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Tourism, Employment Generation and Foreign Exchange Earnings in Nepal

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Abstract

An activity of travelling has remained one of the leading contributors of global economic activities, particularly, in employment generation and foreign exchange earnings. With the 56-folds growth of international tourist arrivals from 1950 to 2018 globally, Nepalese tourism industry is widening its scope for employment generation and foreign exchange earnings. The aim of this study is to analyze role of tourism on employment generation and foreign exchange earnings in Nepal. For this, a descriptive study design was employed. Analysis was done by using secondary data of the period 2010-2019. Number of tourist arrival in 2019 (1,197,191) was found nearly double compared to the 2010 (602,867), however, the status of average length of stay remained almost same within this period. Data show, on average, that most of the tourists had visited Nepal for holiday celebration (58.6%), followed by trekking and mountaineering (11.2%) and pilgrimage (11.4%). Average annual share of tourism earnings on total export earnings in 2010-2018 was 21.7% whereas share of tourism earnings on total foreign exchange

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earnings was 6.2%. It is estimated that every 6 tourists visited create 1 employment opportunity in Nepal. Despite the situation of almost double in number of tourist arrival from 2010 to 2019, this study concludes that there was no significant increase in the share of tourism in total foreign exchange earnings and total employment in Nepal.

Introduction

An activity of travelling has remained one of the leading contributors of global economic activities (Cannonier & Burke, 2018; Badal, 2019). Tourism related services, industries and activities were found to have spin-off effects over the other economic sectors, and have multiplier effect on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Dhakal, 2016; Saleh et al., 2015). International arrivals has increased globally 56-folds, from 25 million in 1950 to 1.4 billion in 2018 (United Nations World Tourism Organizations [UNWTO], 2019). In 2019, total international tourist arrival grew at 5 percent; and export earnings generated by such arrivals was USD 1.7 trillion. The World Travel and Tourism Council revealed the growth of travel and tourism as 3.5 percent in 2019 (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2020b). However, the COVID-19 was found to be a hurdle to the expansion of international tourist arrivals thereby falling the numbers by 60-80 percent in 2020 (UNWTO, 2020c). The global scenario highlights the growing tourism activities, thereby reducing the unemployment rate, particularly in developing economies (Saleh et. al., 2015). Tourism is an important source of foreign exchange earnings and employment, which enlarges the consumer markets, promotes export trade and overall economic growth of a country (Badal, 2019; Basnet, 2016; Dhakal, 2016; Honey & Gilpin, 2009; Matthew et al., 2018; Pandey & Dhakal, 2019; Saleh et al., 2015; Shrestha & Shrestha, 2012; UNWTO, 2019). In 2017, travel and tourism had 3.8% contribution on total employment, which is expected to increase to 4.2 percent in 2028 (WTTC, 2017). Studies have presented Nepal with the enchanting beauty and possibilities for tourism expansion (Basnet, 2016; Dhital, 2009; Ministry of Finance [MOF], 2019; Shrestha & Shrestha, 2012; Subedi, 2018). Nepalese tourism industry has experienced positive signals in inflow of foreign tourists (Pandey & Dhakal, 2019). The scenario of 2019 highlighted 940,200 tourist arrivals, accounting for USD 629.7 million international tourism inbound receipts, and 2.9 percent share on total employment in Nepal (WTTC, 2019). Most tourist arrivals in Nepal were recorded from India, China, USA, Sri Lanka and UK in 2018 (MOF, 2019). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has appreciated the double-digit growth of tourism in Nepal because of increased air connectivity, growing purchasing power, and enhanced visa facilities (UNWTO, 2019). In such context, objective of this study is to analyze the contribution of tourism on employment generation and foreign exchange earnings in Nepal. In spite of government's emphasis on tourism development, studies analyzing the contribution

of tourism on employment generation and foreign exchange earnings are either scanty or non-existent in Nepal. This study will bridge up this gap.

A number of studies, in several countries, have analyzed the relationship between tourism, and employment generation and foreign exchange earnings. Contemporary situations have been studied using many models. The gist of some literature suggests that there was a positive and significant role of tourism in employment generation and foreign exchange earnings. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2020) presented the gloomy scenario of the overall tourism sector because of COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing the fact that tourism is one of the major sources of employment, government revenue and foreign exchange earnings for many developed and developing countries, COVID-19 was found to have caused a dramatic rise in unemployment. Report has used a computable general equilibrium model to study the tourism situation in 65 countries. Study found the rise of unemployment by 20 percent in some developing countries, and in some other countries tourism will be wipe out if the same situation continues for a year (UNCTAD, 2020).

Aktar et al. (2014) analyzed the relationship between tourist arrival and foreign exchange earnings in Bangladesh. Study used monthly time series data from 2004 to 2010 from Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation and Bangladesh Tourism Board. Analyzing through Johansen's multivariate cointegration procedure, research indicated the existence of cointegrating relationship between these variables. Study concluded that creating more employment, generating demand for accommodation, improving transportation and branding of the whole nation can be helpful in tourist arrival and foreign exchange earnings.

UNWTO (2019) described the growing role of tourism in the global economy in its 2019 edition report. Analyzing the global trends, report revealed the rise by 5 percent in international tourist arrivals in 2018 (1.4 billion tourists). Tourism expansion not only found supporting economic growth, but also on the job creation, and remained as a catalyst for innovation and entrepreneurship. At regional level, Asia-Pacific region recorded fastest-growing region in 2018 by tourist arrivals (348 million), and 7 percent share on international tourist receipts (USD 435 billion).

Matthew et al. (2018) studied on the interaction effect of tourism and foreign exchange earnings on economic growth. Study from Nigeria shows the need to develop the tourism industry because of its potentiality in job creation and also on the economic diversities. The research explained the interaction effect of the tourism and foreign exchange earnings using time series data in the period of 1980-2016, and using fully modified ordinary least squares (FMOLS) and Johansen co-integration techniques. The results have shown positive interaction effect of tourism and foreign exchange earnings on economic growth. Study suggests tourism promotion for foreign

exchange earnings through improvement of amusement parks and recreational centers in Nigeria.

Dhakal (2016) found tourism as one of the major service industry for foreign exchange earnings and employment generation in Nepal. Using the annual time series data of 1991-2014, researcher investigated international tourist arrivals and their duration of stay as a fundamental to the employment and foreign exchange earnings. Author conducted econometric analysis using Johansen test of co-integration and Granger Causality technique. Cointegration analysis shows that there was long-run relationship between foreign exchange earnings, and number of international tourists and average length of stay. The findings from Granger causality analysis revealed existence of unidirectional causality from average length of stay as well as from number of international tourists on foreign exchange earnings. Paper concluded that increased tourist arrival and length of stay increases foreign exchange earnings, which further have a multiplier effect on the economic growth of Nepal.

Shrestha and Shrestha (2012) highlighted the role of the tourism industry in socio-economic sectors; particularly, in earning foreign exchange, employment opportunities and economic growth of country. Study analyzed different aspects related to tourists, like age, gender, nationality, purpose of tourist arrivals, seasonal tourist arrival, length of stay and modes of tourist arrivals based on secondary data from 1962-2010. Article concluded with focusing on the importance of tourism in alleviating poverty with cooperation of the government and private sectors in the tourism sector.

Honey and Gilpin (2009) in their special report addressed the wider aspect of tourism industry in the global economy. Tourism remained as fourth largest industry, after fuels, chemicals, and automotive products, in the global economy generating almost \$1 trillion in global receipts in 2008. Through creating jobs, generating income and diversifying the economy, tourism has much to do with promoting peace and reducing poverty. Report urged peace and economic development as prerequisites for tourism development and vice-versa.

Methodology

This study employed descriptive design to analyze the data of last ten years from 2010 to 2019 on the tourism of Nepal. Secondary sources of data were retrieved through the rigorous search of reports, books and journal articles from national and international government and non-governmental organizations. Study materials were selected and reviewed based on the objective of this study. Analysis was made with the help of qualitative descriptions and figures, as well as tables and diagrams.

Analysis of data

Current scenario of Nepalese tourism

Nepalese tourism sector earnings in 2019 stood at around USD 724,337 thousand, which was almost 16 % higher than previous year 2018 (MOCTCA, 2020). Per day expenditure was found slightly increased (48 USD/tourist/day) in 2019. In 2017 per day spending of foreign tourist was account to be \$54, which decreased slightly to \$44 per day in 2018. These data were very unsatisfying based on the year 2003, where per day spending was \$79.1. Furthermore, 1,197,191 international tourists were found visiting in 2019 in Nepal. The situation of tourist arrival in Nepal shows increasing in numbers from 2010 (602,867) till 2012 (803,092), decreasing from 2013 to 2015 thereby again increasing till 2019 (1,197,191), as shown in table 1. The situation was determined by the political scenario at large; the decrease in number during 2015 was because of earthquake and Indian economic blockade. Likewise, the average length of stay was found to be slightly increasing in the year 2019 (12.7 days) than 2018 (12.4 days). However, the average length of stay was found almost constant from 2010 to 2019.

Table 1: Tourist arrival and average length of stay 2010-2019

Year	Tourist arrival	Average Length of Stay
2010	602,867	12.7
2011	736,215	13.1
2012	803,092	12.2
2013	797,616	12.6
2014	790,118	12.4
2015	538,970	13.7
2016	753,002	13.4
2017	940,218	12.6
2018	1,173,072	12.4
2019	1,197,191	12.7

Source: MOCTCA, 2020

Major source countries

Major source countries for Nepalese tourism industry are India, China, Sri Lanka, USA and UK. Data of last ten years (2010-2019) suggest that share of these five countries in annual tourist arrival ranged from 46.8% to 53.0%. Likewise, Germany, France, Australia and Japan are the countries having important share on total tourist

arrival in Nepal in last ten years. However, in recent year visitors from Thailand, South Korea and Myanmar has also significant visitors in Nepal. The data on share of these countries on total tourist arrival is available only for few years: South Korea (4 years), Myanmar (4 years) and Thailand (7 years) and have total share of 9% and above. In summary, Chinese tourists most significantly increased in Nepal in comparison to other countries in last ten years' period (China's share on total tourist arrival within this period increased from 7.7% to 14.2%) and Nepal has been destination for visitors from many countries from where there were insignificant visitors in the past. Table 2 shows tourist arrival by major nationality.

Table 2: Tourist arrival by major nationality (percentage) (2010-2019)

Year	India	China	Sri Lanka	USA	UK	Germany	France	Japan	Australia	Others
2010	20.1	7.7	7.6	6.0	5.8	3.7	4.1	3.9	2.7	38.4
2011	20.3	8.4	8.1	5.8	5.3	3.7	3.6	3.6	2.7	38.5
2012	20.6	8.9	8.7	6.1	5.1	3.8	3.6	3.6	2.7	36.9
2013	23.2	12.4	4.1	5.9	4.5	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.5	36.1
2014	17.1	15.7	4.8	6.3	4.7	2.3	3.0	3.3	3.1	39.7
2015	13.9	12.0	8.0	10.0	3.8	2.3	2.0	2.7	2.7	42.6
2016	15.7	13.8	7.6	7.1	6.15	3.2	2.3	3.1	3.4	37.7
2017	17.1	11.1	4.8	8.4	5.4	3.2	2.8	2.9	3.6	40.8
2018	16.6	13.1	6.0	7.8	5.41	3.2	2.7	2.5	3.3	39.5
2019	21.2	14.2	4.7	7.8	5.1	3.1	2.6	2.6	3.3	35.4
Average	18.6	11.7	6.4	7.1	5.13	3.2	3.0	3.2	3.1	38.6

Source: MOCTCA (2020)

Purposes of tourist arrival

Classification of tourists by purpose of visit is important to know their economic contribution. Based on the purpose of visit by tourists, country should make plan and develop necessary infrastructure. Obviously, it helps to know whether country is receiving high value tourists. Data of the last ten years (2010-2019) suggest that, on average, most of the tourists had visited Nepal for holiday celebration (58.6%), followed by trekking and mountaineering (11.2%) and pilgrimage (11.4%). Furthermore, 18.8% tourists were found to have visited by other purposes. However,

data on business purpose, official visit and convention/conference purpose are not available for 2017, 2018 and 2019. Holiday celebration is main purpose of travel in all regions of world except Middle East (UNWTO, 2020b). According to UNWTO, in 2018, global share of leisure was 56.0%. As most of the tourists had visited Nepal for holiday pleasure and trekking and mountaineering, this is good situation for Nepal. It is because these people spend relatively more compared to people coming for other purposes. However, for this there is the necessity of providing more tourism products to the tourists. Average daily spending by tourists in Nepal is very low (\$ 48 in 2019 and \$44 in 2018), which is one of the lowest in the world. It is very low compared to major tourist destinations of the world. For example, such expenditure in Spain (2nd tourist destination of world in 2018) in 2018 was \$167.4 whereas in USA (3rd tourist destination of world) it was \$194.4 in 2018 (UNWTO, 2020a). One reason behind such low spending by tourists might be limited tourism products.

Table 3: Tourist arrival by purpose of visit (percentage) (2010-2019)

Year	Holiday Pleasure	Trekking and mountain- eering	Business	Pilgrimage	Official	Convention/ Conference	Others	Not specified
2010	43.8	11.6	3.5	16.8	4.4	1.6	8.7	9.6
2011	57.8	11.7	2.4	8.7	3.3	1.5	5.1	9.6
2012	47.3	13.1	3.1	13.7	3.8	1.7	6.0	11.4
2013	54.9	12.2	3.8	5.1	5.0	2.0	7.8	9.2
2014	50.1	12.3	3.1	12.5	4.1	1.7	6.8	9.4
2015	71.6	1.7	3.9	2.8	4.0	1.7	14.4	-
2016	65.0	8.8	3.2	11.0	2.8	1.7	7.4	-
2017	70.0	8.0	NA	15.0	NA	NA	7.0	-
2018	60.0	16.0	NA	14.4	NA	NA	9.6	-
2019	65.0	16.5	NA	14.4	NA	NA	4.1	-

Source: MOCTCA (2020)

Nepal has some very attractive tourist locations for adventure tourism (for example, for rafting, trekking and mountaineering) and pilgrimage (for example, Pashupatinath, Muktinath and Lumbini). However, number of tourists visited for these purposes is not significant. Total number of visitors in Lumbini in 2019 was 374,005 (MOCTCA, 2020). Lumbini is birthplace of Lord Buddha. World Buddhist population in 2010

was 488 million (Pew Research Centre, 2010), which is major source of visitors for Lumbini. In case of Mecca (which is birthplace of Muhammad), the situation is totally different. Total number of visitors in Mecca in 2018 was 7,952,121 (Wikipedia, 2020). The major source of visitors of Mecca is Muslim population, which was 1.6 billion in 2010 (Pew Research Centre, 2010). Such situations show that there is lack of sufficient promotional activities in Nepalese tourism. Based on the importance of particular tourist location, promotional activities should be designed.

Table 4: Average daily spending by tourists in selected countries (2018)

Country	Average daily spending (\$)
Spain (2 nd tourist destination of world)	167.4
United States of America (3 rd tourist destination of world)	194.4
Italy (5 th tourist destination of world)	120.2
Thailand (9 th tourist destination of world)	163.7
Japan	144.7
Sri Lanka	173.8
Myanmar	122.0
Lao PDR	90.7
Cambodia	96.3
Nepal	44.0

Source: MOCTCA (2020); UNWTO (2020a)

Tourist arrival by month and route

From earlier section, it is clear that tourists visiting Nepal have different purposes. By nature, each purpose has its own season to visit Nepal. For example, autumn season (September, October and November) is best trekking season in Nepal (World Expeditions, 2020). In this season, atmosphere is cleared by monsoon rain of late May to mid-September so that it offers wonderful panorama of Himalayan mountain ranges. During this season, clear blue sky can be seen and warm sunshine lasts throughout the day. Clearly, depending upon intensity of monsoon, the best time for trekking generally starts around mid-September. Similarly, spring season (March, April and May) is best time for climbing mountains in Nepal. At this time, weather is warm and there is less snow deposited in the mountains.

Table 5: Tourist arrival by month (percentage) (2010-2019)

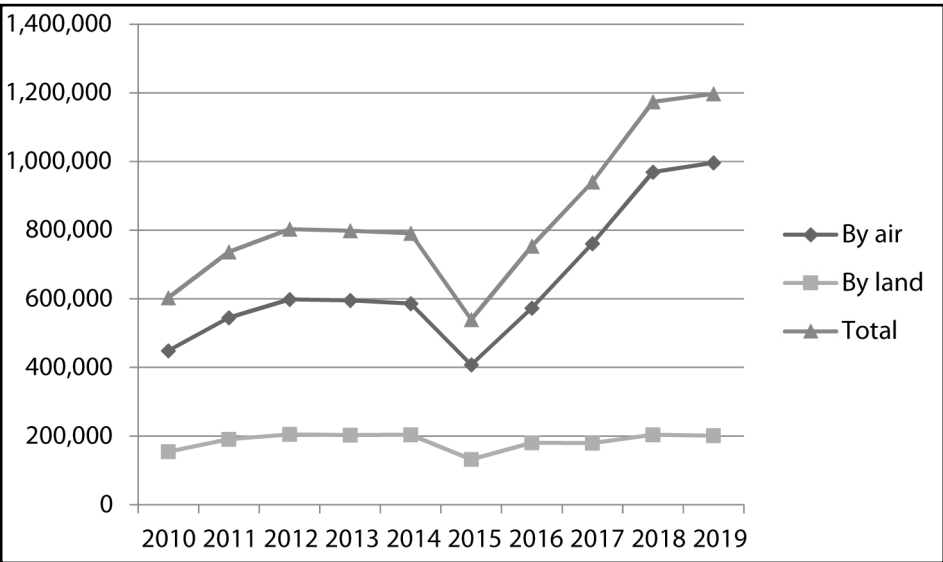
Year	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2010	5.8	6.7	10.5	7.6	5.4	5.5	6.5	9.1	9.1	13.1	11.2	8.4
2011	5.8	7.7	9.2	8.1	6.3	6.3	5.8	9.7	8.6	13.2	11.3	8.2
2012	6.5	8.3	11.1	8.7	6.3	6.7	6.2	9.0	8.3	10.8	10.4	7.9
2013	6.0	8.4	11.1	8.2	6.6	6.9	6.8	8.6	8.4	12.5	9.5	7.2
2014	8.9	8.7	10.1	10.1	7.9	6.4	5.9	7.6	6.7	10.3	9.7	7.7
2015	7.2	10.9	14.7	12.2	3.3	3.4	4.3	7.2	7.3	10.5	10.8	8.4
2016	5.6	8.1	10.2	8.0	6.2	5.2	6.4	8.8	9.9	11.9	9.6	10.1
2017	6.7	8.9	11.3	9.4	6.7	6.0	4.5	7.9	7.3	12.0	10.6	8.8
2018	6.2	7.6	10.6	8.4	5.9	5.6	6.3	7.5	7.8	11.2	12.6	10.4
2019	6.8	8.6	10.6	9.1	6.5	6.3	5.9	7.9	7.7	11.2	10.9	8.4
Average	6.6	8.4	10.9	9.0	6.1	5.8	5.6	8.3	8.1	11.7	10.7	8.6

Source: Researchers' calculation based on MOCTCA (2020)

Analysis of last ten years' data shows that there is fluctuation in tourist arrival in Nepal in different months. On average, tourist arrival increased from January to March. It decreased from April to June. In July and August, it increased whereas in September, it decreased. Tourist arrival was highest in October, after that it decreased again in November and December. Clearly, tourist arrival was better in March, October and November. Tourist arrival was lowest in June. However, there was no significant difference in tourist arrival in three months May, June and July. Tourist arrival was highest in October. As monsoon rain occurs from late May to mid-September, there was relatively low tourist arrival in these months. After the end of monsoon rain, tourist arrival was relatively better in October, November and December. As mentioned earlier, this is best time for trekking. Some popular trekking areas of Nepal are Mustang, Lower Dolpa, Upper Dolpa, Humla, Manaslu, Kanchanjunga, Narphu, among others.

