhel area, on an average, 10 Kg/day waste is generated from each hotels in the study area and from 1 Kg of waste, 13.2 Liter of biogas can be generated by reducing the particle size before digestion (Aryal et al., 2017).

Redesign and replace

How redesign of the buildings to incorporate passive heating and cooling systems can reduce energy demand has been discussed in the reduction section. Along with that, replacing the less efficient devices and equipment with the more efficient one can generate benefits. Replacement would be practically useful in the context of tourism transportation. Replacing the fossil fuel dependent transportation mode with alternative one is identified as a necessary condition (Manniche et al., 2017). Railways would be more obvious options in many countries as they emit significantly low greenhouse gases per capita compared to other modes of transport (Girard & Nocca, 2020), which is not practical for now in Nepal at present scenario. But there is a high potentiality to shift towards electric vehicles. In Lumbini area, which is a birthplace of Lord Buddha and one of the major tourist destination, with the help of Asian Development Bank (ADB), solar energy powered electric vehicles were designed and piloted by a project called Pedicab whose motive is to replace traditional rickshaw with modern electric passenger cart is being operated (Chaudhary, 2017). The sustainability of the project is yet to be explored, though this is itself a radical stride towards sustainable tourism in the area. Another project that too was supported by ADB is under operation at Lumbini area which aims to introduce electric powered vehicles for sustainable transportation within Lumbini area and integrate the issue of transportation within the Greater Lumbini Master plan and could inspire adaptation of electric vehicles in other parts of the country (Tamaki, 2017). To move towards a circular economy, the options are not limited to purchasing of the new vehicles. Rather, we can redesign the existing vehicles to

convert them into electric power vehicles. This will surely help to make the mobility sector stride towards circular tourism. Even the promotion of bicycle tourism could be options for certain areas like Kathmandu, Pokhara and many areas of lowland Nepal. Furthermore, in-situ production of goods and services in tourist destinations would serve the cause (Girard & Nocca, 2020).

Pathways for transition to circular tourism in Nepal

As the discourse of the circular economy in Nepal is in a very primitive stage, academics should make a contribution in exploring its potential in the tourism industry in Nepal. This should be followed by the initiation by the tourism industry that should identify the potentiality in their business to make transition and offer products and services. Tourism industry should use digital technologies and should be used to trade the services and products. In addition to this, all the personnel involved in tourism should be empowered in aspects of circular tourism so that psychological and behavioral changes are essential to ease transition toward circularity and adoption of circular tourism.

Potential drivers for circular tourism

Due to COVID-19 Nepali tourism industry has been significantly affected (Nepal, 2020). The income sources are halted while the job opportunities are greatly reduced. For the revival of tourism it will take time while for taking momentum, additional time would be necessary. In this regard, many will seek to increase the brand image while significantly reducing the cost associated. The transition towards circular tourism could serve this dual purpose. Circular tourism is a realistic choice to increase the comprehensive competitiveness of the tourism industry (Zhang & Tian, 2014). Despite huge potential, the tourism activities in Nepal are concentrated to few destinations while other parts of the country are highly unexplored primarily due to lack of the tourism infrastructures and services. Due to the covid-19 pandemic, majority of Nepali youth who have been to foreign countries have returned home after losing their job. Agriculture has been identified as an important sector to provide employment opportunities. But, this could be more viable if we can integrate tourism and agricultural practices. Agrotourism in which tourism and agricultural practices are integrated can result in rural development through increased income to the farmers opening avenues of employment opportunities can help in transition towards circular tourism in rural parts (Zhu et al., 2013). Agricultural practices can provide the resources required by the tourism industry while tourism could provide market and employment opportunity. In the tourism industry of developing countries like Nepal, revenue leakages resulting from the need to import goods and services (Nepal et al., 2019) which could be addressed by adopting circular tourism. In a post pandemic scenario social distancing could be still a norm of tourism meaning we

cannot let a crowd of tourists gather to few destinations. Agrotourism could serve the purpose of diversification (Bhatta, 2020). In such a scenario, transformation of the agricultural practices to incorporate sustainable tourism within the system can be best achieved by aligning the activities with circular economy.

Barriers for circular tourism

The transition from the linear approach to circular tourism is not that straightforward. For the transition, the existing system should be properly studied to identify the interventions that are essential to close the loop. But, in case of Nepal, we have limited understanding in the academic circle about the materials used, the source of those materials and their sustainable replacement. This lack of proper understanding about the circular economy also acts as the important barrier for implementation (Rizos et al., 2015). Research on the aspects of circular tourism in Nepal is almost non-existent. Additionally the government and other stakeholders are yet to realize the need of transition towards circular tourism, which means there are neither policies to drive towards circular tourism nor the understanding essential for that. In addition to this, adaptation of circular tourism approach requires investment. But, even in developed countries, finance has been identified as a key barrier especially for the small and medium enterprises, for the development and implementation of innovative products under circular economy (Rizos et al., 2015).

Way forward

Economic transitions, industrial relationships and knowledge sharing interconnect three major layers of stakeholders in the tourism network. The first core layer consists of tourism attraction enterprises and tourists, second layers consists of service providers ranging from the travel manager to the helpers and retailers of tourist commodities while the third layer is support layer consisting of government, academic and educational institutions and other related industries (Han, Xinming, Zheng, 2009). Transition to circular tourism requires efforts from all these three layers. More quantitative and qualitative research in the field of circular tourism are essential. Besides these, the government should take a lead in the transition by proper policy guidance (Florido et al., 2019). At present, the achievements of governments are mostly measured using Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which cannot incorporate the issues such as welfare, shift towards more robust indicators such as Green GDP could serve the purpose (Zhijun & Nailing, 2007). Adaptation of circular tourism has the potential to create additional job opportunities while reducing the pressure on the natural environment. Despite these benefits, the practicality of the circular economy approach should be tested before investing by using SWOT (Strength-Weakness-Opportunities-Threats) approach and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) (Winans et al., 2017). Once the transition is made, regular monitoring of the sub-

system of tourism from the perspectives of energy, water, waste and natural capital management, resilience perspectives are essential to ensure the activities performed align with the circular economic credentials (Jones & Wynn, 2019).

Conclusion

Nepali tourism economy is predominated by the linear approach and it needs a transition towards a more sustainable approach. There is potential to make a transition of the tourism sector. Proper management of the waste through 4R concepts, water and energy use management and reduction in emission of CO₂ are some of the priority areas for intervention. But, these transitions are hindered by lack of comprehensive study on the hospitality sector from circular tourism perspectives, lack of awareness in the related stakeholders about the circular tourism perspectives. Additionally, there could be some forms of financial hindrance. If we overcome these challenges and make transition to a circular economy in the tourism industry i.e. circular tourism has potential to develop comprehensive competitiveness of the Nepali tourism industry besides helping to reconcile environmental, social and economic perspectives in tourism and support in achieving sustainable development goals. For Nepal, in the post pandemic era, agro led rural tourism with circular economy credentials' embedded within them can be a tool to tackle the economic crisis originated due to pandemic. For that, the government should take lead in the matter, through development of the proper guidelines and policies and by providing the financial and other support for the tourism actors' especially small and medium enterprises to shift their business model. Furthermore, after implementation of the circular economy model, they should be monitored regularly by developing proper sets of indicators.

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Constraints to Community Participation in Tourism in Kenya: The Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary

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Abstract

Community Based Tourism (CBT) is among several types of tourism that have been considered sustainable and beneficial to the host populations in conservation areas. The local community participation in tourism in conservation areas is supposed to be high and its members should benefit from the tourism process. However, having been presented with opportunity to improve their livelihoods, communities are constrained in various ways and generally fail to benefit from tourism development. This study was set to investigate constraints to community participation in conservation areas. It was carried out in Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary (MES) in Kwale County, Kenya, using a descriptive survey design. Data was collected using researcher administered questionnaires and oral interviews. The results indicated that lack of coordination among stakeholders; inadequate financial resources, lack of conducive environment for tourism growth, and lack of skills/knowledge were major constraints to participation. The study concludes that to address both operational and structural constraints to community participation, the national and county governments should develop policies that compel investors to honour agreements with communities, assist communities to enter into fair collaborations with investors, and provide incentives to investors in tourism.

Keywords

*Community,
conservation,
constraints, tourism,
Mwaluganje Elephant
Sanctuary*

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Introduction

Community-Based Tourism Initiatives (CBTIs) in Kenya came into being to secure wildlife habitats and diversify tourism. However, policy documents – for instance, the Tourism Act 2011 that provides for the development, management, marketing and regulation of sustainable tourism and tourism-related activities and services (GoK, 2011) – do not have provisions for CBTIs development. Similarly, in the Vision 2030 blueprint for Kenya, tourism is one of the components of the economic pillar (NESC, 2007) but CBTIs are not among the flagship projects. This leaves CBTIs in Kenya to develop by default with no guiding framework that could direct this critical sector. The success of CBTIs cannot therefore be guaranteed in the absence of a well-thought framework.

Although Kibicho (2008: 214) argued that community-based tourism is gaining momentum in Kenya and in the world at large, he noted that “the extent to which this theoretical idealism is met by reality in Kenya is still debatable”. Manyara and Jones (2007) have criticized this type of tourism on the consideration that it only enhances the conservation agenda and has little significant impact on poverty and on communities. In addition, Barrow and Fabricius (2002) noted that conservation linked to development is unsustainable while Worah (2002: 82) observed that “there was a weak relationship between enterprise success and conservation success”. All these critical views point to the idea that, the real effects of conservation and tourism on a country’s development are not as obvious as some may say. Consequently, they need to be critically studied and documented. In view of this, Kihima (2015) recently reflected upon the objectives of CBTIs, noting that they should revolve around informed, deliberate and collaborative management actions of: ‘thinking of the tourist, appealing to the tourist, proper execution of projects and collaboration with other stakeholders’.