Majority of tourists visit the country by air. Data of last ten years (2010-2019) suggest that 77.0% tourists, on average, visited the country by air whereas 23% visited by land (MOCTCA, 2020). Globally, 58% tourists travelled by air in 2018 (UNWTO, 2020b). Figure 1 shows tourist arrival in Nepal by air and land during 2010-2019.

Figure 1: Tourist arrival by air and land (2010-2019)



Source: MOCTCA (2020)

Tourists visiting Nepal by land enter through both India and China. These tourists are not only Indian and Chinese but also are of other countries. In 2019, such tourists had entered from Kakadvitta, Birgunj, Rasuwagadi, Bhairahawa, Nepalgunj, Kailali and Mahendranagar. Total number of tourists entering from these entry points was 201,307. Most of them (80.2%) had entered from Bhairahawa, followed by Timure (13.3%), Kakadvitta (4.2%), Gaddachauki (1.5%), Birgunj (0.6%), Nepalgunj (0.2%) and Dhangadi (0.1%). Major reason behind entering most of the tourists from Bhairahawa is to visit Lumbini. This is supported by the fact that among 201,307; 60.7% were from Myanmar, South Korea, Sri Lank and Thailand. The visitors from all these countries mostly visit Lumbini.

Current situation of Nepalese tourism industry

Table 6 shows current situation of Nepalese tourism industry. According to MOCTCA (2020), 43,999 beds are available from 1,289 hotels in Nepal. Out of which 13,200 beds are available from 138 star hotels and remaining 30,799 beds are available from other tourist standard hotels. Average stay of tourist in Nepal was 12.7 days in 2019. This accounts that Nepalese star and other tourist standard hotels can only accommodate 1,264,538 tourists each year. Apart from beds at hotels, 1,088 beds are available from 389 registered homestay in Nepal. These can accommodate 31,269 tourists throughout the year. Thus, altogether present hotels and homestays can accommodate 1,295,807 tourists in a year.

Government of Nepal had targeted to welcome 2,000,000 tourists for proposed visit Nepal 2020 campaign which was cancelled due to pandemic caused by corona virus disease. Thus, existing beds of star and other tourist standard hotels, and homestays were insufficient to welcome 2,000,000 tourists. Nepalese government is discussing on different programs for future like organizing visit Nepal 2022 and celebrating tourism decade 2021-2030. Therefore, proper planning for the tourist facilities must be in government priority. If target is to welcome 2,000,000 tourists per year, there should be 69,589 beds if average length of stay is 12.7 days. Table 9 shows that, in Nepal 22,091 tourist guides are available that composed of 4,200 tour guides, 17,625 trekking guides and 266 river guides.

Based on the data of table 1 and 9, average occupancy rate of hotels and home stays seems to be around 92%. However, as a substantial number of unregistered hotels provide accommodation to the tourists, this high average occupancy rate might be different from reality (Hotel Association Nepal [HAN], 2017).

Homestays in rural area are helping in promoting rural tourism. Tourism is becoming popular in many rural parts of Nepal and many local people are learning, about tourism, by doing through homestay. This initiation of local people shows good potential of extending tourism industry in Nepal. This can be a tool for promotion of cultural tourism. Such homestays are very popular among the internal tourists as well.

All the tourists arrived in Nepal were served by 3,680 travel agencies, 2,764 trekking agencies, 81 rafting agencies and 82 tourist transportation agencies. Altogether there were 22,091 tourist guides in Nepal in 2019. It shows that a guide was serving many tourists. So, there is the necessity of increasing trained manpower in order to provide quality service to the tourists. Nepal has bilateral air service agreements with 40 countries only. Total no. of airline seats is 9,000,000 per year. So, Nepal should expand connectivity through more bilateral air service agreements with the nations.

Table 6: Current situation of Nepalese tourism industry

Indicators	
A. No. of hotels	
a. Star hotels	138
b. Other tourist standard hotels	1,151
Total	1,289
No. of beds	
a. Star hotels	13,200
b. Other tourist standard hotels	30,799
Total	43,999
B. No. of travel agency	3,680
C. No. of trekking agency	2,764
D. No. of rafting agency	81
E. No. of tourist transportation service	82
F. No. of guide	
a. Tour guide	4,200
b. Trekking guide	17,625
c. River guide	266
Total	22,091
G. Registered home stay	
a. Community	310
b. Private	79
Total	389
No. of rooms	
a. Community	438
b. Private	225
Total	663
No. of beds	
a. Community	742
b. Private	346
Total	1,088
H. No. of airline seats	9,000,000 per year
I. No. of countries having Nepal's bilateral air service agreements	40
J. Total tourist arrival	1,197,191

Source: MOCTCA (2020)

Table 7 summarizes growth of some indicators of tourism industry. These indicators have experienced growth over given period of time. Average growth of beds in star and other tourist standard hotels is lower than average growth of tourist arrival. Data on growth of travel agency, trekking agency, rafting agency, tourist transportation service and river guides are available for last 7 years only whereas that of tour and trekking guides are available for last 6 years only. Comparing last 7 years' period, average annual growth of tourist arrival (8.4%) is higher than average annual growth of travel, trekking and rafting agency whereas lower than growth of tourist transportation service and river guides. On the other hand, comparing last 6 years' period, average annual growth of tourist arrival (9.9%) is higher than average annual growth of tourist guides whereas lower than that of trekking guides. As growth of beds in star and other tourist standard hotels is low compared to growth of tourist arrival, there is the necessity establishing new hotels in Nepal.

Table 7: Growth of tourism industry (percentage) (2010-2019)

Year	Growth of								
	Tourist arrival	Beds in star and other tourist standard hotels	Travel agency	Trekking agency	Rafting agency	Tourist transportation service	Tour guides	Trekking guides	River guides
2010	18.2	3.0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2011	22.1	4.9	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2012	9.1	2.9	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2013	-0.7	9.1	9.4	10.2	15.4	61.3	NA	NA	31.0
2014	-0.9	4.8	6.6	8.1	1.7	18.0	6.2	7.1	0.0
2015	-32	2.1	6.0	6.0	8.2	13.6	5.2	8.8	42.8
2016	40	3.5	24.4	17.3	9.1	7.5	6.0	14.9	10.7
2017	25	4.2	11.0	11.4	1.4	0.0	4.3	6.0	11.1
2018	25	2.6	-8.3	0.5	0.0	6.9	6.5	17.5	10.0
2019	2.1	7.7	4.9	4.3	11.0	6.5	1.8	8.5	5.1
Average	10.8	4.5	7.7	8.3	6.7	16.3	5.0	10.5	15.8

Source: MOCTCA (2020)

Contribution of tourism on foreign exchange earnings

Globally, tourism had 7% share in total export earnings whereas 29% share in earnings from service export in 2018 (UNWTO, 2020b). In Nepal, average annual share of tourism earnings on total export earnings in 2010-2018 was 21.7% whereas share of tourism earnings on total foreign exchange earnings was 6.2%. Table 8 shows share of tourism earnings on total export earnings and total foreign exchange earnings in last nine years' period.

Table 8: Share of tourism earnings on total export earnings and total foreign exchange earnings

Year	Total convertible foreign exchange earnings (NRs ten million)	Foreign currency earned from tourism (NRs ten million)	Share of tourism earnings on total export earnings (%)	Share of tourism earnings on total foreign exchange earnings (%)
2010	38,030.1	2,540.9	20.2	6.7
2011	53,691.0	3,180.1	20.0	5.9
2012	62,965.6	3,420.5	18.9	5.4
2013	77,075.1	4,611.5	20.5	6.0
2014	87,212.4	7,729.9	21.6	8.9
2015	92,686.4	4,111.5	19.6	4.4
2016	93,490.4	5,197.7	24.3	5.6
2017	108,010.1	6,566.0	25.4	6.1
2018	116,431.2	7,420.2	25.1	6.4
Average	81,065.8	4,975.4	21.7	6.2

Source: Calculations based on MOF (2019) and MOF (2020)

Table 9 shows contribution of tourism and other different sources of foreign exchange earnings of the country in different years. Remittance had highest contribution on foreign exchange earnings. Clearly, compared to remittance, foreign aid, export of goods and tourism had lower contribution on foreign exchange earnings. Service had a dominant contribution on foreign exchange earnings.

Table 9: Sources of convertible foreign exchange earnings (NRs. ten million)

Year	Foreign exchange earnings from service			Export of goods	Diplomatic missions	Foreign aid	Others
	Remittance	Tourism	Interest earning on foreign investment				
2010	22,590.9 (59.4%)	2,540.9 (6.7%)	462.5 (1.2%)	3,985.3 (10.5%)	548.1 (1.4%)	2,966.5 (7.8%)	4,935.9 (13.0%)
2011	33,336.7 (62.1%)	3,180.1 (6.0%)	325.4 (0.6%)	5,298.3 (9.9%)	936.6 (1.7%)	4,100.7 (7.6%)	6,512.8 (12.1%)
2012	39,434.9 (62.6%)	3,420.5 (5.4%)	416.7 (0.7%)	6,432.5 (10.2%)	1,839.0 (2.9%)	3,566.7 (5.7%)	7,855.3 (12.5%)
2013	49,030.3 (56.2%)	4,611.5 (6.0%)	681.8 (0.9%)	7,482.2 (9.7%)	2,634.8 (3.4%)	4,053.3 (5.3%)	8,581.3 (11.1%)
2014	54,005.3 (62.0%)	7,729.9 (8.9%)	854.6 (1.0%)	7,354.5 (8.4%)	3,248.1 (3.7%)	2,485.4 (2.9%)	11,534.5 (13.2%)
2015	59,458.8 (64.2%)	4,111.5 (4.4%)	845.6 (1.0%)	5,768.4 (6.2%)	3,997.8 (4.3%)	7,083.9 (7.6%)	11,420.2 (12.3%)
2016	60,249.7 (64.4%)	5,197.7 (5.6%)	1,098.2 (1.2%)	6,120.6 (6.5%)	2,672.8 (2.9%)	5,542.2 (5.9%)	12,609.6 (13.5%)
2017	65,400.3 (60.6%)	6,566.0 (6.1%)	1,704.5 (1.6%)	6,862.2 (6.4%)	2,096.1 (1.9%)	9,576.5 (8.9%)	15,804.5 (14.6%)
2018	75,069.0 (64.5%)	7,420.2 (6.4%)	1,712.2 (1.5%)	8,018.0 (6.9%)	2,119.9 (1.8%)	6,675.6 (5.7%)	15,416.3 (13.2%)
Average	50,952.9 (61.8%)	4,975.4 (6.2%)	900.2 (1.1%)	6,369.1 (8.3%)	2,232.6 (2.7%)	5,116.8 (6.4%)	10,519.0 (12.8%)

Source: Calculations based on MOF (2019)

Contribution of tourism on employment

Tourism creates employment directly as well as indirectly. Direct employment includes jobs in hotels, airlines, travel agencies, rafting agencies, and so on. On the other hand, indirectly employment opportunities are created in those activities which supply goods and services to hotels, construction industry where infrastructure is build up to provide facilities to the tourists, handicraft industry, and so on. MOCTCA (2014) had conducted tourism employment survey in 2014. Survey found that 138,148 jobs were created in Nepalese tourism industry in 2014. Among the employed people, 5% were self-employed whereas 95% were employees. Among the employed people, 80% were male and 20% were female. Similarly, 24% were seasonal workers. Furthermore, 32% workers had secondary job. It shows that a significant proportion of employed people work as part-time worker in this industry. Among the employed people, 18.8% were highly skilled, 28.3% skilled, 40.9% semi-skilled and 12% unskilled. Table 13 shows employment opportunity generated per industry in tourism in Nepal.

Table 10: Employment generation per industry in tourism

Indicator	Average no. of employee
Star hotel	128
Tourist standard hotel	43
Home stay	12
Trekking agency	29
Travel agency	12
Rafting agency	15
International airline	442
Domestic airline	394
Others (Paragliding and ultra-light)	20

Source: MOCTCA (2014)

Time series data are not available on the employment created by tourism industry. MOCTCA (2014) estimated that every 6 tourists visited had created 1 employment opportunity in Nepal. Based on this fact, estimation can be done on employment generated by tourism in different years. For example, as 1,197,191 tourists visited the country in 2019, it can be estimated that 199,532 jobs were created from tourism in 2019. Thus, tourism is one of the important sectors that can create a number of jobs in the economy. Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) had conducted economic census in 2018. That census did not measure employment in tourism. However, according

to that census 346,272 people were employed in accommodation and food industry whereas 16,062 were employed in arts, entertainment and recreation (CBS, 2019).

International agencies have maintained databases of travel and tourism industry, which include the data of Nepalese travel and tourism industry also. However, these databases do not provide data on travel industry and tourism industry separately. In 2019, 330 million jobs were created in travel and tourism industry in global economy (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2020a). WTTC had found that out of every 10 jobs created, 1 was associated with travel and tourism in 2019. In last five years, 1 in 4 net new jobs were created by travel and tourism in global economy.

Data of the last ten years suggest that direct contribution of travel and tourism industry to total employment, on average, is 3.1% whereas such contribution under total contribution to employment is 6.5%. Since 2016, number of employment in travel and tourism industry and its share on total employment is increasing under direct as well as total contribution to employment.

Table 11: Contribution of travel and tourism to employment in Nepal

Year	Direct contribution to employment			Total contribution to employment		
	No. of employment	Share of total employment	Growth of employment	No. of employment	Share of total employment	Growth of employment
2010	352,552	2.8%	-15.6%	773,232	6.1%	-14.8%
2011	434,248	3.3%	23.2%	921,054	7.0%	19.1%
2012	396,412	3.0%	-8.7%	841,508	6.3%	-8.6%
2013	419,845	3.1%	5.9%	888,274	6.5%	5.6%
2014	435,439	3.1%	3.7%	928,231	6.6%	4.5%
2015	424,942	2.9%	-2.4%	901,547	6.2%	-2.9%
2016	442,783	3.0%	4.2%	919,144	6.2%	2.0%
2017	497,652	3.2%	12.4%	1,027,110	6.6%	11.8%
2018	517,182	3.3%	3.9%	1,070,420	6.7%	4.2%
2019	531,916	3.3%	2.9%	1,102,510	6.8%	3.0%
Average	445,297	3.1%	3.0%	853,152	6.5%	2.4%

Source: The World Bank (2020)

Conclusion

The analysis of last decade (2010-2019) shows that the number of tourist arrivals in 2019 nearly doubled compared to the arrival of 2010; however, the status of average length of stay remained almost similar to that of 2010. Major 5 countries, i.e. India, China, Sri Lanka, USA and UK shared almost half of the tourist arrival in Nepal. Almost half of total tourists' purpose of such visit was holiday celebration. Autumn season was mostly enjoyed by tourist for trekking. The average annual share of tourism to total foreign exchange earnings from service was almost 6 percent. As compared to remittance, foreign aid and export of goods, tourism has lower contribution on foreign exchange earnings in Nepal. Tourism has role on employment generation directly as well as indirectly. It was estimated that every 6 tourist visited had created 1 employment opportunity in Nepal. This means 199,532 jobs were estimated to be created by 1,197,191 tourists who visited the country in 2019. In the last decade, there is improvement in tourist arrival in Nepal. Finally, this study concludes that despite the increase in number of tourist arrival, there were no significant increase in the share of tourism in foreign exchange earnings and employment in Nepal.

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Ecotourism in Ghoda Ghodi Wetland Sukhad, Kailali, Nepal

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Abstract

Tourism is the act of spending time away from home. Nepal has remained an exotic tourist location for several decades, and wetlands are among the major areas of tourism in Nepal. Located in the far-western Tarai of Nepal, Ghoda Ghodi Lake is among the major wetlands in terms of both biodiversity and tourism. This study has assessed the ecotourism status in Ghoda Ghodi Lake of Nepal and to understand the current condition and possible inferences. A total of 40 households were surveyed, and 80 visitors were interviewed for collecting primary data. Most of the respondent visitors have visited wetlands more than five times. It is important to point

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out that fifty percent of the respondent visitors have visited the wetland for natural purposes indicating that the naturalness of the wetland has more capacity to attract tourists. Visitors perceived to enhance economic activities and increase employment opportunities to attract locals to promote ecotourism. The local people were engaged in homestay earning around NRs 2 to 4 lakh per year as well most of the local respondents (50%) were participating in tourism promotion activities

Background

In the past several decades, globally, tourism has proved to be one of the fastest and largest booming economic industries (Pao, 2010; World Tourism Organization, 2018). In Nepal, tourism is a newly discovered phenomenon dating back to the early 1960s (Stevens, 2003). Tourism is one of the major economic industries of Nepal (Gautam, 2011). With the increasing number of visitors every year, the tourism industry in Nepal has the potentiality to stretch its array in the generation of more income, employment, and other benefits (Thapa, 2003). It has been reported that simply tourism entertains more than half a million international tourists every year in several parts of Nepal (Gautam, 2011).

Tourism as an economic sector has aided some influence directly and indirectly towards the economy in Nepal. On a positive note, tourism has also helped increase foreign currency influx and indirectly promote other sectors of the Nepalese economy (Pandey, Chhetri, Kunwar, & Ghimire, 1995). On the contrary, there have been occurrences of some negative consequences due to tourism in Nepal. Tourism destinations could have several social, cultural, and even environmental impacts (Basnet, 2016; Kunwar, 2017; Vanhobe, 2005).

Ecotourism in the wetlands of Nepal has been important for the benefits of the local people (Shrestha, 2011). Ecotourism prioritizes the integrity of ecological resources, conservation of the environment, development of the community through economic prosperity through the maintenance of low-consumptive and low-impact utilization of the available resources (Duffy, 2008); (Gurung & Scholz, 2008). Sustainable ecotourism accounts for comparatively lower environmental impacts aiding in a decrease in negative external factors by promoting environmental and cultural integrity (UNEP, 2013).

Local communities are the primary caretakers of the wetland prevalent in their region (ICIMOD, 2006). The involvement of the local communities in the conservation of the wetland can play a crucial role. It is important to realize the relationship between the local people with the wetland. Their socio-cultural and economic status, attitudes towards conservation, enthusiasm in community participation for protection and welfare, resource utilization patterns play a significant role in deciding the fate of the wetland (Sah & Heinen, 2001). Nepal is a country teeming with natural beauty, as

of 2019, more than one million tourists have visited Nepal (GoN, 2020). In the early 1970s, most tourists were secluded within the Kathmandu valley, Pokhara, Chitwan National Park, or Annapurna Conservation Area (Stevens, 2003). This was because of the prevalence of infrastructures such as lodging and accommodation facilities and the availability of transportation services (Thapa, Murayama, & Ale, 2008). But now, they visit different parts of Nepal, including beautiful wetlands outside the major town of Nepal, such as Ghoda Ghodi, Rara.

Ghoda Ghodi Lake is one of the important wetlands in Nepal listed among the Ramsar sites of Nepal. It has been attracting many tourists each year and contributing to the socioeconomic activities of local people while also helping to promote the local area and culture in a different part of Nepal and the world. Ghoda Ghodi Lake has been registered under the Ramsar site since 2003 (Lamsal, Pant, Kumar, & Atreya, 2015; Kafle, 2005; Lamsal et al., 2014). The lake is an important destination for tourism for western Nepal most of whom attribute as Nepalese. Considered a religious shrine by the locals, Tharu people celebrate their traditional festival called 'Agan Panchami' every year in the study area (Lamsal, Atreya, Pant, & Kumar, 2016). Apart from that, ecotourism has also flourished in the Ghoda Ghodi Lake complex. Different researchers have researched Ghoda Ghodi Lake of Nepal viz. Lamsal et al. (2016) and Upadhyaya (2019), however, these studies have not combined visitors and local perception to find the ecotourism status in Ghoda Ghodi Lake. Therefore, this study has coupled both the visitors' and local perceptions to see the status of ecotourism in Ghoda Ghodi Lake, which is beneficial to local and other stakeholders to formulate and implement a plan and policy for better tourism and livelihood promotion and conserving wetland.

Tourism

Tourism is an act of spending time temporarily away from home for recreation and (Mathieson & Wall, 1982; p.1, Kunwar, 2017, p.11). The tourism sector has had several implications for the environment and stability. The top being sustainability issues (Thompson, Gillen, & Driess, 2018). The opportunity of tourism is prevalently high. There has also been an increased fuelwood demand, improper waste management, pollution, changes in the settlement patterns, among many others (Sharma, Upreti, & Pyakuryal, 2012). Therefore, institutional and government innovations are necessary for proper management and monitoring of the environment during the tourism planning process (Sharma, 2009).

Wetlands are important tourism destinations because of their aesthetic values (Paudyal et al., 2018) and the high diversity of the animal and plant life they contain (Lamsal et al., 2014; Bista et al., 2010). They are used as the sites for recreational fishing, and coral reef areas are highly used as recreational diving sites (Reid et al.,

2005). Tourism plays a significant role in supporting rural economies. However, there are often great disparities of visitation based on access and involvement of people in tourism is particularly noticeable when they introduce inequities and do not support and develop local economies, and significantly where the resources that support the recreation and tourism are degraded (Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, 2012).

Wetlands are rich in biodiversity, and it has become a necessity to utilize sustainable ways to promote them while also recruiting the community's welfare through resource usage. Wetlands cover more than 2.6% of the total land in Nepal. According to the Ramsar Convention of 1988, there are a total of 9 registered wetlands in Nepal. They have been termed as the Ramsar sites viz. Ghodaghodi lake, Koshi-Tappu, Jagadishpur Reservoir, Beeshazari Lake, Gokyo, Gosaikunda lake, Phoksundo lake, Rara Lake, and Maipokhari (Bhandari, 2009,). Nepal is rich in terms of wetland-dependent birds.

In Nepal, many species of birds have been described of which, nearly 200 birds i.e. nearly 25% of birds in Nepal are wetland-dependent (Baral, 2009). Besides these, charismatic species of mammals and other vertebrates visit wetlands compelled by their ecological requirements offering the potential for wildlife based on ecotourism. From the perspective, where wetland conservation comes in the lower spectrum of infrastructure and poverty alleviation, it has become necessary to balance development with protection (Poudel, 2009). Ecotourism can contribute to all three aspects of sustainable development, i.e., environmental, social, and economic sectors (Rinzin et al., 2008). The activities can motivate local participation in wetland conservation and contribute to sustainable development (Poudel, 2009).

In the context of Nepal, local people involved in providing homestay facilities to tourists receive direct payback from the ecosystem services. Well-managed homestay as an ecotourism product can be an alternative to mass tourism and can play a crucial role in involving the remote population and contribute to the conservation of wilderness and traditional cultures (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013). The benefits that can be achieved from ecotourism depend upon that site's potential to attract and host tourists without affecting the physical, social, and economic aspects of the environment adversely and maintain ecosystem services in a well-managed form (Navarro et al., 2012; Reilly, 1986). Ecosystem services from the wetlands are an essential part of the livelihood strategies of the local people. Thus, wetlands play an important role in promoting ecotourism in Nepal. Because of their vulnerability due to development attractions, wetlands are also one of the most threatened habitats (Hollis, 1990).

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is considered as a newer approach of tourism contributing to cultural, scientific, and educational as well as adventure drives (Basnet, 2016; Weaver, 2002). In simpler terms, ecotourism can be defined as a responsible mode of traveling that allows for the conservation of the environment through sustainability approaches, consequently contributing to the wellbeing of the local people (TIES, 2015). Travel and tourism are human resource intensive employing 230 million people or 8% of the global workforce, and it is estimated that one direct tourism job creates more than one indirect job within the tourism industry. Eco tourists seek an alternative to mass tourism. Thus, they travel to new areas in a relatively undisturbed place with some cultural or environmental attraction. Thus, we can infer that ecotourism and sustainability go hand in hand and brings about mutual benefit to both conservation areas and local people (Bajracharya & Lama, 2008; Shrestha, 2015). Ecotourism in wetland regions of Nepal has been coming into the limelight for the past few years.

Even in developed countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and Tanzania, nature-based ecotourism is an essential entity for economic development (Eagles, 2002). Similarly, middle-income developing countries such as Thailand have also been incorporating ecotourism for the social empowerment of their local communities (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005). Likewise, in the neighboring country India, in Kerala, the state government itself has been promoting ecotourism as an important agenda for increasing employment security and foreign currency influx (Sreekumar & Parayil, 2002). Obua (1997), regarding the impacts of ecotourism on the environment, has revealed some negative influences such as degradation in environmental quality. Likewise, Kelkit, Ozel, & Demirel (2005) have assessed tourism activities particularly sensitive to the environment and deduced Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threat (SWOT) analysis to derive strategic proposals for future development. In addition to this, Gezon (2014) has conducted research that revolved around protected areas in Madagascar to analyze the social implications caused due to ecotourism within the area. Likewise, Brunet et al. (2001) have also researched to analyze the relationship between environment, tourism, culture, and economic development in Bhutan. Stem et al. (2003) have also conducted a study to assess the benefits of ecotourism, impacts of ecotourism, and its potential for environment conservation in Costa Rica. Likewise, Nepal (2007) also researched in the Annapurna Conservation Area of Nepal to understand the effects of ecotourism experience. Likewise, various studies about ecotourism have been conducted in Nepal. Gurung et al. (2009) have been accounted for the limnology and bathymetry of the wetlands of Nepal. Khanal (2009) has assessed the forest cover change in the watershed and wetland regions of Nepal. Similarly, integrated wetland and watershed management have been researched intensively by Regmi et al. (2009).

Materials and methods

Study area

The Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex (GLC) is located in the western part of lower Nepal between the latitudes of 28°41'03" N and 80°56'43" E and within the altitude of 205 meters above sea level (masl). The lake complex is under the jurisdiction of the Government of Nepal. The Ghodaghodi Lake Complex is located in a region of diverse topography and is connected to a widespread mixed type of tropical forest situated in the lower part of Siwalik Hills in the north. Likewise, it is also connected with Bardia National Park and Suklaphanta National Park in the south. This peculiar location of the Ghoda Ghodi Lake is also why it acts as a biological corridor for the movement of wildlife between the areas (Sah and Heinen, 2001).

Climate

The Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex lies in the sub-tropic climatic zone. As per the climate data collected in Dhangadhi, the region was classified as CWA (Köppen and Geiger, 2011). It is located 60 km away from Ghoda Ghodi Lake and shows that the climate in Dhangadhi is warm and temperate. The average temperature in Dhangadhi recorded by the Department of hydrology and meteorology, Dhangadi (1984-2013), is 24.6 °C. About 1860.47 mm of precipitation falls annually.

Biodiversity

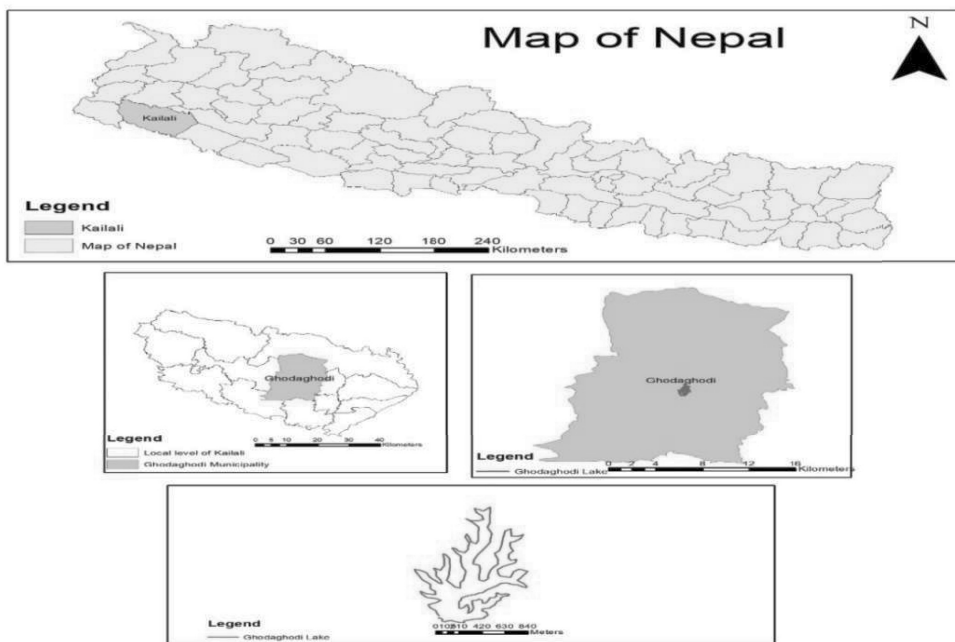
Ghoda Ghodi Lake is considered a biodiversity treasure because it hosts varieties of flora and fauna. The lake has a record of 388 vascular plants. The Ghoda Ghodi Lake has recorded 34 species of mammals, 35 species of herpetofauna, 148 species of birds, 30 species of fish, and 32 species of butterfly. This area serves as a corridor between Terai low land and Siwalik hills for wildlife, also supports many critically endangered and vulnerable species (IUCN,1998; Sah & Bhatta, 2002, Bista et al., 2010; Shrestha et al., 2020). Notably, the Ghoda Ghodi Lake is also a habitat for nationally and globally threatened and endangered bird species. Hence, the Government of Nepal has declared the GLC as an Important Bird Area (IBA) (BCN and DNPWC, 2012). On a positive note, the Ghoda Ghodi Lake has recently been extended to a total area of 9650ha encompassing Division Block Number 5 of Basanta Protection Forest to manage the ecosystem within the area more holistically and call for biodiversity conservation (DoF, 2017). As the name suggests, the Ghoda Ghodi Lake was named after the temple 'Ghodaghodi' located within the southern part of the lake complex. The temple premises marks as an important religious shrine for the local people practicing Hinduism, and the site also welcomes several devotees from nearby villages every year. The mechanisms for protection and governance are contextually based on the wetlands of Nepal depending upon the geography (Lamsal et al., 2017). As the lake complex is not located within the protected areas with stricter

governance and protection mechanism, the Ghoda Ghodi Lake does not pertain to strong legal protection measures compared to other wetlands located within the protective areas.

Socioeconomic features

The area's population is 47,979, with 8585 total households distributed in 9 different wards (CBS, 2011). The male population is 23,603, and the female is 24,376, which shows the sex ratio is 96:83.

Figure1: Map of Ghodaghodi Lake complex



Data collection

A set of the questionnaire was prepared and randomly, a total of 120 respondents were surveyed in which 80 were domestic tourists and 40 were local people out of which two people were key informants. Most of the respondents (about 63%) were male. The ages of the respondent were between 20 to 70 years. Most of the respondents (57%) were from the Kailali district, while the rest of them were from outside the Kailali district, viz. Bardiya, Palpa, Jumla, Doti, Kathmandu, and Chitwan.

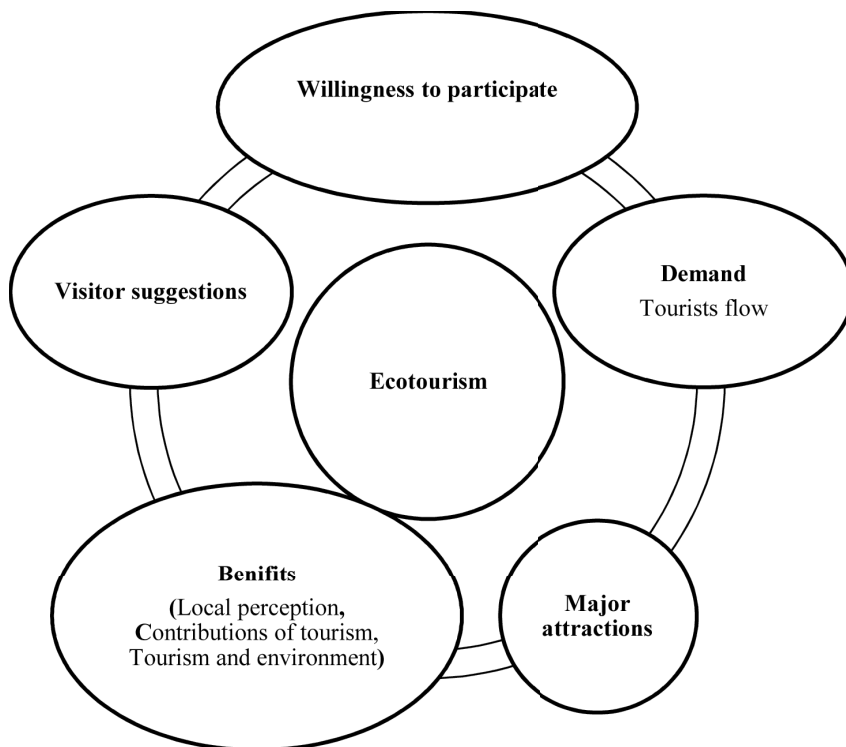
Prior to the survey, informant consent was taken orally from each respondent. To collect diverse information, both participant and non-participant observation

methods were applied in the study area. The participant observation method was prioritized while observing the local scenario, activities of the local people, and domestic tourists. Non-participation observation was employed while focusing on a specific context and whenever needed, such as tourism amenities of the study area, accessibility, and accommodation.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed and interpreted using Microsoft Excel 2010 and presented in the form of bar diagrams and pie charts. The data were presented in percentages in tables and graphs. Frequency of visits, the contribution of tourism and major attractions, visitors suggestions, Visitors Willingness to Participate in Tourism Activities, Local perception, tourism, and environment were taken as major variables for exploring ecotourism status (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Analytical framework used for the analysis of ecotourism in Ghoda Ghodi wetland.