To go one step further and understand the ways in which the host community could and should participate in tourism, this paper presents a study aimed to assess the extent to which social, political and economic constraints shape – and hinder – community participation in tourism projects, and which one exactly. The study was conducted in Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary, located in Kwale county at the South coast of Kenya.

The Republic of Kenya is an East African country located between 4°40’ north and 4°20’ south; and between 34°0’ west and 42°0’ east. It covers a surface area of 582,648 Km² and is situated astride the equator. The country is well-known for nature-based tourism, popularly known as safaris (World Resource Institute, et al., 2007) and is well endowed with the national park and reserve system occupying 44,562 Km² or 8% of its territory. About 70% of visitors come to Kenya to enjoy the country’s natural

beauty and engage in nature-based tourism activities (World Resource Institute, et al., 2007). In 2019, Kenya received 2.0 million international arrivals each staying an average of 12.1 days with 63.3% of the total arrivals coming for holiday (GoK, 2020). With a beach front of 530 Km stretching from Somalia to the Tanzanian border, the coastal beach accounted for 38% of the total bed nights in the country in the year 2019, while National parks and Reserves had a total of 2.98 million visitor entries in the same year (GoK, 2020). Among the first CBTIs to be established in Kenya and recognized for its best practice is the Mwalunganje Elephant Sanctuary (Manyara and Jones, 2007), therefore being considered a 'successful' initiative. Nevertheless, the sanctuary receives less than 3,000 visitors in a year.

The community members around this Sanctuary have been participating in CBT for a period of more than 20 years. Thus, they have had sufficient time to notice the effects of tourism development and also recall how life was before the onset of tourism in this area. The first part of this paper analyses the existing literature on constraints facing community participation in conservation areas. After presenting the Mwalunganje Elephant Sanctuary and describing the methodology used in the study, the second part provides its most salient results while the third and last part offers a discussion on the presented results by drawing upon qualitative information collected that may explain why there is, in Mwalunganje Elephant Sanctuary, lack of coordination among stakeholders, inadequate financial resources, lack of conducive environment for tourism growth, and lack of skills/knowledge at various levels. It suggests that the national and county governments should develop policies that compel investors to honour agreements with communities, assist communities to enter into fair collaborations with investors, and provide incentives to investors in tourism

Constraints to community participation

Community participation is a fundamental factor in ensuring that local communities are guaranteed benefits from tourism development in conservation areas, and their way of thinking and doing are respected and not negatively impacted. Participation means that community members are part of decision making on the use of their cultural spaces. However, local communities are constrained in various ways while participating in tourism related activities (Wondirad & Ewnetu, 2019; Juma & Khademi-Vidra, 2019, Devkant & Bagri, 2018, Mensah, 2017; Chili and Ngxongo, 2017). Tosun (2000) identified limitations to public participation in decision-making process and benefit sharing of tourism development in developing countries. He classified these limitations in three categories namely: operational, structural, and cultural.

Limitations at the operational level include the centralisation of public management of tourism development by national governments. All decisions regarding planning,

implementation and monitoring of tourism development are made at a national level with minimal or no input from the local community. Consequently, only a few areas, where decision makers at the national level have interest in, experience tourism development while the other regions are neglected. For instance, Akama, Maingi and Camarco (2011) and Kihima (2015) observed that despite enormous and varied potential for wildlife tourism development in Kenya, the country's tourism is geographically limited to a few protected areas and conservancies. Oketch (2009) attributed this to the absence of appropriate land-use policy and procedures governing the location and distribution of tourism amenities and infrastructure in various parks, reserves, and conservancies. Additionally, even in areas considered developed with regard to tourism, community participation is often hindered by existing land ownership regimes. Nevertheless, there is need to broaden geographical spread of tourism and deepen the product base through CBTIs.

Moreover, lack of co-ordination amongst stakeholders (government agencies, hoteliers, tour operators, local community, and NGOs) involved in tourism development limits community participation (Wondirad & Ewnetu, 2019). Each stakeholder is driven by the desire to achieve his/her objectives with little regard to the objectives of others. Kibicho (2008) noted that funding institutions were more concerned with project effectiveness/success than the fundamental and less concrete aspects of community-based tourism like stakeholders' collaboration, while the government agency emphasised conservation. He further observed a level of distrust between the local host community in Kimana Wildlife Sanctuary and the Kenya Wildlife Service, the national conservation organisation, and noted that where trust is weak participants do not achieve the desired outputs. Besides, insufficient tourism development data and poor distribution of information (Scheyvens, 2002) makes the community more vulnerable to manipulation. Under such circumstances, low public participation in the tourism development process is apparent as the community is not sufficiently informed.