Results

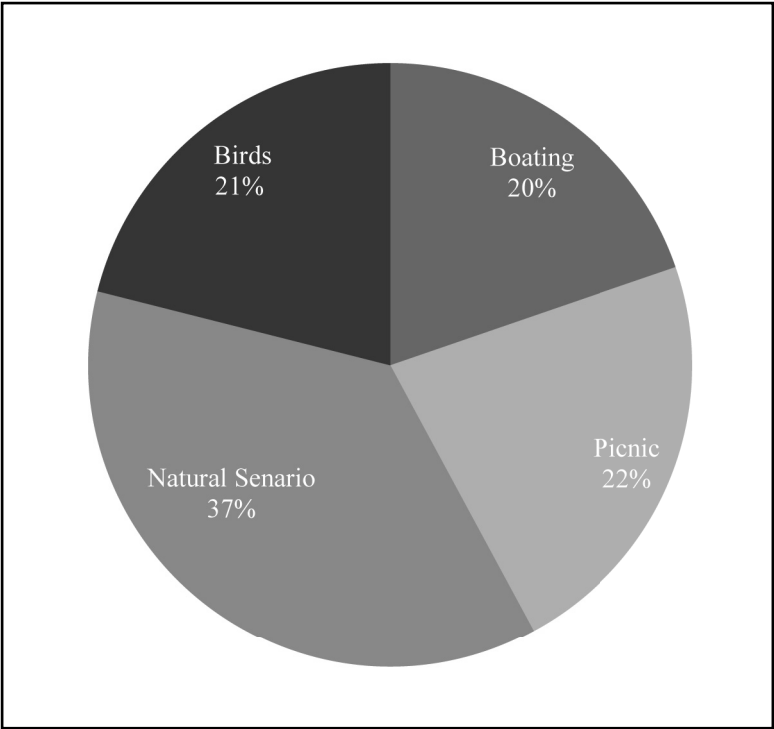
Tourists flow

The key respondent reported that more than 500 locals visited per day and 1500 foreign tourist visits per year. Most of the respondents (37.5%) have visited wetlands for more than five times followed by one time (26.25%), three times (22.5%) and five times (13.75%).

Major attraction of wetland

Among the visitors, 37% of them visited the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex to enjoy the natural scenery, while 22% of them had visited for a picnic. Likewise, about 21% of the visitors had visited for birdwatching while the rest of them were for boating (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Major attraction of wetland



Locals perception in tourism activities

A total of 40 respondents interviewed around Ghoda Ghodi Lake provided a homestay facility, and most of them were Tharu (80%). They were running their homestay for the last four years. They primarily generated income from early

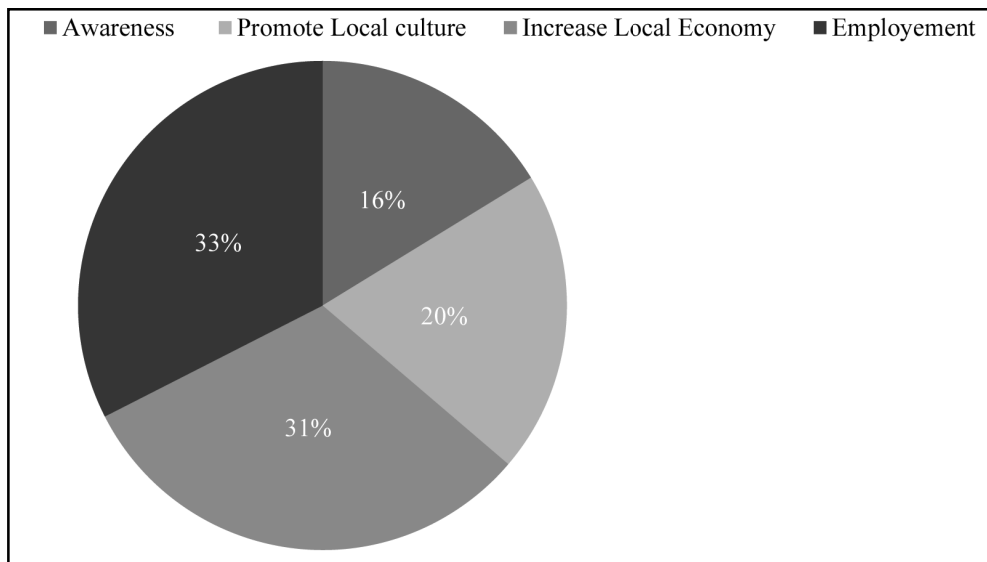
September to April in this season festivals, like Dashain, Deepawali, and Makar Sankrant falls. They were generating Nepalese Rupees (Rs.) 2 lakh to 4 lakh during this season.

Locals argue that land price around the lake has increased and the number of homestays is also increasing day by day. They also say that earning from tourism activities is insufficient for their livelihood, but it has been an alternative earning. Additionally, almost 100% of local respondents perceived that their lifestyle and culture have not been negatively impacted due to tourism activities in the area. They also reported that so far, they have not witnessed any crime scenes around the lake.

Contribution of tourism

All the visitors believed that tourism activities could promote the socioeconomic conditions of the area. A total of 33% of the respondents perceived that tourism helps to promote employment opportunities, followed by an increase in the local economy, promotion of local culture, and enhanced awareness of the area (Figure 4).

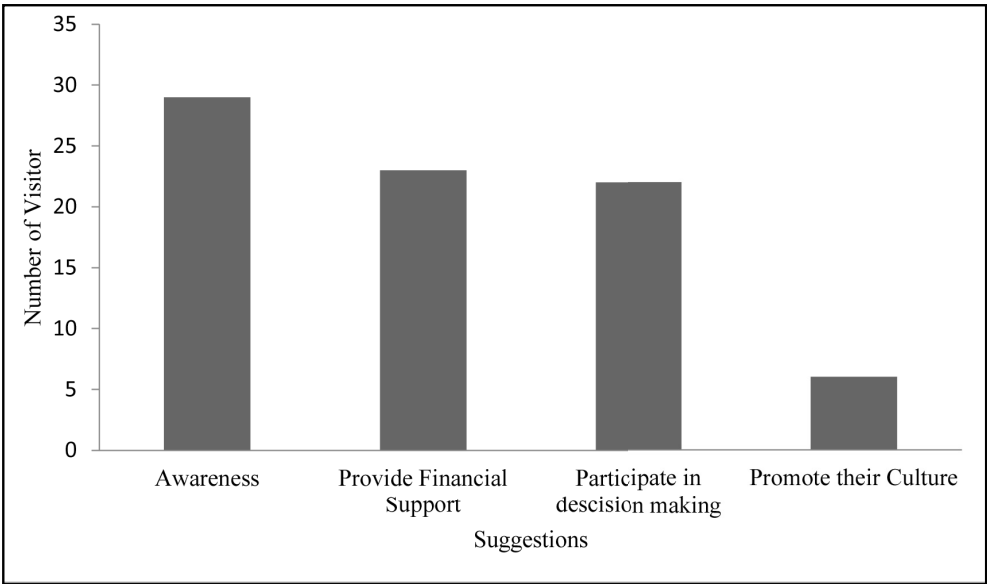
Figure 4: Visitors perception on the most important socioeconomic attributes that tourism contributes in the area.



Visitors suggestions

A total of 41 (51.12%) respondents suggested generating massive awareness among the local people and enhancing the capacity of local people in tourism management through various training, 21 respondents (26.25%) indicated to increase financial investment, and 18 respondents (22.5%) suggested to help in livelihood (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Visitors suggestion to involve the local community in tourism



Local participation and tourism

Out of 40 respondents, 26% reported that they are participating in awareness, 50% participate in promotion and decision making, and 24% are providing financial support for tourism development.

Discussion

Frequency of visit

This study revealed that 37.5% of the visitor respondents had visited the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex more than five times. From this, it can be comprehended that the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex is a popular tourist destination among domestic tourists. In addition to this, it was also found that more visitor respondents were from the Kailali district, which is also where the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex is located. Considering that Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex and its surrounding areas are easily accessible to the local people within the Kailali district, it is well validated that the local people from within the district comprise higher than those from other parts of Nepal. Apart from that, domestic travelers frequently visit certain places if a variety of services are offered. As the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex provides a diverse ecosystem and provisioning services such as sightseeing, leisure activities like boating, spots for organizing picnics, visitors from all over Nepal frequently visit the place (Bania & Paudel, 2016). It has been observed that, for domestic travelers, the accessibility and affordability factors are among the significant affairs when selecting

their destinations (Deraniyagala, 2005). Bania & Paudel (2016) reported that the pull motives of domestic tourism could be easy access and affordable, which in the case of the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex is true.

Major attraction of wetland

The majority of the respondents' visitors (37%) perception about the major attraction of the wetland was a natural scenario. The lake complex is named the country's most extensive interconnected natural lake system and is also under the Ramsar site since 2003 because of its biodiversity (IUCN, 1998; Kafle, 2005; Thapa et al., 2020). Additionally, the lake complex is blessed with 45 species of aquatic plants, while more than 27 species of aquatic fishes also inhabit there (Lamsal, Pant, Kumar, & Atreya, 2014). Similarly, the vicinity of the lake is also teeming with terrestrial biodiversity making the entire area a haven for the admirers of nature and natural beauty. Likewise, the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex offers recreation through picnics within the vicinity. This attracts many local people from the area as well as from neighboring districts and domestic tourists from all over Nepal. Similarly, 140 bird species have been reported within GLC, out of which six are threatened (Baral, 1992; Baral & Inskipp, 2005). Therefore, the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex remains an important site for bird watching in Nepal. In addition to this, considering the provision of boating services within the lake complex, the lake complex is also used for boating recreationally (Sah & Heinen, 2001).

Local's perception in tourism activities

The peak season for tourists at the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex is between September and April. Particularly, during festival seasons among Nepalese practicing Hinduism such as Dashain, Tihar, Makar Sankranti, etc, there is a high influx of domestic tourists in the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex. In this same context, the respondents reported more than 500 domestic visits to the area in a day while generating income between Nrs 2lakh to 4lakh during these peak seasons. While the number of international tourists is estimated to be around 500,000 annually, the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex has welcomed approximately (Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Civil Aviation, 2015). Despite booming tourism at the lake complex, the respondents have argued that tourism is an insufficient source of livelihood and needs to depend on alternative earning such as farming. Researchers such as Reisinger (2009) have argued that tourism could change the lifestyle and culture. On the contrary, the respondents have observed no negative impact on their lifestyle and culture. In addition to this, the respondents have strongly stated that the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex area has not been a platform of violence for the visitors.

Tourism contribution

Tourism is known to positively correlate with economic growth (Armstrong & Read, 2000). Tourism contributes to the local economy through the exchange of local goods; tourism also promotes cultural exchange and hence, ultimately contributes to the economic growth of the society (Mihalic, 2002; Bhattarai, Roskaft, & Graae, 2020). Based on the interview of the visitor respondents, 33% of them believe that tourism in the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex has contributed to the provision of employment for local people. In line with this, from the research by Aynalem et al. (2016), tourism opportunities and challenges, it is observed that tourism contributes to employment opportunities in fields such as accommodation, transportation, and attraction sites such as the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex in this research. Similarly, Herman et al. (2017) have analyzed the linear increase in the local economy with time. Likewise, it is also agreed that tourism can contribute to awareness of conservation behavior (Ajzen, 2005). The visitor respondents in the study area also acknowledged awareness in their conservation behavior due to ecotourism.

Tourism and environment

It has been observed that tourists are getting more inclined to visit natural areas (Kiper, 2013). This is also why, over recent times, the problem of managing solid wastes within the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex has become apparent. Reports by Nepal (2000) and Shackely (1994) point out that tourism contributes to increased litter, poor sanitation facilities, and solid waste disposal in developing countries like Nepal. In addition to this, in the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex areas, paper, plastics, glass bottles, and several other non-biodegradable materials are frequently disposed of without proper management, and especially in spaces such as designated picnic spots solid wastes are openly disposed of. More than 40% of the household respondents have been providing homestay for the past 3-4 years in the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex. Almost all of the household respondents agree that increasing tourism in the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex has caused several environmental impacts, particularly due to increasing solid wastes and their improper management.

Prebensen et al. (2016) and Troye and Supphellem (2012) outline the participation of visitors or consumers in tourism to be a good approach to create value in the consumption process. Bajracharya et al. (2006) reiterate that the current scenario where the visitors rarely participate in conservation is planning and decision making. However, in the study area, the respondents have emphasized that their involvement is necessary for both the sectors and help promote local culture through participation.

Participation and tourism

Participation is considered as one of the successful strategies for sustainable development as well as conservation (Alexander, 2000; Khadka et al., 2019). In addition

to this, the participation of the local people in decision making is also a necessity to increase the socioeconomic benefits of the community through ecotourism (Mensah & Ernest, 2013). The advantages of local participation in ecotourism are widely known, it is in many cases. It is not an approach followed in developing countries (Dei, 2000). On the contrary, community participation is quite common in the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex, where, among the household respondents, 26% stated that they're involved in awareness activities, 50% have been participating in decision making while 24% of them help in tourism development through financial support. Similarly, an important ecotourism principle is that the local communities are to participate in making tourism decisions so that it results in an effective, legitimate as well as equitable planning process (Buanes et al., 2005). The locals were gaining economic benefits from the area through homestay activities. They were also actively engaged in tourism activities. They argue the wetland is facing the problem of degradation.

Conclusion

The Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex is an important site for ecotourism for the local people of the region as the lake complex is one of the major contributing factors for the provision of employment. Most of the tourists are domestic, to attract more of them, exciting schemes which also focus on sustainability could flourish the ecotourism in the region that could also eventually lead to ecotourism as the main source of livelihood. Similarly, it is revealed that to enhance the local ecotourism within the region, local participation is deemed necessary. From the study, it has been disclosed that local participation has been the approach of practice within the Ghoda Ghodi Lake Complex. Thus, it is better to continue it for the welfare of the local people and the environment.

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Declaration

The authors declare there is no conflict of interests.

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The Effects and Challenges of COVID-19 in the Hospitality and Tourism Sector in India

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Abstract

The hospitality and tourism sector is considered the backbone for economic growth, especially in developing countries. However, this thriving sector is particularly vulnerable to natural and human-made disasters. This study assesses the impact of the COVID-19 (coronavirus disease-2019) pandemic in India's hospitality and tourism sector by addressing essential aspects such as current conditions and challenges as well as future perspectives. The secondary research methodology has been applied for the research. For data collection, the secondary data has been collected through literature, journal articles, government documents, etc. The research findings show that COVID-19 in India has significantly affected the hospitality and tourism sector. Global and domestic tourists have canceled their programs to visit the natural, historical, religious, and cultural sites. The flight tickets and the hotel reservations have been canceled. A significant number of workers in the sector have lost their jobs. This pandemic has affected the economy of the country as well as the well-being of the individuals to a large extent. As the intensification of the COVID-19 is being thought to

cause a long-term impact, this study could be relevant to the decision-makers in regards to the crucial task of reviving the sector.

Introduction

The hospitality and tourism sector is commonly recognized as a significant contributing factor to the green economy through a more sustainable development agenda (Wilkes & Reddy, 2015). It has been the primary and most dynamic sector in today's global economy. It had generated about 10.3 % of global GDP and provided 330 million jobs in 2019 directly and indirectly (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019). Such a large and positive impact on the global economy was experienced despite its survival from the crises and disasters at various times in the past.

The primary forms of crises that affect the hospitality and tourism sector are armed conflicts, environmental hazards/pollution, and pandemics. The main events were the 9/11 attacks in the USA, the 2004 Asian tsunami, the Fukushima nuclear disaster, the 2015/2016 drought in India, Avian flu, amongst others (Ahlfeldt, Franke, & Maennig, 2015; Cheer, 2020; Kuo, Chang, Chen, Huang, & McAleer, 2012; UNICEF, 2016). Moreover, pandemics have left the hospitality and tourism sector with unprecedented challenges time after time, such as by limiting the demand side (freedom of movement, fear of infection, etc.) and the supply-side (closure of accommodation and leisure facilities, etc.). Therefore, it is difficult to predict how the tourism sector will develop during this period. Analysis, early approach, and marketing strategies of tourism elements that meet the modified requirements due to the COVID-19 pandemic are clearly demanding. These necessitate significant research that focuses on its impacts, changes, and awareness.

COVID -19 pandemic has impacted the global economy. It has been predicted that the global GDP will be contracted by 5.2 % in 2020 (The World Bank, 2020b). One of the economic areas this pandemic has affected the most in developing countries like India is the hospitality and tourism sector. Many hospitality businesses have been temporarily closed due to strategies to minimize the infection rate. The measures such as lockdowns, social distances, home orders, travel bans, and travel restrictions have been imposed. Also, demand for businesses that are allowed to continue has declined significantly (Bartik et al., 2020; Gursoy & Chi, 2020). In a nutshell, the fear of COVID-19 has led to uncertainty and chaotic conditions in the hospitality and tourism sector.

The hospitality and tourism sector is an essential tool for sustainable economic development in India, like in other developing countries (Asif Khan, Bibi, Lorenzo, Lyu, & Babar, 2020). It contributed 6.8 % of total GDP and 8 % of the total employment in 2019 (The Times of India, 2020; World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019). The revenue from domestic trips in India is the most profitable sum of capital. However, with the spread of COVID-19 at the beginning of 2020, there is a significant downfall

in the sector. The lockdown started on March 25, 2020, and continued until May 31, 2020, taking into account the extension of the lockdown. In the hospitality sector, the lockdown was lifted, and on June 8, 2020, hotels, restaurants, temples, and tourist destinations were allowed to reopen. Even so, it is not possible to estimate the extent of the economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak in the sector because the course and duration of the outbreak are still uncertain. As the lives and health of the people are still at stake, it is unlikely that the positive signals in this sector will be restored soon. With this regard, there is a need for detailed study and analysis of the effect of COVID-19 in the hospitality and tourism sector in India.

This study is based on secondary data obtained through the internet, books, online news, reports, and published research articles. The data were also collected from the homepage of temples, the published news portal of the Ministry of Tourism, and the information page for COVID-19 of the Government of India. In the rest of this article, I review the literature and mention the impacts of COVID-19 in different hospitality and tourism sectors. It provides correlations between COVID-19 and the sector demand. Finally, the author presents the implications and conclusions of this study that could provide recommendations and outlooks on a future plan.

Literature review

The author reviews the pandemic's global impact in the beginning, and I focus on India because only a handful of pandemic research studies are documented. Epidemics and pandemics have long played a role in social and economic changes (Hall, Scott, & Gössling, 2020). However, the nature of such changes is selective. That means, in some cases, the changes are minimal, while in other cases, the changes are unexpected (Hall et al., 2020).

It was reported that the COVID-19 causes not only a considerable proportion of the health crisis but also an imminent restructuring of the global economic order (EYQ, 2020; Lee & Song, 2020; McKinsey, 2020; Sneader & Singhal, 2020). The World Bank has predicted the long-term socio-economic implications (The World Bank, 2020a). The sharp drop in domestic demand and service supply has forced many countries and regions to revise their GDP projects. Similarly, the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2020b) has observed blockades adopted by countries and regions. The production of non-essential goods and services has been increased. Falling prices of goods in export-centric countries have weakened exporting countries' economies and reduced employment in these sectors (ILO, 2020c). As a result, trade imbalances and large outflows of capital have made debt repayment importing essential goods and services difficult, especially in developing economies.

One of the evident impacts of COVID-19 within the hospitality and tourism sector has been towards the airline and transport sectors. Before the COVID-19

pandemic, tourist destinations such as Venice (Italy), Barcelona (Spain), Kyoto (Japan) faced so many visitors that the situation of over-tourism had occurred. The tourism and hospitality sector was affected by the onset of COVID-19 as domestic and international visitors began canceling scheduled trips. With the progression of COVID-19, almost all countries started restrictions on their borders crossing as part of national emergency responses (ILO, 2020a). The staff of airlines and transport companies across the globe have been being asked to take paid or unpaid leave as well as to accept reduced wages. Another significant impact of COVID-19 has been in the hotel sector. The emergency majors have imposed bars, cafes, and hotels to limit the virus's spread by local and federal governments. About 33 % of the hotel business losses have been predicted in Europe (Dogra, 2020). In the USA, hotels are experiencing booking cancellations, which are expected to eliminate four million jobs. Meetings, incentives, conferences & exhibitions (MICE), etc., are significantly affected, canceled, or postponed across the region. As the pandemic rose to its peak, nearly 30 airlines, including German Airways and Thai Airways, have filed for bankruptcy. Many carriers such as Indigo and Emirates had to cut salaries and dismiss their services (The Indian Express, 2020). This year, airline revenues worldwide in 2020 are down 44% year-on-year (The Economic Times, 2020).

COVID-19 pandemic is deteriorating the hospitality and tourism sector in India like in other countries around the world. It is visible in the country's inbound, outbound, and domestic tourism (Dash, 2020). The potential job loss in tourism and hospitality has been estimated to be about 70 % of the sector workforce (Radhakrishna, 2020). The estimated losses of US\$ 150 billion have been predicted in India's tourism sector (Ghosh, 2020; The Hindu, 2020). The lockdown practice was implemented at the beginning of the pandemic. While with the decline of COVID-19 daily cases (from September 16), alternative approaches such as social distancing, mask-wearing, and avoiding gatherings have been encouraged. These measures have greatly encouraged economic activities in the hospitality and tourism sector. However, with an uncertainty of effective vaccine and therapeutics as well as the distribution of vaccines on such a large population (1.3 billion), even if the vaccine is developed, the positive impact on the sector is still long to wait.

Methodology

In this study, secondary research data has been implemented for the research. Data collection has been collected through literature, journal articles, government documents, government press release, newspapers, online portals, temple websites, advertisements, etc. The research findings show that COVID-19 in India has significantly affected the hospitality and tourism sector. Mainly affected sectors of airlines data had published by International Air Transport Association (IATA). However, hotels and other sectors' data was not clearly shown by those sectors.

During the pandemic, the author conducted direct interviews with local people, local students, and pilgrims to collect information.

Though there are various approaches to reviewing the literature, the author has followed both mixed methodologies of a qualitative and quantitative approach (Terzidou, Styliadis, & Szivas, 2008). With a mixed-methods approach to research, researchers integrate collecting and analyzing data from the quantitative and qualitative research approaches in a single research study (Carrie, 2018; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Kunwar & Karki, 2020; Mair, Ritchie, & Walters, 2016; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). In this study, the pilgrim's experience, discussions with local students, and subsequent interviews with their residents, daily-based workers' relatively age group of 25-50, represent the field's current situation.

Impact on India's hospitality and tourism sector

COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the hospitality and tourism sector in India. In the following subsections, the impacts on the airline, hotel, and pilgrimage sectors are elaborated.

Impact on the airline sector

The Indian airline service is perhaps the most affected sector by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019 the growth of low-cost airlines was expected to promote and increase domestic tourism. India's aviation industry has high fixed costs of nearly 35-40%. These costs include leasing, rentals, worker wages, and interest (Arshad Khan, 2020). Low-cost flights under the UdeDeshkaAamNaagrik (UDAN) scheme are expected to connect regions within the country and promote domestic tourism (IBEF, 2019). The airport authorities of India also aimed to start operating 250 airports nationwide by 2020. As of 2019, 132 airports were operating in India. In 2018-19, India's domestic and international airline passengers increased by 14.1% and 3.4%, respectively. By 2020, the number of passengers at Indian airports was expected to reach 450 million (IBEF, 2020). The airline service has been highly disruptive during COVID-19. The two-month lockdown was dramatic for vulnerable airlines, plagued by low-profit margins, liquidity crises, fixed costs, and rising debt (Agrawal, 2020). The change in airline demands for some countries is presented in Table 1. Due to COVID-19, it was expected that the % change in passenger demand would be decreased by about 49 % in India (Moneycontrol, 2020). The Indian aviation sector is hitting a net loss of US\$9-12 million per day during lockdown (Arshad Khan, 2020).

The airline employees have also been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Air India has withdrawn job offers for around 180 trainee cabin crew members amid the economic slowdown (PTI, 2020). IndiGo, India's largest airline, has suspended its service for several months due to lockdown. It has announced that it will cut 10% of its staff to tackle sluggish earnings. 10 % will result in about 2400 jobs for the airline,

which employ about 24000 people. The other smaller airlines have suffered from similar problems and are about to implement similar measures to avoid bankruptcy. Also, analyzing the situation in other countries, airlines in India emphasize their risk of going bankrupt. By 2020, it could drop to half of the airline's revenues, having the biggest negative impact on the aviation sector and endangering airline jobs.

Table 1 shows the losses estimated by the IATA by region. Indian airlines expect COVID-19 pandemic revenues to decline to US\$ 11,610 million in 2020. It also expects a US\$ 30,60,000 million loss to aviation and subordinate sectors (Moneycontrol, 2020). Passenger demand in India also decreased by 49% in 2020 compared to 2019.

According to the IATA Vice President for the Asia Pacific, Conrad Clifford said, "2020 is the worst year in aviation history, airlines are in survival mode. Also, the impact of this COVID-19 is expected to be the largest loss for airlines in the Asia Pacific region, with annual losses of nearly US\$ 29 billion, more than one-third of the US\$84.3 billion of the aviation sector worldwide. And passenger demand in the region is expected to decline by 53.8%" (Business Standard, 2020a; India Infra Hub, 2020; Moneycontrol, 2020).

Table 1: Regional losses, international air transport association estimates, FY2020

Country	% Change in Passenger Demand (2020 Vs. 2019)	Demand Impact (Origin-Destination Volumes - 2020 Vs. 2019)	Revenue Impact US\$, Millions, 2020 Vs. 2019)	Potential Jobs Impact (Aviation & Dependent Sectors)
Australia	-53%	-52,510,000	-14,770	-376,100
Bangladesh	-49%	-5,660,000	-1,090	-63,300
Fiji	-51%	-1,170,000	-310	-65,500
India	-49%	-93,270,000	-11,610	-3,060,000
Indonesia	-50%	-60,560,000	-8,320	-2,096,800
Japan	-53%	-99,790,000	-23,920	-620,700
Malaysia	-52%	-34,060,000	-4,300	-224,800

Country	% Change in Passenger Demand (2020 Vs. 2019)	Demand Impact (Origin-Destination Volumes - 2020 Vs. 2019)	Revenue Impact US\$, Millions, 2020 Vs. 2019)	Potential Jobs Impact (Aviation & Dependent Sectors)
Maldives	-53%	-2,830,000	-660	-38,300
Nepal	-52%	-3,490,000	-530	-234,200
New Zealand	-52%	-13,250,000	-3,480	-176,400
Pakistan	-53%	-10,100,000	-1,870	-265,600
Philippines	-49%	-29,880,000	-4,630	-569,800

Source: Money control (2020) and edited some by author

The sustainability of Indian airlines requires turnaround changes in revenue strategies and operating models. Focusing on minimizing losses rather than maximizing profits in a pandemic may help airlines fight the current situation (Agrawal, 2020). Such a strategy is required not only during the pandemic but also until this sector is fully revived. During the COVID-19 crisis, the Government of India needs to consider establishing an appropriate strategy for the aviation sector for future sustainability.

Impact on the hotel sector

The lockdown by COVID-19 had a devastating effect on India's hotel sector as well as whole economic development. 1.43 million people are employed in India's hotel industry from 2013 to 2017 (Statista, 2020). The Carlson Group, an international hotel brand in India, currently has 94 operated hotels and plans to add about 30 more hotels by the end of 2023 (IBEF, 2020). A look at the growth rate of major industries in the lockdown, the manufacturing industry was decreased by 39.3%; the commercial, hotel, transportation, and telecommunications sectors were decreased by 47%; and the construction industry was decreased by 50.3%. Only during the monsoon period, the agriculture sector had a positive growth of 3.4% compared to the previous year, 2019 (Mitsubishi UFJ Research & Consulting, 2020). The hotel and tourism sector received a growing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow of US\$ 15.48 billion between April 2000 to June 2020. Indians' national and international flight cancellations, train cancellations, hotel reservation cancellations, the closing of travel

agencies, stopping transportation, and closing of craft showrooms are the reason for the negative impact on the hotel sector.

As of December 2020, most of the hotels in India are not fully open. Hotel chains such as Trident and Hyatt are trying to increase users by offering discounts of up to 60% (The India Express, 2020). Hotel Association of India's (HAI) Vice President K.B. Kachru has said that around 40 million workers in India's hospitality sector may lose their jobs due to COVID-19 (The New Indian Express, 2020a). The luxury hotel chain operated by the TATA Group is also running in the direction of saving costs due to the lockdown caused by COVID-19. Puneet Chatwal, Chief Executive Officer of Indian Hotels Co Ltd, said: "The sector has never experienced such a decline in revenue in the last 100 years" (Business Standard, 2020b). The company's iconic Taj brand, which operates The Pierre in New York City, hasn't reduced hotel employment but is staffed elsewhere in the TATA Empire. (Business Standard, 2020b). The company has lost US\$ 51 million in the six months to September 30, 2020. The budget hotel chain Treebo implemented a pay cut of its founders and managers of 60 and 40 % respectively and launched a paid voluntary resignation scheme for its 400 employees. The hotel chain Oyo cut 5,000 jobs as of April 15 (ILO, 2020b).

Medical tourism is closely linked to luxury hotels and travel agencies, both of which are adversely affected by COVID-19. India faces medical tourism difficulties due to lockdowns and short-term domestic aviation services suspension (ILO, 2020b; Sharma, Vishraj, Ahlawat, Mittal, & Mittal, 2020). Over the past month, several publications and articles have been published dealing with the impact of COVID-19 on India's tourism and hospitality sector. Still, most of the articles are limited to medium and large luxury hotels only.

Impact on pilgrimage tourism

Pilgrimage tourism is the mixture of traditional tours to shrines and cultural trips designed, guided, and synchronized by religious organizations or/and for religious purposes. There are multiple religions in India, and there are many believers in those religions. Therefore, not only Indian people but also foreigners are increasing the number of pilgrims visiting India for religious pilgrimages. Believers of major religions often (mostly) participate in pilgrimages. For them, pilgrimage pursues great moral significance throughout a long journey. In particular, Islam requires that you participate in a Mecca pilgrimage at least once in your life (Singh Jaswal, 2014). Other religions have similar ideas, and participation in pilgrimages remains. However, in recent years, the way of involvement in pilgrimage tourism has changed from a large group to a small group. The Ministry of Tourism collects a large sum of foreign currency through foreign tourists (Ranga & Pradhan, 2017). Among Hinduism and other religions, rather than focusing on the economic impact, the emphasis here is on

the socio-cultural and psychological effects that it has had on the community. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, important and Famous festivals are canceled. Subsequently, It had a negative impact on people who love festivals (Radhakrishnan, 2020).

According to The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), “The Government of India has introduced several plans to increase both domestic and foreign customers and boost the tourism sector. The plans to promote pilgrimage tourism by adopting the Swadesh Darshan scheme and the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD)” (FICCI, 2020b). US\$ 120.19 million was sanctioned to develop 51 sites across 28 states in the country under the scheme of PRASHAD. And, under the Swadesh Darshan scheme, 77 projects have been approved worth US\$ 863.60 million (IBEF, 2020). These plans not only increase tourists on pilgrimage but also increase sustainable employment opportunities. However, there is no doubt that the COVID-19 will not keep things going as planned for the campaigns.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on temples and shrines. Thousands of Pilgrims could not go on a pilgrimage to worship temples or shrines. Therefore, the revenue of temples or shrines, the related business's income, local areas social tax revenue have decreased. Also, in pilgrimage, star hotels' business included luxury hotels, general hotels, and pilgrims' accommodations to be shut down at once. Table 2 shows the number of closed days of main temples in India.

Table 2: Situation of Hindu temples in India according to COVID-19 (2020)

Temple name	Pilgrims per day (average)	Status during lockdown	Number of visitors allowed during the restrictions	Days of closed	Place
Padmanabhaswamy Temple	52500	Closed	1000	180	Kerala
Tirupati Balaji Temple	70000	Closed	6000	80	Andhra Pradesh
Vaishno Devi Temple	21753	Closed	2000	150	Jammu and Kashmir
Shirdi's Sai Baba	25000	Closed	6000	210	Maharashtra
Guruvayur Temple	50000	Closed	1000	75	Kerala
Golden Temple	1,00,000	Open	fewer	0	Punjab

Temple name	Pilgrims per day (average)	Status during lockdown	Number of visitors allowed during the restrictions	Days of closed	Place
Sabarimala Temple	100000	Closed	1,000	180	Kerala
Siddhivinayak Temple	40000	Closed	1,000	210	Mumbai
Meenakshi Temple	15000	Closed	Strict restrictions	165	Tamil Nadu
Jagannath Puri Temple	31500	Closed	Still closed	-	Odisha

Source: Created by the author data from the homepage of each Temple, newspaper, etc.

Table 2 shows all Hindu-rich temples in India, and these temples are also on the top-ranking list of assets. These temples are adversely affected by COVID-19. With the temples' closure, many jobs and related temples' services are in a difficult situation. A lockdown order from the state government sets a period for closing temples in a particular area. However, some temples are not closed due to the temples' authorities' decision. Golden Temple in Punjab is an example of opening temples even after the lockdown restrictions. The temple entrances are still restricted, and the number of pilgrims has dropped significantly. Simultaneously, pilgrims who want to go on pilgrimages have restrictions on transportation and accommodation facilities, which makes pilgrimage tourism in India still problematic.

Temples in India are always crowded, and the COVID-19 infection has affected many employees too. In India, many full-time and part-time workers are working in various temples and pilgrimage sites. COVID-19 has made it challenging to hire workers on these sites. Tirupati Balaji Temple, which generates employment opportunities for 14,000 people (TTD, 2021), has a significant negative impact on employee's employment. Padmanabhaswamy Temple's administration also withheld 20% of the salary from 150 employees (The New Indian Express, 2020b).

Current status and impact of Covid-19 on the local community in India

India has a total of 38 protected World Heritage Sites. More than 170,000 daily-based workers are working on such World Heritage Sites only as daily-based salary. For example, many tour guides, porters, and photographers in those areas. (FICCI, 2020a, 2020b; ILO, 2020b). Due to COVID-19, the daily-based workers have lost their jobs and are trying to move to other jobs, but there is no other employment

opportunity. COVID-19 is harming their family's life as well. In most urban areas, the employer's employment is directly related to their family. The loss of that employment means the employer is to return to the village or hometown (Walter, 2020). However, it is hard to find the accurate numbers of workers who have returned to their original home by the COVID-19 as data are not published yet. Lockdown and post lockdown have a major impact on daily-based workers' health, mainly in psychological health. Besides, the closure of schools and kindergarten has a major impact on children's and students' studies.

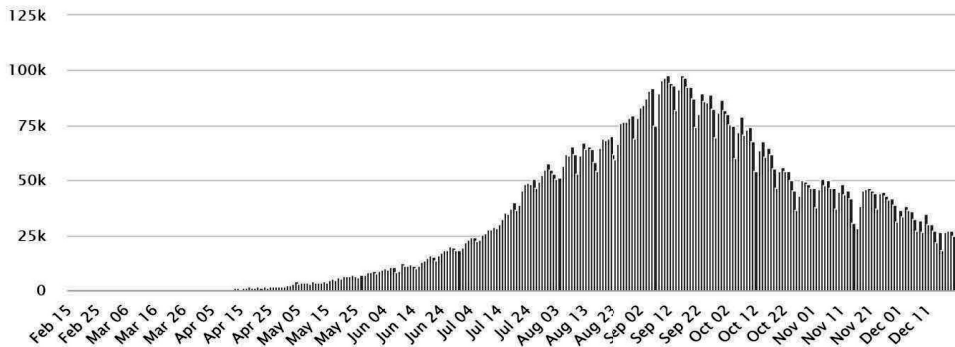
Domestic tourism, which mainly supports India's hospitality and tourism sector, is also restricted by the lockdown. Most of the reservations for summer vacation have been canceled in tourist destinations such as Kerala, Rajasthan, Goa, etc. Subsequently, it claims a negative effect on local communities' employment.

Table 3: Covid-19 status in India (as of December 16, 2020)

COVID-19 Dashboard	Total Cases	Active	Discharged	Deaths	Total Samples Tested Upto December 15, 2020	Samples Tested on December 15, 2020
As on 16 Dec 2020	9,932,547	332,002 (3.34%)	9,456,449 (95.21%)	144,096 (1.45%)	156,646,280	1,085,625
IST (GMT+5:30)	26,382 ↑	7,818 ↓	33,813 ↑	485 ↑		

Source: Created by the author from the home page of Government of India (2020)

As evident from Table 3, many infected people (per day) have still been reported, while the number of patients who have been cured is also comparable. As of December 15, the number of tests per day is 1,085,625, which is a significant achievement in the health sector. Nevertheless, due to the lack of contact tracing and other controllable health measures, there is no likelihood that the pandemic will end soon.