Structural limitations at CBTI level include lack of appropriate legal system, especially on matters regarding land ownership (Manyara and Jones, 2007) where initiatives are registered as Community Based Organisations (CBOs), associations, trusts or limited companies with various land ownership tenures and without a definite land use policy. This makes it easy to convert land from conservation and tourism development to agriculture as happened in Kimana, Kenya. Lack of trained human resources and expertise amongst the local community limits participation in tourism. Muganda, Mgonja and Backman (2013) observed that the community in Mto wa Mbu in Tanzania did not wish elected officials or the local committee to independently make decisions on matters tourism development because they lacked tourism skills and some of them had little education. Similar observations were made by Manyara and Jones (2007) in six CBTIs in Kenya.

High cost implication associated with community participation and inadequate financial resources (Tosun, 2000; Scheyvens, 2002; Manyara and Jones, 2007; Chili and Ngxongo, 2017) are other structural limitations hindering community participation in tourism. Communities frequently lack resources and power (Scheyvens, 2002; Akama, Maingi and Camarco, 2011), and are therefore unable to establish amenities and infrastructure required for tourism development. This makes it difficult for the community to improve on the quality of the tourism product in their locality and to access the desired markets. The local community therefore becomes reliant on other stakeholders, hence constraining its participation.

Cultural limitations include limited capacity of action by poor populations, lack of inspiration and low level of awareness in the local community (Kibicho, 2008). Manyara and Jones (2007: 410) in their study on best practice model for community capacity building in community-based enterprises in Kenya noted that “some respondents felt that majority of the local communities were not aware at all about tourism and that in such cases it was only the local elites who were”. This shows that lack of awareness and information hinders most community members from participating in tourism. Lack of inspiration and low levels of awareness in local communities has been attributed to a history of ignoring the grassroots in decision-making (Tosun, 2006; Mensah, 2017).

According to Blackstock (2005) and Kibicho (2008), the heterogeneous nature of communities is a constraint to their participation in tourism development. A community comprises of several kinds of people, often with uneven status and positions and different ambitions. Such segmentations lead to unequal opportunities for participation in tourism activities and struggles within the community.

All these deficiencies form severe predicaments to community participation in tourism and slow down the destination development process. The general outcome of such barriers is often the communities’ limited eagerness towards the industry, which results in little benefits trickling down to the local community. Past researches, as enumerated above, have focused on identifying such constraints at various sites. However, little has been done to establish the extent to which such constraints hinder the involvement of the local community in CBTIs, and consequently their sustainability. Findings of such a research would be useful in identifying the priority areas and mechanisms for minimising the negative effects of these barriers to the host community.

Research methodology

Currently, Kenya has approximately 250 CBTIs, a majority of which are located in five focal areas: Taita-Taveta, Laikipia, Samburu, Amboseli, Kwale and Maasai Mara. They are all considered as having high potential for tourism development and

conservation (FECTO, 2010). These initiatives are conservation-based and bring together members from the host community, private investors, different government conservation agencies and donor NGOs from time to time. However, there are no structures both at the national and county level to oversee the coordination of the activities of these different stakeholders and monitor their adequate development. Several tourism and conservation organisation – for instance, the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA), Ecotourism Kenya (EK), Federation of Community Tourism Organisations (FECTO), and Kenya Community Based Tourism (KECOBAT) network – were formed to help CBTIs realise their tourism potential in Kenya. Yet their activities and scope of action are limited due to lack of funds. Further, being membership groups, membership and annual fees are hindering some CBTIs from joining these associations, thus leaving many on their own.

The Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary (fig.1), in Kwale, was registered as a limited company in 1994 under the name; Golini-Mwaluganje Community Conservation Ltd and adopted the name Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary (MES) as the trade name. In the company's Memorandum of Association, members were required to give legal right of vacant possession of their parcel of land to the company, and that they would not dispose off the parcel of land without express and written consent of the company (MES, 1994). An acre or part thereof constitutes a single share. Due to difficulties in securing funding as many organisations were unwilling to fund limited companies, MES initiated a process of registering as a Community Based Organisation (CBO) in 2013.

The study targeted 282 landowners who ceded their land to establish MES, 5 directors and 19 staff of MES. Descriptive research design was utilized to measure, classify, analyse and interpret data (Kombo and Tromp, 2009) by describing possible behaviour, attitudes, values and characteristics (Orodho, 2003). This design provides answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and how, associated with a specific research problem (Kothari, 2004). Since the research intended to investigate constraints to community participation based on past and present experience of the land owners this design was considered ideal.