Figure 1: COVID-19 daily cases of India

Source: Created by the author based on data from Worldometer (2020)

As it is clear from the histogram shown in figure 1, the number of COVID-19 patients is maximum at the beginning of the third week of September. After that, the number of patients is gradually decreasing to till now. However, it is also possible that the second wave of COVID-19 may come as like in the USA or other European countries. As the new strings of the virus have been reported in European and other Asian countries, we cannot be certain of the pandemic length.

Support and statistics from the Ministry of Tourism of India

Ministry of Tourism has many challenging projects from past years to promote the tourism and hospitality industry. For instance, it has operated tourism schemes like PRASHAD and Swadesh Darshan. Ministry of Tourism has also released the budget to multiple states and union territories for fairs, festivals, and other tourism-related events. The government of India allows 100% of FDI in the Indian tourism sector. By June 2019, the Indian tourism sector had raised a total of US\$ 13 billion in capital investment. It is expected to be valued at US\$ 460 billion by 2028. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has directly affected the progress of those projects. It will not be a surprise if they need to redefine their strategies and timelines for the post-pandemic period.

Indian Ministry of Tourism is implementing various measures during COVID-19 to support the Indian tourism sector. According to a press release of the Ministry of Tourism, (2020b) on October 16, 2020, “focusing on the promotion of domestic tourism, implementation of the Incredible India Tourist Facilitator (IITF) Certification Programme, improved the connectivity to other states, loan support, an extension of property tax filing deadline, exemption of electricity and water bills during periods when the property was not functioning, opening the tourism services and destination in a phased manner, etc.”

Table 4 shows the number of the registered tourism sector's business in New Delhi, India, in 2020 compared to pre-pandemic years. As evident from Table 4, the number of inbound tour operators is relatively large and has become an essential component of the tourism business. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the new registration in the tourism business has significantly decreased by ~85 %, going from 2019 to 2020 while ~88 % for Inbound Tour Operators. Along with this, the tourism sector business may have gone bankrupt due to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis (FICCI, 2020b). Also, the other states follow a similar trend (Ministry of Tourism, 2020).

Table 4: Number of the new registration business of tourism sector in New Delhi

Year	State	Inbound Tour Operators	Domestic Tour Operators	Adventure Tour Operators	Tourist Transport Operators	Travel Agents	Total
2015	New Delhi	15	4	2	3	1	25
2016	New Delhi	50	4	3	14	7	78
2017	New Delhi	38	4	2	12	11	67
2018	New Delhi	65	11	8	16	16	116
2019	New Delhi	89	12	4	14	17	136
2020	New Delhi	11	3	2	1	4	21

Source: Created by the author based on data from the Ministry of Tourism (2020)

Challenges and remedies after the COVID-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has proven to be very destructive. Covid-19 has caused havoc in the global economy, causing social and financial disruption (Laing, 2020). The aftermath of such a pandemic is probably more threatening to various business survival and sustainability (Wren-Lewis, 2020). Hospitality industries such as the aviation sector and the hotel sector are in a difficult time. As mentioned earlier, the aviation sector is the most adversely affected sector, with the most considerable loss of US\$ 84.3 billion in 2020, the largest loss ever witnessed by the aviation sector (Business Standard, 2020a; Moneycontrol, 2020). More than three in four workers in the tourism sector are in informal jobs in Asia Pacific countries, leaving them especially vulnerable to the negative impacts of the COVID-19 crisis (ILO, 2020b).

To recover from the COVID-19 crisis, stakeholders need to choose the direction of survival by reducing losses rather than considering the business's profits. When

the economy tries to recover at the end of the pandemic, it will be more problematic if there are no employees in their sector. So, it is thought that some measures should be considered, and the employees in the sector should be left without restructuring. Suppose employees working in the hospitality sector are affected by COVID-19 and move to other sectors, even if the pandemic is over. In that case, there is a risk that the economy will not recover sooner due to the lack of employees. Another issue for the end of the pandemic is that the tourism sector needs to be carefully preserved for employees working in the hospitality sector to start up smoothly (FICCI, 2020b).

When the Covid-19 pandemic is over, and the tourism sector is recovering, the tourism sector needs to be boosted. It should be considered that the future of the tourism sectors to build trust between tourists and all other stakeholders. The preparation for welcoming tourists should start as soon as possible. This requires loans to the tourism sector, support, and good planning. At that time, the stakeholders could create a wide range of tourism circuits with friendly neighboring countries. Tourists for medical tourism are visiting from all over the world as India is still a famous destination. However, currently, the medical tourists are in waiting due to the pandemic. With numerous tourists are coming from several parts of Europe, the Middle East, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and the United States, the medical tourism sector is unlikely to be postponed for a long time. It is because India offers the latest technology, medical devices, and services at a lower cost than other countries. The Indian medical tourism sector's services may also offer low-cost wellness tourism, alternative treatments, and cosmetic surgery (Gautam & Bhatta, 2020). It is considered that it will be a big issue in the future to revive fully Indian medical tourism, which is almost stopped now, even after the pandemic.

COVID-19 may significantly change destination marketing services, as well. It is expected that it will take some time before the invention of drugs and vaccines. Due to social distance, luxury hotels and luxury travel will still take some time to revive. At this time, domestic boutique hotels, accommodations, and homestays can maintain their social distance and reduce viruses' risk. It is thought that the government's help is required for such domestic tourism. Further, inbound tourism and domestic tourism will be difficult to revive the tourism sector until medicines and vaccines are fully developed and efficiently delivered to the public.

Proposals to the Government of India

The hospitality and tourism sector is endangering the employment of large numbers of people as the COVID-19 pandemic is negatively affecting India's economy. Some remedies need to be recommended to India's central and provincial governments for the sector to overcome the crisis (FICCI, 2020b). The author proposes the following strategies to overcome the challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 5: Proposals to Central and State Governments in India

No	Proposals
1	Provide direct support and tax exemption for daily-based workers such as taxi drivers and porters.
2	Provide low-interest or straightforward rate loans for the purpose of infrastructure equipment in the hotel sector.
3	Increase the 6-month diploma of tariffs, all legislative obligations, and license fees to 12 months.
4	Provide an appropriate support plan and salary support plans to support the company.
5	Direct support to airlines (ground processing fees, airport fee diplomas, parking fee diplomas, landing fee exemptions)
6	Provide rapid, interest-free, or low-interest loans to restructuring companies as term loans and working capital loans.
7	Create a tourism fund separate from the Ministry of Tourism, which plans an unsecured 10-year loan for industrial infrastructure. Plans for interest-free for the first two years and a minimum interest rate loan for the remaining eight years to stabilize the company in a crisis.
8	Remedies in the aviation sector, travel agencies, tour operators, hotels, amusement parks, and ground transportation sectors are directly related to tourism.
9	Plan and implement the employee salary support schemes and insurance fee reduction policy.
10	Increase investment in beach tourism, marketing, and promote niche products with the 'Incredible India' campaign.
11	Plan to encourage business trips, increase train numbers, develop digital content, invest in new technologies, the idea of virtual tourism and smart tourism, and develop local skills.
12	Conduct campaigns like Japan's Go To Travel and Go To Eat campaigns in the hospitality sector.

Source: Created by the author based on FICCI (2020)

Although the author proposes India's plans (Table 5), it can be utilized in neighboring countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Bhutan, which share similar cultural, social, and economic backgrounds.

Conclusion

In this study, the author presented the impact of COVID-19 on the Indian hospitality and tourism sector and its current situation. It was confirmed that this pandemic has significantly affected the Indian tourism sector, especially the aviation sector, the hotel sector, pilgrimage tourism, and daily-based workers in the local community. Moreover, due to lockdown and travel restriction measures, the tourism sector's employers as well as an employee, are in jeopardy. Furthermore, this unprecedented situation is prevailing not only in India but also around the world.

In India, revenues in the aviation sector have temporarily stopped and now resumed. Although we confirmed the airline sectors' loss estimates, the author could not obtain detailed loss estimates for the hotel sector. However, it can also be said that it will be difficult to revive the hospitality sector for a while. The Indian government, the tourism sector stakeholders also have challenges toward the economic revival after the pandemic. It is thought that a plan that can adequately respond to those issues will be necessary. Finally, the author's proposal, along with the FICCI report to India's Government, could be critical for reviving the hospitality and tourism industry. This strategy could be equally applicable to countries with shared economies and social values.

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Tourism Potential of Plants Species Used for the Treatment of Malaria and Typhoid Fever in Omo Forest Reserve Southwest Nigeria

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Abstract

This research study was carried out to investigate medicinal plant species that is used to treat malaria and typhoid fever and to provide information on the tourism potentials of these plants species in Omo forest reserve southwest Nigeria. The study area was divided into two compartments for the purpose of this research work, undisturbed forest and secondary forest compartments. Data was collected using field surveys and visiting traditional medicine homes for parts the used for the treatment of malaria and typhoid fever. Field trips were embarked upon for three months from July to September 2020 for medicinal plant species identification. The researchers were accompanied by a field assistant who can identify the plant species in local languages.. The computer PAST Model version 3 was used to analyze plant species diversity indices. The result obtained from the study shown that the study area is rich in plant species that are used to treat malaria and typhoid fever in southwest Nigeria. In all, a total of 81 plant species belonging to 42 families were recorded in the study area with great tourism potential when a sustainable management is set up. The family Asteraceae has a plant

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diversity of 6 and this is followed by Rubiaceae and Solanaceae family's which have five (5) each Figure 2. The diversity index was higher in the undisturbed compartment (4.414) than the secondary forest compartment (4.364).

Introduction

Medical tourism is the term commonly used to describe international travel to receive all care. Medical tourists may pursue medical care abroad for a variety of reasons, such as decreased cost, a recommendation from friends or family, the opportunity to combine medical care with a vacation destination, a preference for care from providers who share the traveler's culture, or to receive a procedure or therapy not available in their country of residence. Medical tourism is a worldwide, multibillion-dollar market that continues to grow (Hallmann *et al*, 2012).. Surveillance data indicate that millions of US residents travel internationally for medical care each year (Lipmann, *et al*, 2014). Ongoing reports of infections and other adverse events following medical or dental procedures abroad serve as reminders that medical tourism is not without risks. Nature has been a source of medicinal agents for thousands of years and an impressive number of modern drugs have been isolated from natural sources (Kazemi, M. 2013). Many of these isolations were based on the uses of the agents in traditional medicine, especially medicinal plants. Plants are usually the major component of traditional medicine (Global Initiative for Traditional Systems of Health, 2007, Schmincke, 2009; World Health Organization, 20013). With about 80% of the world's inhabitants relying mainly on traditional medicines for their primary health care, the traditional medical practice continues to play an essential role in health care. Traditional medicine is a principal form of health care for many populations, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where traditional healers are appealing since they share a common perspective with their clients, and make use of knowledge, beliefs, and practices indigenous to the local culture and also for its cost implication, the affordability of most traditional medicines makes them all the more attractive at a time of soaring health-care costs (WHO, 2013). This form of health care has continued to gain attention as an important means of health care coverage globally (Rokaya, *et al*, 2014). Malaria fever is one of the tropical diseases of socio-economic importance to which man have been looking for a solution for along time. It is the most prevalent of the tropical diseases identified as a threat to more than 40% of the world's population with about 200 to 450 million infections reported annually worldwide (Muriuki 2006, Adekunle, 2008). The annual death rate has been recorded at between 1.2 and 2.7. Its area of endemism covers more than 100 topical countries and its control remains a major concern for improved healthcare worldwide. The majority of malaria cases i.e about 90% are in sub-Saharan Africa and Plasmodium falciparum is the main cause of severe clinical malaria and eventual deaths Recently, many medical authorities like the world health organization (WHO)

has come to recognize the place of herbal medicines as a viable alternative in the treatment of malaria infections. Since it mainly afflicts poor populations in the tropics, it attracts scant rewards for bioprospecting by big pharmaceutical companies for active molecules that could lead to new drugs. Whereas herbal antimalarial drug development based on traditional knowledge of plant use may hold more promise for developing countries' medicines. (WHO, 2014). Hence the relevance of this study investigated the indigenous use of plant species in the treatment of malaria and typhoid fever in the Omo forest reserve where the disease is prevalent. Thus this paper will highlights strategies and initiatives integrating tourism and botany for the purpose of knowledge transfer and education, with a specific emphasis on Omo forest reserve potential for developing herbal medicine-based tourism

Literature review

Tourism industry, as the biggest service industry in the world, has received much attention in the world. The majority of the developed or developing countries have considered tourism industry as their first economic priorities. Therefore, they plan to achieve to the highest rate of international tourism statistically. The phenomenon of tourism has developed over the last 50 years to become an enormous global industry nowadays (Ritchie and Crouch, 2000) and along with this a powerful economic source (Kayar and Kozak, 2007). These kinds of changes have led to massive tourism changes and in the near future, it will turn to qualitative tourism. Currently, tourism is a kind of strong and professional activity in the world. Tourism industry has developed substantially during the last 50 years and it has changed to an international major industry, which is regarded as the biggest economic source (Hallmann et al., 2012). Tourism is a kind of complex social and economic activity, which must be investigated at various levels to achieve the intended and organized development (Risteski et al., 2012). In order to design programs in tourism industry, we should consider various kinds of tourism and their definitions. Since the demands and the required services are not at the same level for different types of tourists (Kazemi, 2006). Nowadays the countries that aim to increase their national gross income have considered tourism industry as an essential industry with the highest financial circulation, generative job creation, and great profits. Increase in the rate of international trips and getting interested in tourism destinations have branched out this term to some great extent. Thus, there are various kinds of tourism such as religious tourism, sport tourism, war tourism, leisure tourism, medical Tourism, etc. Medicine tourism is considered as one of the most important kinds of tourism. Currently medical tourism has received industries (Connell, 2013). Zanzibar city enjoys tremendous historical and natural tourism attractions it is a major tourism destination among tourists. Therefore, the improvement of medical services in terms of place and technical features plays essential role for economic development. In fact, when a health tourist utilizes the

medicinal potentials of the city can be attracted to other types of tourism attractions and vice versa. Tourism can be classified and defined for various reasons but one of the most important groups can be medicinal tourism

Herbs and medicinal herb-based niche tourism

Kala (2015) highlighted how medicinal and aromatic plants can create entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly in the tourism sector. Butthongdee (2015) indicated that community herbal learning centres in Thailand have the potential to become important tourist attractions. In addition, Deka, *et al.*, (2015) noted, and ecological benefits for rural communities through tourism. In their study, herbal that the traditional use of herbal health remedies in India provides significant nutritional, economic gardens not only engage farmers in introducing home herb gardens but also enhanced a sense of familiarity with local biodiversity and its conservation, especially herbal plants. Establishing herb gardens was shown to create jobs in nearby villages, and results showed that people are interested in herbal medicine tourism. The Indian state of Kerala is well known for herbal tourism, especially for Ayurvedic treatment, and a large number of people visit India for herbal tourism; these herbal tourists provide employment for thousands of people (Sharma, 2013). In 2009, India received approximately 180,000 foreign tourists who came for health services such as yoga, meditation, herbal therapies, and skin treatments (Sharma, 2013). Dzida, *et al.*, (2014) studied the opinions of potential recipients of agritourism services on the need for herb gardens and the possible use of herbal plants on a farm. The results illustrated that 89% of respondents recognize the importance of herb gardens in enhancing the attractiveness of agritourism farms. The results also indicated that for 91% of respondents, the possibility of using fresh herbs was appealing, providing a potential advantage for such enterprises. Most of Dzida *et al.*'s respondents believe that natural aromatherapy can be an important part of the offer on agritourism farms. Opinions on the usefulness of herbs on the farm were divided: 43% were of the opinion that these are spice plants, 33% considered them medicinal plants, and 24% consider them ornamentals. Despite the growing recognition of herb-based tourism, there is a general lack of studies on the subject, and most recent studies emphasize herbal tourism as being part of health and wellness tourism (Nolan and Schneider, 2011), medical tourism (Chambers and McIntosh, 2008), or agritourism (Berdzenishvili, Abesadze, *et al.*, 2013). However, none of these approaches take into consideration strategies and initiatives that can promote herbal medicine niche tourism specifically, nor do any of these tourisms consider medicinal herb tourism as an integrated niche form of tourism. Likewise, until now, no significant work has been undertaken on herbal medicine tourism to investigate innovative strategies for developing this niche in Iran. The importance of research on this topic will become more obvious when there is a significant increase in innovative strategies

for promoting herbal medicine tourism in the Traditional Herbal Medicine Tourist Park, restaurants, teahouses, and wellness tourism centres of Isfahan and other cities in the future. Herbal medicine niche tourism as an integrated tourism Education and learning have become an increasingly important and recognized component of travel activity and travel experiences (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2001; Ritchie, Carr, and Cooper, 2003). Educational tourism has developed because of the growing population of travellers who have a formal education, the importance of education in motivating people to travel, and the growing popularity of formal teaching and learning outside the classroom environment. Travel for educational purposes can be a diverse and complicated area of study (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003). According to some authors (Donaldson and Gatsinzi, 2005; Gogoi and Balaji, 2015; Ohe, *et al.*, 2014), educational tourism has generated excitement from the tourism industry and is a lucrative market segment. Education or learning may be either the main reason for a trip or a secondary reasons that is perceived to be an important way of using leisure time (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2001; Ritchie *et al.*, 2003). Educational tourism offers opportunities to travel and study overseas and outdoors (Benson, 2005).