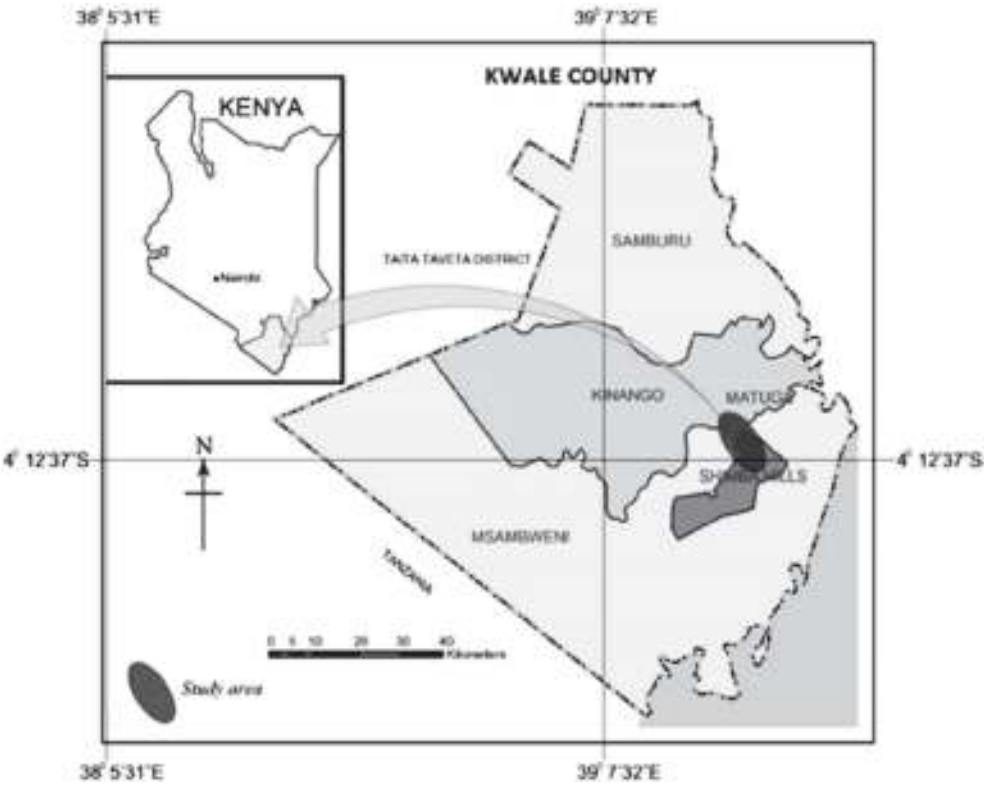
Data was collected through researcher administered questionnaires and interviews on the constraints to community participation. The questionnaire had both structured and unstructured questions, while the interview schedule had unstructured questions. The use of both categories of questions in the questionnaire allowed for collection of in-depth information (Kombo & Tromp, 2009). Researcher administered questionnaires were used for the landowners because many of them could not read and write, while interviews were used for the key informants' i.e. staff (19) and ex- officio (5). To achieve the desired sample, stratified random sampling was used for landowners. The objective of stratified random sampling was to get the desired representation from different subgroups in the population.

MES is divided into two settlement sections; Golini adjudication section and Mwaluganje A/B adjudication section (MES, 2012), which formed the subgroups of the study among the community. In each sub-group, every community member was given a number after which the numbers were placed in a container and randomly picked. Members corresponding to the numbers picked were included in the sample. Picking numbers continued until the required sample size was achieved. Thus, no bias was noted during the sampling. This gave each member a chance to be involved in the study.

Contacts of ex-officio directors and staff were obtained from the MES office. The directors and staff were chosen because of their past and present involvement in tourism development in the community, hence deemed to have in-depth information about MES and CBTI development. A census for this category was used since the entire population is small and easily accessible (Kombo and Tromp, 2009).

The study was conducted between September 2013 and May 2016. Two research assistants and two translators (from English to the native Digo and Duruma dialects) were recruited to assist in administering the questionnaires by moving from one household to another. Data was collected in the morning and late in the afternoon. It was suspended at mid-day to allow the respondents go to mosques for midday prayers (majority were Muslims). Interviews were conducted by the researcher through visiting individual directors in their residences, offices and businesses. Staffs were interviewed at their respective work stations. The respondents were notified before commencement of the interview through a phone call.

Figure 1: A map of Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary



Findings

Respondent characteristics

A total of 130 respondents (50 Golini and 80 Mwaluganje) participated in the study. Out of the total number of respondents 69.2% were male while 30.8% were female. The majority of the respondents 84.6% were aged 51 and above. Moreover, 54.6% of the respondents had no formal education, while 27.7% had primary level of education; 17.7% had secondary education level and mid-level college education. The results depict a community that is not formally well educated and likely to face challenges in making informed decisions on matters relating to tourism development.

Moreover, the findings indicated that 52.3% of the landowners practiced mixed farming (subsistence farming and keeping of livestock) as their means of livelihood and 32.3% practiced crop farming with the main crop being maize inter-planted with bananas, cassava and cowpeas. Only 9% depended solely on employment, 4.6% do business (but not with MES) and a mere 1.5% practiced livestock rearing only.

Respondents mentioned that during the dry season (January–April) their livestock illegally graze in MES, reducing the attractiveness of the site. While during the rainy season their farms experience increased Human Wildlife Conflict (HWC), sometimes leading to loss of both wildlife and humans.

Constraints to community participation

Constraints to participation were investigated using various statements (table 1). Response to the statements were classified based on a Likert scale of 1=strongly agree, 2=agree; 3=neither agree nor disagree; 4=disagree; 5=strongly disagree. Mean (M) values and Standard deviation (SD) were calculated for the various statements. Mean (M) values closer to 1 represented high level of agreement to the statement under consideration.

Table 1: Mean (M) values and standard deviation (SD) of the various statements on constraints to community participation in tourism development

Constraints to community participation in tourism development	Number of respondents	Mean (M)		Std. Deviation (SD)
		Stat	Std. Error	Stat
1. Lack of financial resources for tourism development.	130	1.64	.042	.482
2. Lack of skills/knowledge to manage tourism development in MES.	130	1.77	.037	.423
3. Lack of adequate consultations on decisions regarding the development of MES.	130	4.48	.044	.502
4. Lack of benefits to the community.	130	4.35	.050	.567
5. Inadequate role played by the private sector	130	1.62	.043	.486
6. Lack of conducive environment for tourism growth	130	1.64	.050	.571

Lack of financial resources for tourism development

Respondents were asked if the community lacked financial resources for tourism development in the Sanctuary. In response, 36.2% strongly agreed while 63.8% agreed, M=1.64 (second closest mean to 1), SD=0.482, (table 1) indicating that the community lacked financial resources for tourism development. Respondents mentioned that they lacked funds to procure brochures for marketing, participate in

trade fairs, acquire a van to ferry clients to the Sanctuary, repair roads and construct a tented camp, among other things.

Lack of skills and knowledge to manage tourism

Variable 'community lacked skills and knowledge to manage tourism development' had $M = 1.77$ (third closest mean to 1), $SD = 0.423$. The community lacked skills and knowledge (23.1% strongly agreed and 76.9% agreed) to fully participate in tourism development.

Inadequate role played by other actors

Of the respondents, 37.7% strongly agreed with the statement that the developer in MES did not adequately play her role as per the agreement while 62.3% agreed to the statement, corresponding to $M = 1.62$ (Mean closest to 1), $SD = 0.486$. Similarly, a majority of respondents, 98.4% (strongly agreed and agreed) $M = 1.64$ (Mean second closest to 1), $SD = 0.571$ indicated that the conservation agency (KWS) had not created a conducive environment to enable the community fully participate in their projects in MES.

The respondents mentioned that at inception, the investor (Dhanjal Investment ltd) promised to construct and manage a tented camp, market the sanctuary and maintain roads in return for a site in the Sanctuary to construct a '*lunch banda*' (an extension of the tented camp). This worked well for 5 years after which the investor neglected the camp, stopped marketing the Sanctuary and stopped maintaining the roads. According to the respondents this denied the community opportunities (employment and business) to participate in tourism development. On a similar note, respondents complained that the conservation agency failed to involve them in branding and security enhancement activities which took place in the Sanctuary despite promises to do so.

The respondents indicated that the community had not received the desired support from the Kenya Wildlife Service. This included reintroduction of animals and road maintenance, though the agency had taken up fence maintenance and enhanced security. One respondent was quoted saying: "We requested them to restock the sanctuary with more animals but now it is the third year and nothing has been done yet. We also requested them to help repair the roads, nothing has been done, yet roads are impassable".

The directors also identified land ownership system as a constraint to participation. It was explained that though under MES, the land was legally owned by individual members, this made it difficult to carry out projects or investments on the land. This was illustrated by the following statement from one respondent: "When we identified a site for the construction of a tented camp by an investor; the individual landowner

insisted that he wanted to deal directly with the investor since the title was in his name. It was after lengthy discussions and persuasion that he agreed to 'lease' the land to MES who would then leased it to the investor". When MES wants to carry out a major investment in the Sanctuary, it either has to buy or lease land from the owner, which according to the respondents is a tedious process and discourages prospective partners and therefore limiting participation.

Lack of adequate consultations on decisions regarding development of MES

Respondents were asked if they were not adequately consulted on decisions regarding development of MES. In response, 51.5% of respondents disagreed while 48.5% strongly disagreed with the statement that they were not adequately consulted $M = 4.48$ (mean furthest from 1), $SD = 0.502$ on decision regarding the development of MES.

Lack of benefits to the community

Finally, respondents were asked if benefits from MES trickled down to the community. To elicit more details from the respondents, the statement was negatively presented. Of the respondents 60.8% disagreed whereas 37.7% strongly disagreed to the statement that benefits from MES did not trickle down to the landowners ($M=4.35$, $SD= 0.567$). Respondents commented that the mechanism of sharing financial benefits (compensation) based on size of land owned was very good and objective, however complained that the amount of 5 USD per acre per year were too little. Interview results revealed that annual compensation was the only benefit enjoyed by all landowners' individually. Other benefits like employment and business linkages benefitted very few people. Initially compensation was dependent on income raised from tourism which varied depending on the number of visitors and size of land (in acres) owned. However, when tourism was too low the management had to seek for well-wishers to donate money towards the compensation kitty to just keep the landowners contented.