Educational tourism is one of several niche tourism forms (scientific tourism and research tourism) that emphasize knowledge transfer and knowledge management. Museums are key components of educational tourism and are open for the purpose of conserving and preserving, studying, interpreting, assembling, and exhibiting objects and specimens of educational and cultural value to the public for their instruction and enjoyment (Ambrose and Paine, 2006). Botanical gardens, such as traditional herbal medicine tourist parks, are good examples of a sort of open-air museum (Benfield, 2013) that exhibits and educates about traditional medicine as places of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Normally, in Persian culture, most soft medicinal plants are used in foods and served as tea and beverages in teahouses, restaurants, and hotels. For example, borage is very commonly associated with refreshing drinks; lemon verbena (*Aloysia citrodora*) tea is useful for relaxation and decreases depression and nervousness; saffron and mint teas are relaxing drinks with healthful benefits. However, most customers, tourists, and visitors who drink these teas or beverages are unfamiliar with the medicinal plants and their therapeutic properties. The establishment of a traditional herbal medicine tourist park in Isfahan, Iran, is being considered as an outdoor strategy for knowledge transfer and the popularization of traditional medicine, botany, and medicinal plants.

Knowledge transfer is also a crucial element of heritage tourism. Cultural heritage involves inherited objects, beliefs, practices, and activities from the past that are valued and used in the present (Timothy, 2011). Food, cuisine, and food ways are crucial elements of human heritage and tell many stories of nationalism, identity, migration, colonialism, faith, family, and humankind's struggles with nature

(Mahachi-Chatibura, 2016; Timothy, 2016). In recognition of food as a heritage product, specific food types (e.g. spices, dishes, herbs, food preparation methods) are salient elements of the heritagescapes of tourist destinations and can function as primary attractions or as enhancers of a place's cultural brand (Jolliffe, 2014).

It has been estimated that in developed countries such as United States, plant drugs constitute as much as 25% of the total drugs, while in fast developing countries such as China and India, the contribution is as much as 80%. Thus, the economic importance of medicinal plants is much more to countries such as India than to rest of the world (Monier and Abd, 2016). These countries provide two third of the plants used in modern system of medicine and the health care system of rural population depend on indigenous systems of medicine. More than one-tenth of plant species are used in drugs and health products, with more than 50,000 species being used. However, the distribution of medicinal plants is not uniform across the world (Cole, *et al*, 2007) For ex example, China and India have the highest numbers of medicinal plants used, with 11,146 and 7500 species, respectively, followed by Colombia, South Africa, the United States, and another 16 countries with percentages of medicinal plants ranging from 7 % in Malaysia to 44 % in India versus their total numbers of plant species (Hamilton2005, 2003 Marcy, 2005, Ratknić,et al, 2011)'

. The use of traditional medicine in various therapies by the indigenous population over the world cannot be overemphasized, according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2005) as many as 80% of the world's people depend on traditional medicine for their primary healthcare needs. Due to poverty, ignorance and unavailability of modern health facilities, most people especially rural people are still forced to practice traditional medicines for their common day ailments, most of these people form the poorest link in the trade of medicinal plants (Khan, 2002). A vast knowledge of how to use the plants against different illnesses may be expected to have accumulated in areas where the use of plants is still of great importance (Diallo et al.,2009). In the developed countries, 25 per cent of the medical drugs are based on plants and their derivatives (Principe, 2001).

During the past decade, traditional medicinal practices have become a topic of global relevance. In many developing nations, a significant number of indigenous populations rely on medicinal plants to meet their health care needs. According to Lewis and Elvin-Lewis (2003), botanically derived medicinal plants have played a major role in human societies throughout history and prehistory and people have used plants as medicine since the beginning of civilization, as they were believed to have healing powers (Connie and King, 2003). The use of plants in the tropical and subtropical regions is diversified and most of the uses are for medicine, source of food, clothing and shelter. But the medicinal uses of plants are rapidly declining among the present generation of local people as a consequence of modernization and

civilization (Cox, 2005). The younger generation is showing little interest in learning this valuable science of healing. Usage of medicinal plants to cure diseases has also been much influenced by religious practices (Trease and Evans, 1989; Wambebe, 1999). All over the world, several ethnobotanical studies focusing on medicinal plants have been documented (Ekpendu et al., 1998; Balansard and Timon, 2000; Singh and (Cox, 2005; Kumar et al., 2005; Pei, 2005). But in Nigeria, very little information about ethnobotanical studies has been documented (Sofowora, 2013). Therefore the need for proper documentation of traditional medicinal practices among the people in Nigeria where there has been a dearth of published information is immediately called for and this accounts for the rationale to undertake the present study.

Importance of medicinal plants

Nature has been a source of medicinal agents for thousands of years and an impressive number of modern drugs have been isolated from natural sources. Many of these isolations were based on the uses of the agents in traditional medicine especially medicinal plants. Plants are usually the major component of traditional medicine (Global Initiative for Traditional Systems of (World Health Organization, 2003). From time immemorial, mankind has been developing a traditional medicinal system, based on the knowledge of medicinal plants throughout the world (Falodun, 2010; Petrovska, 2012) and these plants and their products have also continuously played important role in the health care systems; especially of the people living in developing countries (Pan *et al.*, 2014; Harvey *et al.*, 2015).

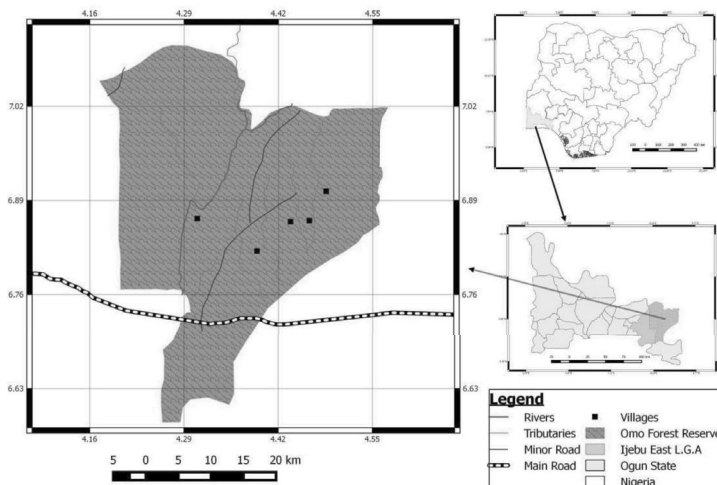
Historically, the use and practices of many traditional medicine, including experiences are passed on through oral information from generation to generation and such knowledge survives because it is transferred from one generation to another (Kayani *et al.*, 2015; Ijaz *et al.*, 2016). High emigration rates, exposure to modern culture, rapid land degradation, access to modern facilities and urban developmental processes altering the distribution of communities are affecting transformation of such knowledge, thus indigenous knowledge in this area is gradually (Amjad *et al.*, 2017) eroding. There is therefore a strong need to conserve this valuable knowledge, in order to (i) preserve cultural heritage, (ii) to provide basis for ethnopharmacological drug research and (iii) to preserve our biological diversity. (Weldegerima, 2009)

Typhoid fever is a life-threatening systemic infection caused by the bacterium, *Salmonella typhi*. It is a global public health problem that is especially worse in the developing nations of the world where sanitation is deficient, (Rokaya *et al.*, 2014) it is a significant contributor to morbidity and mortality in Nigeria and surrounding regions (Enabulele and Awunor, 2016). It is transmitted through the ingestion of food or drink contaminated by the faeces or urine of infected people (WHO, 2008).

Materials and method

The study was carried out in Omo Forest Reserve which is situated between latitude 6° 35' to 7° 03' North longitudes 04° 09' to 04° 40' East in the southwestern part of Nigeria (Adesoye Ezenwenyi, 2014). The reserve is bounded by Benin-Shagamu expressway to the south and Omo River and Oni River to the east. The forest soils are dominantly ferrallitic and highly weathered. The texture of the forest soil is usually loamy and sandy becoming heavier at greater depths, frequently with layers of gravel found between 30-60 cm. The soils tend to be acidic with low cations exchange capacity. If the soils are not maintained under forest cover surface soil erosion would set in (Isichei, 2005). An annual rainfall of 2,000 mm and a dry season from November to March and wet season from April to November, with the rains falling almost every day during our survey (Mengistu, Salami 2007, Okosodo *et al*, 2016). The terrain is undulating with an elevation of about 300 m on some rocky hills. The areas south of the reserve are at lower elevations than those to the north (Adekunle, 2006). The pockets of primary forests are around inaccessible areas where timber extraction is impossible. In the logged areas, vines are tangled with the secondary growth forest dominated by *Musanga cecropoides*, and a few oil palm trees *Elaeis guineensis* compared to sites further west along the road to Lagos. Most remaining larger trees are the soft-wooded *Cieba pentandra* (Bombacaceae). Along the low-lying areas are drainages covered by tangled vegetation with few trees making access difficult. Cocoa farms now replace cleared areas of the forest (Okosodo, *et al*, 2016).

Figure 1: Map of the study area source: (Ezenwenyi and Onyekachi)



Data collection

The study was carried out in Omo forest reserve. The study area was divided into two compartments for the purpose of this research work, undisturbed forest and secondary forest compartments. Data was collected using field surveys and visiting traditional medicine homes for parts the used for the treatment of malaria and typhoid fever in (Igbarese and Ogbole 2018). Field trips were embarked upon for three months from August to September 2020 for medicinal plant species identification. The researchers were accompanied by a field assistant who can identify the plant species in local languages. Six popular and highly patronized traditional healing homes across the three villages surrounding the Omo forest reserve were visited. This was followed by direct observation and collections of herbal plants from the wild. The plants collected were identified by their vernacular names and their scientific equivalent found and documented. Identification of herbs as well as their uses was done with the aid of a book of the tress of Nigeria (Gbele and Soladoye, 2012) while the inventory of available herbs was recorded. The literature on medicinal plants was searched to back up the claims by the traditional practitioners. Also, parts of medicinal plants not readily identifiable were taken to the herbarium at the Department of Forestry and Wood technology, the Federal University of Technology Akure for proper identification. Plant parts mostly leaves were put in the press for proper preservation

Statistical analysis

Data obtained from the field survey were entered into Excel (version 15) spreadsheet before both descriptive (tables, frequency, and percentage frequency, graph, pie, and bar charts). The computer PAST Model version 3 was used to analyze plant species diversity indices,

Results

The result obtained from the study shown that the study area is rich in plant species that are used to treat malaria and typhoid fever in southwest Nigeria. In all, a total of 81 plant species belonging to 42 families were recorded in the study area. The family Asteraceae has a plant diversity of 6 and this is followed by Rubiaceae and Solanaceae family's which have five (5) each Figure 2. The diversity index was higher in the undisturbed compartment (4.414) than the secondary forest compartment (4.364) Table 1. Plant type that is used to treat malaria and typhoid fever indicates that tree species (56) more than the shrubs (25). Figure 3 The pats of the plant species used, the form either dry or fresh and mode it is used Table 2. Checklist of plants that win the was recorded in the study area Table 3

Figure 2: The Family composition of ethnobotanical plant species in the study area

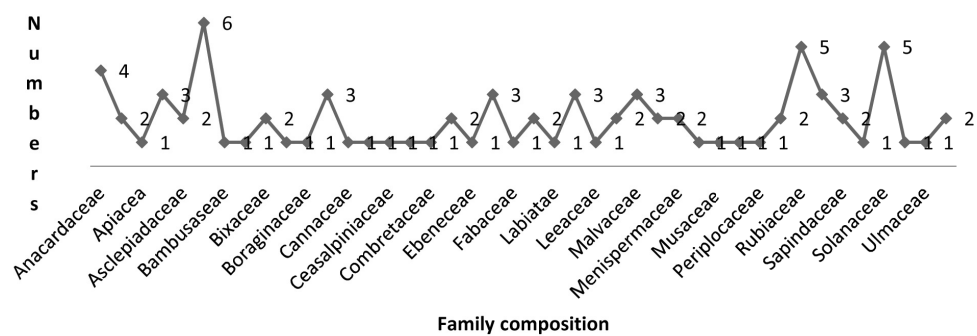


Table1: Diversity index plants species in the plots in the study area

Diversity index	Undisturbed compartment	Lower	Upper	Secondary forest compartment	Lower	Upper
Taxa_S	84	56	68	84	56	69
Individuals	88	88	88	94	94	94
Dominance_D	0.0124	0.01756	0.02428	0.01426	0.01811	0.02784
Shannon_H	4.414	3.887	4.138	4.364	3.844	4.128
Evenness_e^H/S	0.9836	0.8562	0.9295	0.9357	0.8101	0.913
Brillouin	3.482	3.19	3.339	3.479	3.18	3.358
Menhinick	8.954	5.97	7.249	8.664	5.776	7.117
Margalef	18.54	12.28	14.96	18.27	12.11	14.97
Equitability_J	0.9963	0.9619	0.9825	0.985	0.9484	0.9783

Figure 3: Plant Type recorded in the study area

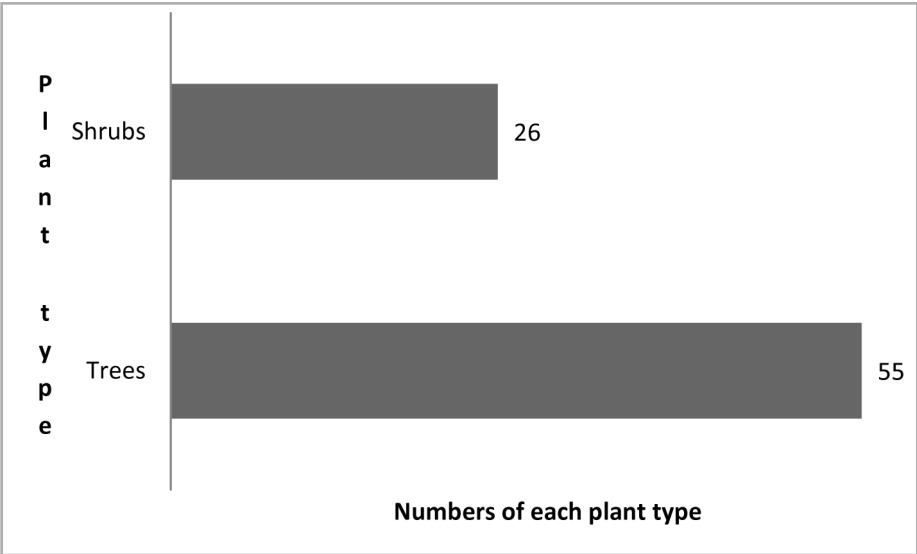


Table 2: Medicinal herbs, parts used, form and the mode of used

Plant species name	Parts used	Form used	Mode of use
Acanthospermus hispidum	leaves	Fresh	Boil with khaya seneganiensis, and dry pawpaw leaves as concoction
Aframomum melegueta	Seeds	Dried seeds	Boil with Anacardium occidentale leaves, Alchornea cordifolia leaves used for vapor bathing
Ageratum conyzoides			Boil leaves is taken orally
Alchornea cordifolia	Leaves	Fresh	Boil with Alstonia boonei bark and dry pawpaw leaves as concoction
Anacardium occidentale	Leaves and bark	Fresh or dried	Leaves and bark boil with leaves and mango

Plant species name	Parts used	Form used	Mode of use
Ananas comosus	Leaves and bark	Fresh and dry	Boil leaves and bark with leaves and fruits of citrus lemon add drink as concoction
Alstonia boonei	Leaves and bark	Fresh and dry	Squeeze fresh leaves in water and drink the extract. Dried leaves can be cooked with soup
Aspilia africana	Leaves	Fresh	Boil with other herbs
Bambusa vulgaris	Apex leaves	Fresh	Squeeze fresh leaves in water and drink the extract.
Blighia sapida	Leaves, bark, and roots	Fresh and dry	Boil leaves and bark with leaves, Dried leaves can be cooked with soup
Bridelia ferruginea	Leaves, bark,	Fresh and dry	
Cajanus cajan	Leaves	Fresh and dry	Boil with other herbs as concoction
Canna indica	Leaves	Fresh and dry	Boil singly and drink the extract
Carica papaya	Leaves	Fresh and dry	Boil with other herbs
Capsicum frutescens	Leaves and fruits	Fresh and dry	Boil with other herbs and drink and use vapor bathing
Ceasalpinia bonduc	Leaves, and roots	Fresh and dry	Cook leaves and roots together and drink
Cassia sieberiana	Leaves, flowers, roots	Fresh	Boil the leaves, bark and flowers together and drink. Also soak the bark and root for 8 hours and drink
Ceiba pentandra	Leaves	Fresh	Boil with other herbs as concoction

Plant species name	Parts used	Form used	Mode of use
<i>Chromolaena odorata</i>	Leaves	Fresh	Boil with other herbs as concoction
<i>Chorchorus litorus</i>	Leaves	Fresh	Boil with other herbs as concoction
<i>Chrysophyllum albidum</i>	Leaves, bark, roots and seeds	Fresh and dry	Squeeze fresh leaves in water and drink the extract. Dried leaves can be cooked with soup
<i>Citrus medica</i> <i>Citrus limon</i>	Leaves and fruits	Fresh	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Citrus limon</i>	Leaves and fruits	Fresh and dry	Squeeze fresh leaves in water and drink the extract. Dried leaves can be cooked with soup
<i>Citrus aurantifolia</i>	Leaves and fruits	Fresh	Cook with other herbs and drink the . concoction
<i>Cochlospermum tinctorium</i>	Leaves and seeds	Fresh and dry	Squeeze fresh leaves in water and drink the extract. Dried leaves can be cooked with soup
<i>Cola latertia</i>	Leaves	Fresh and dry	Boil with other herbs as concoction
<i>Combretum reticulatum</i>	Leaves	Fresh and dry	Squeeze fresh leaves in water and drink the extract. Dried leaves can be cooked with soup
<i>Curcuma longa</i>	Fruits	Fresh and dry	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Cymbopogon citratus</i>	Leaves	Fresh and dry	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Daucus carota</i>	Leaves	Fresh and dry	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Diospyros mespiliformis</i>	Leaves	Fresh and dry	Boil singly and drink the extract