Extent of the constraints

To establish the extent to which these constraints hindered community participation in tourism development, data was subjected to a Chi-square test with 'involvement' as the row values and 'constraints' as the column values. In table 2, X^2 represent the Chi value, V (Cramer's V) is a measure of association between the "row variable" and "column variable"; values close to 1 indicate strong positive associations, P represents the significance levels (P value less than 0.05 indicate significant associations).

The findings (table 2), showed that lack of financial resources to manage the sanctuary ($V=0.568$, $P=0.042$), private investor had not adequately played her role ($V=0.822$, $P=0.020$), benefits from MES did not trickle down to the local

landowners ($V=0.483$, $P=0.006$), community lacked skills/knowledge to manage tourism development in MES ($V=0.411$, $P=0.017$) and the conservation agency (KWS) had not created a conducive environment ($V=0.365$, $P=0.012$) hindered community participation significantly from a moderate to a high extent. The other constraint; landowners were not adequately consulted ($V=0.067$, $P=0.418$) did not significantly hinder participation of local community. Therefore, the constraints hindered community participation from a moderate to high extent ($0.365 \leq V \leq 0.822$; $0.017 \leq P \leq 0.042$).

Table 2: Chi- square test results on the extent to which constraints hinder community participation.

Variable	X ²	df	V	P
1. The community lacks financial capability to manage the sanctuary	3.562	1	.568	.042
2. The community lacks training to manage tourism development in MES	18.887	2	.411	.017
3. Landowners are not adequately consulted on any decision regarding the development of MES	.576	1	.067	.418
4. Benefits from MES do not trickle down to the local landowners	10.398	2	.483	.006
5. The private investor Dhanjal Investment has not adequately played her role	20.051	2	.822	.020
6. KWS has not created a conducive environment	2.016	2	.365	.012

Discussions and conclusions

High expectations but failed promises of development

The results from this study show that operational, structural and cultural limitations to sustainable and participatory tourism exist in Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary, but with varied representation. Lack of coordination was identified as a major constraint at the operational level. This was depicted by two variables: first, the private investor, Dhanjal Investment Ltd, did not adequately play its role i.e. development and management of a catering and accommodation facility, sanctuary marketing and road maintenance. The investor contracted to manage tourism sites in the sanctuary failed to honour agreements with the community. Efforts by the community in conjunction with KWS to convince the investor to honour the agreement were unsuccessful. The investor promised to improve the camp, carry out marketing and repair roads but failed to do so. Because of this, the community felt short changed and denied an opportunity to fully participate in tourism development.

Further, the Kenya Forest Service (KFS), who issued the investor with a 25 years lease, felt that Dhanjal Investment Ltd had not violated any of the conditions in the lease. This depicted a lack of objective coordination/collaboration among the stakeholders (Wondirad & Ewnetu, 2019).

Secondly KWS did not create conducive environment to enable the community full participation in tourism development. The agency failed to fulfil promises made at inception (construction of an office), to fully involve community in their projects (construction of a new gate, security enhancement), and to timely and positively respond to community requests for improvement (road repair and reintroduction of animals) of the Sanctuary as a tourist site. According to MES community, the agency allocated very little funds for community projects in MES due to the high demand of such funds from other projects in the ecosystem. Further, obtaining funds from the agency through proposals, though an option, was not guaranteed and took too long to get responses. Although the issues raised by the community were genuine, the community seemed to have expected too much from the agency, without considering its capacity and the bureaucratic nature of decision making in government agencies. However, such views by the community were to be expected, considering that it was the conservation agency that initiated the process of sanctuary formation.

These findings portray a community unable to fully participate in tourism development due to activities of other stakeholders who influence the success and viability of tourism. The absence of a single entity with a mandate to co-ordinate and influence activities of the stakeholders worsens the situation for the community. According to Kibicho (2003), the integration of various interested parties (with equally varied interest) into the tourism industry while at the same time guarding the importance of developing a 'workable tourism management strategy' remains a real challenge to many tourism destinations. Other studies (Mitchell and Muckosy, 2008; Dieke, 2001, Wondirad & Ewnetu, 2019), also found that lack of connexion between various stakeholders in CBT development constrains the participation of the local community. This was attributed to the current policy which gives various mandates to government agencies on tourism development and conservation with none to ensure that these agencies and stakeholders fulfil their obligations to the local community.

In MES, lack of funds was attributed to poor performance of tourism (Kihima, 2015), and lack of external support. Honey (2008) noted that even though MES had one of the highest concentrations of elephants in the country in 2002, its visibility to the beach resorts only twenty miles away was poor hence resort guests were not sent to the sanctuary. This state of affairs therefore contributed to low visitor numbers as well as low revenue for the sanctuary. Withdrawal of major support by Eden Wildlife Trust (EWT) (an NGO) exacerbated the financial woes of the Sanctuary. This was

well illustrated by the following comment from one of the directors: “Financial challenges increased when Eden Wildlife Trust stopped paying the manager, fuelling our vehicle and funding major projects in MES”. Lack of financial resources has been identified by various researchers (Tosun, 2006; Zhao and Richie, 2007; Manyara and Jones, 2007, Wondirad & Ewnetu, 2019) as a major challenge facing CBTIs and noted that this shortcoming appeared to be a key drawback to implementation of participatory tourism development in developing countries. Lack of funds due to poor performance of tourism, limited support from donors and government agencies, if not well addressed, could lead to deterioration of tourism.

Lack of skills and knowledge were identified to be a major constraint in the MES community. This was attributed to low levels of education identified in the respondents’ characteristics and failure by the investor and conservation agency to provide more information to the community. Reduction of support by EWT was due to protests by a section of the community to compel the donor to dismiss a manager employed at inception (who was not a local) and engage a local one. This depicted a feeling of lack of ownership (Mensah, 2017) of the project on the part of the community. Though the donor felt that the proposed manager lacked capacity to manage the Sanctuary, he obliged owing to the community’s persistence. The community welcomed the decision, as they thought that they could manage the project without donor support, an illustration of lack of awareness and information by community on matters of tourism development and conservation, which led to failure by the community to achieve the desired objectives in MES. To avert such situations, there is need for more awareness creation, capacity building and policies that guide local community members on how to engage more with the policy makers and other tourism stakeholders. Moreover, Juma and Khademi-Vidra (2019) note that only professional management can guarantee CBTIs success and that they should be managed as a business in structure and form.

The findings concur with Muganda, Mgonja, and Backman (2013) and Cole (2006) who observed that due to low levels of education, community lacked knowledge, skills and interest to participate in tourism development taking place in their locality. Similarly, Meguro and Inoue (2011) noted that in Kimana, the local people left marketing of the sanctuary to KWS, and the former manager from the community found that to be in order. This is an indication of an expertise gap in matters relating to tourism in the management. Thus, considering the lack of understanding of tourist activity by the local populations, one realizes that knowledge necessary to participate in a tourism project is more complex than the act of assembling the project itself and attracting tourists. It is necessary to train the local community on the basic concept of tourism. Generally, the fixation and refusal to change makes CBTIs unappealing to the tourism industry. This implies that such projects lack the necessary magnetic

power and appeal, hence the call for right skills and knowledge on the part of the local community. Though attributed to low levels of education in majority of the rural areas, failure to involve the youth who tend to be more schooled also makes the future bleak for CBTIs.

Lack of appropriate legal system on landownership for conservation and tourism development, made it cumbersome for the management to enter into partnership with new investors for and on behalf of the community, limiting the uptake of new partners. It also made it easy for individual members to sell their land without contacting the management, exposing the whole project to individuals (buyers) who may not be interested in maintaining current form of land use.

Finally, a single social constraint of low level of awareness was identified in MES. As much as the community wanted to be independent, its members did not acknowledge that they lacked capacity to manage the project without any external support. Their motivation for independence was inspired by the revenue generated, with no consideration for revenue sources, costs incurred and long-term sustainability. Tosun (2006) attributed low level of awareness concerning potential of tourism development, costs and benefits of tourism to the style of tourism development in developing countries. There is a need therefore amongst CBTIs for more community awareness about tourism benefits, costs, structure of the industry and how it is affected by external factors. This calls for community members to organise themselves for the purpose of sharing information and possible experiences (Thetsane, 2019).

Inadequate consultation was found not to be a barrier to community participation in MES. This was attributed to the membership scheme adopted that restricted membership to landowners only and management structure where directors were elected democratically by the community and retired by rotation after a short period of 2 years. These findings contradict those by Dogra & Gupta (2012) and Tosun (2000) who found inadequate consultation of the local community by other stakeholders in tourism development to be a major challenge in developing countries. Similarly, lack of benefits was not a constraint to community participation in MES. The results indicated that the local community was satisfied with the mechanism of sharing benefits from the Sanctuary, particularly the financial benefits. Respondents commented that the mechanism of sharing financial benefits (compensation) based on size of land owned was very good, however expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of money they earned per acre per year.

These findings reveal that the main focus in CBTIs should be on the cooperation and coordination among the stakeholders who should fulfil their obligations to the community. This will ensure that more local people get involved in tourism development. However, it should be noted that these constraints could be an extension

of predominant social, political and economic models, which have hindered local communities from realizing higher levels of development in Kenya. In this regard, minimizing these barriers to community participation in tourism development will depend on the cooperation of national government, county government, the private sector, NGOs and the community.

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