Plant species name	Parts used	Form used	Mode of use
<i>Emilia sonchifolia</i>	Leaves	Fresh and dry	Boil with other ingredients and drink
<i>Euphorbia hirta</i>	Leaves	Fresh	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Funtumia africana</i>	Leaves	Fresh	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Garcinia kola</i>	Leaves, bark, fruits, and roots	Fresh and Dry	Boil singly and drink the extract.
<i>Gongronema latifolia</i>	Leaves	Fresh	Boil singly and drink the extract.
<i>Gossypium barbadens</i>	Leaves and roots	Fresh	Boil singly and drink the extract.
<i>Gossypium hirsutum</i>	Leaves and roots	Fresh and Dry	Boil singly and drink the Extract, Also the roots in water for 12 hours and drink or use to bath
<i>Haematostaphis barteri</i>	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Harungana madagascariensi</i>	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Heliotropium indicum</i>	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Hyptis suaveolens</i>	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Boil with cashew leaves and drink the concoction
<i>Khaya senegalensis</i>	Leaves, bark and roots	Fresh and Dry	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Khaya senegalensis</i>	Leaves, bark and roots	Fresh and Dry	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Leea guineensis</i>	Leaves and bark	Fresh and Dry	Boil with cashew leaves and drink the concoction
<i>Mangifera indica</i>	Leaves and bark	Fresh and Dry	Boil with cashew leaves and drink the concoction

Plant species name	Parts used	Form used	Mode of use
Mitragyna inermis	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Boil singly and drink the extract
Morinda lucida	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Squeeze the leaves in water and drink the extracts.2.cook with other herbs and drink as concoction.
Musa paradisiaca	Fruits	Fresh	Boil singly and drink the extract
Musa sapientum	Fruits	Fresh	Boil singly and drink the extract
Nauclea latifolia	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Boil with pap water and drink the extracts
Newbouldia laevis	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Boil singly and drink the extract
Nicotiana tobacum	Laves	Fresh and Dry	Squeeze fresh leaves in water and drink the extract. Dried leaves can be cooked with soup
Ocimum basilicum	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Squeeze fresh leaves in water and drink the extract. Dried leaves can be cooked with soup
Ocimum gratissimum	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Squeeze fresh leaves in water and drink the extract. Dried leaves can be cooked with soup
Parquetina nigrescens	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Squeeze fresh leaves in water and drink the extract. Dried leaves can be cooked with soup

Plant species name	Parts used	Form used	Mode of use
<i>Parquetina nigrescens</i>	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Squeeze fresh leaves in water and drink the extract. Dried leaves can be cooked with soup
<i>Paullinia pinnata</i>	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Squeeze fresh leaves in water and drink the extract. Dried leaves can be cooked with soup
<i>Pennisetum purpureum</i>	Leaves	Fresh	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Pergularia daemi</i>	Leaves	Fresh	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Piliostigma thonningii</i>	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Pseudocedrella kotschy</i>	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Squeeze the leaves in water and drink the extracts.
<i>Pycnanthus angolensis</i>	Leaves and bark	Fresh and Dry	Squeeze the leaves in water and drink the extracts. Squeeze dry leaves inn a soup eat
<i>Physalis angulata</i>	Leaves and seeds	Fresh and Dry	Squeeze the leaves in water and drink the extracts. Soak the dry leaves in palmwine for 6 hours and drink
<i>Rauvolfia vomitoria</i>	Leaves, bark and root	Fresh and Dry	Squeeze the leaves in water and drink the extracts. Soak the dry leaves in palmwine for 6 hours and drink
<i>Sarcocephalus latifolius</i>	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Boil the fresh leaves or dry leaves in water and drink

Plant species name	Parts used	Form used	Mode of use
<i>Senna podocarpa</i>	Leaves and seeds	Fresh and Dry	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Senna siamea</i>	Leaves and flowers	Fresh and Dry	Cook with <i>Xylopia ethiopica</i> leaves and seeds and drink when hot
<i>Sida acuta</i>	Leaves	Fresh	Boil the fresh leaves in water and drink
<i>Solanum lycopersicon</i>	Fruits	Fresh	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Solanum nigrum</i>	Leaves and fruits	Fresh	Boil with pap water and drink the extracts
<i>Sphenocentrum jollyanum</i>	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Boil with pap water and drink the extracts
<i>Synclisia scabrida</i>	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Soak in water for 8 hours drink the extract.
<i>Trema orientalis</i>	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Boil with pap water and drink the extracts.
<i>Tithonia diversifolia</i>	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Soak in water or pap water for 8 hours and drink the extract
<i>Vernonia amygdalina</i>	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Soak in water or pap water for 8 hours and drink the extract
<i>Vigneasu bterranea</i>	Leaves	Fresh and Dry	Boil singly and drink the extract
<i>Xylopia aethiopica</i>	Leaves and seeds	Fresh and Dry	Cook with other herbs and add pepper and fish and drink when hot

Table 3, Checklist of Ethnobotanical plant species in the study area

Name of Plant Species	Family	Parts used	Uses
Acanthospermus hispidum	Compositae	Leaves	Malaria , Typhoid fever
Aframomum melegueta	Zingiberaceae	Seed	Malaria
Ageratum conyzoides	Asteraceae	Leaves	Malaria
Alchornea cordifolia	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves	Malaria , Typhoid fever
Anacardium occidentale	Anacardiaceae	Leaves and bark	
Ananas comosus	Anacardiaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Alstonia boonei	Apocynaceae	Leaves and bark	Malaria , Typhoid fever
Aspilia africana	Asteraceae	Leaves and bark	Malaria
Bambusa vulgaris	Bambusaceae	Aex shoots	Malaria
Blighia sapida	Sapindaceae	Leaves, bark and roo	Malaria
Bridelia ferruginea	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves and bark, roots	Malaria
Cajanus cajan	Fabaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Canna indica	Cannaceae	Leaves	Malaria , Typhoid fever
Carica papaya	Caricaceae	Leaves	Malaria , Typhoid fever
Capsicum frutescens	Solanaceae	Leaves and fruits	Malaria
Ceasalpinia bonduc	Ceasalpiniaceae	Leaves and roots	Typhoid
Cassia sieberiana	Asteraceae	Leaves and bark	Malaria
Ceiba pentandra	Bombacaceae	Leaves	Typhoid
Chromolaena odorata	Leguminosae	Leaves	Malaria
Chorchoruso litorus	Bixaceae	Leaves	Malaria

Name of Plant Species	Family	Parts used	Uses
Chrysophyllum albidum	Sapotaceae		Typhoid
<i>Citrus medica</i>	Rutaceae	Leaves and fruits	Typhoid
Citrus limon	Rutaceae	Leaves and fruits	Malaria
Citrus aurantifolia	Rutaceae	Leaves and fruits	Malaria , Typhoid fever
Cochlospermum tinctorium	Bixaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Cola latertia	Sterculiaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Combretum reticulatum	Combretaceae	Leaves and seeds	Malaria
Curcuma longa	Zingiberaceae	fruit	Malaria
Cymbopogon citratus	Poaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Daucus carota	Apiacea	Leaves	Malaria
Diospyros mespiliformis	Ebeneceae	Leaves	Malaria
Emilia sonchifolia	Asteraceae	Leaves	Malaria Typhiod fever
Euphorbia hirta	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Funtumia africana	Apocynaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Garcinia kola	Clusiaceae	Leaves and fruits	Malaria Typhoid fever
Gongronema latifolia	Asclepiadaceae	Leaves	Malria
Gossypium barbadens	Malvaceae	Leaves and roots	Malaria, Typhoid fever
Gossypium hirsutum	Malvaceae	Leaves and roots	Malaria
Haematostaphis barteri	Anacardiaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Harungana madagascariensi	Hypericaceae	Leaves	Malaria

Name of Plant Species	Family	Parts used	Uses
Harunganamada gascariensis	Hypericaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Heliotropium indicum	Boraginaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Hyptis suaveolens	Labiatae	Leaves	Malaria
Khaya senegalensis	Meliaceae	Leaves and bark	Typhoid
Khaya senegalensis	Meliaceae	Leaves, bark and roots	Typhoid
Leea guineensis	Leeaceae	Leaves and bark	Typhoid
Mangifera indica	Anacardaceae	Leaves and bark	Malria Typhoid Fever
Melicia excelsa	Moraceae	Leaves and bark	Malria Typhoid Fever
Mitragyna inermis	Rubiaceae	Leaves	Malria
Morinda lucida	Rubiaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Musa paradisiaca	Musaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Monadora myristica	Annonaceae	Leaves and seeds	Malaria, Typhoid fever
Musa sapientum	Asteraceae	unripe fruits	Malaria
Nauclea latifolia	Rubiacea	Leaves	Malaria
Newbouldia laevis	Bignonaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Nicotiana tobacum	Solanaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Ocimum basilicum	Lamiaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Ocimum gratissimum	Lamiaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Parquetina nigrescens	Lamiaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Parquetina nigrescens	Periplocaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Paullinia pinnata	Sapindaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Pennisetum purpureum	Poaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Pergularia daemi	Asclepiadaceae	Leaves	Malaria
Piliostigma thonningii	Caesalpinaceae	Leaves	Malaria

Name of Plant Species	Family	Parts used	Uses
<i>Pseudocedrella kotschy</i>	Rubiaceae	Leaves	Malaria
<i>Pycnanthus angolensis</i>	Myristicaceae	Leaves	Malaria
<i>Physalis angulata</i>	Solanaceae	Leaves and seeds	Malaria
<i>Rauvolfia vomitoria</i>	Apocynaceae	Leaves	Malaria
<i>Sarcocephalus latifolius</i>	Rubiaceae	Leaves	Malaria
<i>Senna podocarpa</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	Leaves and flowers	Malaria,
<i>Senna siamea</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	Leaves	Malaria
<i>Sida acuta</i>	Malvaceae	Leaves	Malaria
<i>Solanum lycopersicon</i>	Solanaceae	Fruits	Malaria
<i>Solanum nigrum</i>	Solanaceae	Leaves and fruits	Malaria
<i>Sphenocentrum jollyanum</i>	Menispermaceae	Leaves	Malaria
<i>Synclisia scabrida</i>	Menispermaceae	Leaves	Malaria
<i>Trema orientalis</i>	Ulmaceae	Leaves	Malaria
<i>Tithonia diversifolia</i>	Compositae	Leaves	Malaria, Typhoid fever
<i>Vernonia amygdalina</i>	Asteraceae	Leaves	Malaria, Typhoid fever
<i>Vigneasu bterranea</i>	Asteraceae	Leaves	Malaria, Typhoid fever
<i>Xylopia aethiopica</i>	Annonaceae	seeds	Malaria

Discussion

The result obtained indicates that the study area is rich pant species that is used to treat malaria fever and typhoid in southwest Nigeria. In all, a total of eighty-one (81) Plant species belonging to 41 families was recorded in the study area. These findings consist of other studies such as (Sodipo, and Wannang, 2015). on the use of forest plants to treat some tropical diseases.

It is also consistent with the work of several researchers who carried similar ethnobotanical surveys in Nigeria. Aguoru and Ogaba, (2010) reported that *Bambusa vulgaris*, *Mangifera indica*, *Ananas comosus*, *Carica papaya*, *Ocimum gratissimum*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Psidium guajava*, *Citrus aurantifolia*, and *Moringa oleifera* were used in the treatment of typhoid amongst the Idoma people of Benue state. Halimat *et al.*, 2017 also reported that *Mangifera indica*, *Alstonia boonei*, *Ananas comosus*, *Carica papaya*, *Ocimum gratissimum*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Psidium guajava*, *Sarcocephalus latifolius*, *Citrus aurantifolia*, *Citrus paradisi*, and *Zingiber officinale* were used in the treatment of typhoid in Minna, Niger State. Another study carried out by Sodipo and Wannang, (2015) in Jere Local Government Area of Borno State showed that *Azadirachta indica* and *Citrus aurantifolia* were also mentioned.

The result has also shown that leaves, the bark of the trees were mostly used. The leaves of these plants were used singly or in combination with other herbal materials in the fresh or dried forms which are either in the combination of other herbal roots, flowers, and gum of other plant species Table 2. The mode of application is mostly oral by drinking the extracts or concoctions or vapor bathing. However, the dosage levels and the quantities harvested at a time are not measured.. The treatment could be repeated till the person be treated is healed

The development of tourist capacities based on natural resources is a long-term process.

Therefore, the evaluation of ethnobotanical surveys becomes very important. Sustainable tourism represents a type of approach that incorporates within itself the preservation and enhancement of natural resources and increases the value of local cultural characteristics and traditions. Thus this survey will of ethnobotanical medicinal herbs is very vital medicinal plants are widely accepted by Nigerians and most residents depend on them for a livelihood (Onimhawo, *et al*, 2014)

Tourism developed based on medicinal herb increasingly popular in several developed countries, especially as a part of alternative medicine. This results in a growing demand for medicinal herbs, which, in consequence, may lead to excessive use of this resource in natural habitats and, consequently, to the extinction of some species (Ratknić *et al.*, 2011).

The abundance of medicinal and related species, represented in the diverse flora of the Omo forest reserve, offers large possibilities for their rational use. However, careless, irresponsible, and, most frequently, unskilled collection of wild medicinal herbs in the last few decades has contributed to the destruction and excessive reduction of numerous valuable species in their natural habitats. This also may be due to the lack of participation of interested parties in the decision-making process. (Samardžić, 2014).

The local population that collects herbs for sale most commonly receives financial compensation for the unprocessed herb material. Most wild species, medicinal species, in particular, are still to be collected in the wilderness, which means that it is very huge potential when sustainable development practiced

Conclusion and recommendation

The research has shown that southwest Nigeria has a great potential for plant species used to treat malaria and typhoid fever. Health and wellness tourism has grown throughout the world and includes the consumption of much traditional medicine. Owing to its medicinal history, India and Nigeria has significant potential for promoting traditional medicine as a consumer product for local consumption, as an export product, and as a tourism resource. It is clearly one of the most important elements of these countries intangible heritagescape that is worthy of additional consideration by tourism developers. Based on this research study many local residents can establish herbal gardens that will enhanced a sense of familiarity with local biodiversity and its conservation, especially herbal plants. The traditional use of herbal health remedies will provides significant nutritional, economic, and ecological benefits for rural communities through tourism. Environmental and management problems are imminent such as deforestation barking of trees, defoliation of plant leaves, and overexploitation, hence efforts should be made to educate the residents on the sustainable harvest. Efforts management plans should be set up to train local residents on the need to cultivate most of these plants around their homes and farms to reduce damages done to the forest reserve The government should set up a mechanism to integrate alternate medicine which is the use of wild herbs with orthodox medicine. This will improve the sustainable use of these wild plants and create an efficient method of collecting extract from the plant species. It is also common knowledge that the safety of most herbal products is further compromised by lack of suitable quality controls, inadequate labeling, and the absence of appropriate patient information

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Exploring the Prospective of Dark Tourism in Pashupatinath: A Hindu Pilgrimage Site, Nepal

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Abstract

A unique and increasingly pervasive feature within the tourism landscapes in the post-modern world is the special interests of tourists in death and anything associated with death. It is often believed that those who indulge in death and disaster site tours could potentially awaken their spiritual journey. The visitor immersions, in the spaces of death, and the events that have taken place or are re-created, triggers social conscience, or some shared emotion or an experience of involvement, with the death event. Reckoning to this facet, Pashupatinath temple- a place of pilgrimage for the followers of Santana Vedic religion which shows the comprehensive aspect of Hindu death rituals, symbols and processes has been chosen. The study proposes the site as a dark tourism destination and explores the convergence of cultural heritage site, pilgrimage and death rituals in the area that is associated with its characterization- particularly with reference to the witnessing of live open pyre burning death rituals at the cremation ground (ghat) that exclusively showcases the eastern phenomenon of death-spectatorship

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exhibited by Hindu death ritual. Despite an immense influence of the site in the tourism industry, the eastern dark tourism potential induced by the site has not been recognized formally by the tourism stakeholders. Even though it is widely consumed by the western visitors as a tourist element. The phenomenon of Hindu death tradition in the ghats of Pashupatinath is inclusive of all the death-related rituals and is a threshold of transition and transgression, a place in between life and death. Henceforth, as the central tenet of dark tourism being “the death”, Hindu death rituals in Pashupatinath could be firmly brought into the realms of dark tourism discourse. The findings are based on the prevalence of push factors that encourages consumption of the proposed site as a dark tourist product in liminal conditions (an in-between position). To be more specific, the practice of intellectualization of emotion, convenience of visits, edutainment elements, practice of moral disengagement. The prospective of dark tourism in Pashupatinath, if entitled to the mere promotion of the crematory site, may send a negative connotation and raise moral and ethical concerns. Hence, tourism stakeholders should consciously introduce the phenomenon as an accompaniment to the popularized mainstream religious and cultural value of the site.

Introduction

Tourism is a complex phenomenon involving a wide range of people, increasingly seeking for new and unique experiences in order to satisfy the most diverse motives, the reason why the world tourism landscape has been changing in the past few decades (Fonseca, Seabra & Silva, 2016). One of the newly emerged interests is dark tourism. Dark tourism was first coined by Foley and Lennon (1996a, 1996b), who analyzed dark tourism as ‘the presentation and consumption of real and commodified death and disaster sites which has been expanded and exemplified in book form in Lennon and Foley (2000; in Ashworth & Isaac, 2015, p. 1). They also developed their ideas in an influential monograph entitled *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster*, where they conceptualized dark tourism as a subset of cultural tourism and as something distinct from heritage tourism (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2010; Light, 2017, p. 278).

Early dark tourism scholars gave three different perspectives on dark tourism. Firstly, a demand-led approach by Seaton (1996) where 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’. Secondly, a supply led perspective by Foley and Lennon (1996) defined dark tourism as “the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified death and disaster sites” and later, the sites associated with death, suffering and macabre by Stone (2006) stated that dark tourism is ‘the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre’ (Stone, 2006, p.146). The studied site aligns with the demand-led perspective (Seaton, 1996) and also showcases the features of the dark site (Stone, 2006). However, the supply led perspective (Foley &

Lennon, 1996) is not prevalent in Pashupatinath as of now. The prefix 'dark' in dark tourism, alludes to a sense of apparent disturbing practices and morbid products and experience, within the tourism domain (Stone, 2006, p. 146; in Kunwar&Karki, 2019). The concept of dark tourism sometimes referred to as grief tourism or thanatourism is the intriguing phenomenon by which sites of death and disaster are transformed into sites of popular tourist attraction (Dermody& Brennan, 2014). These spaces of death, and the events that have taken place or are re-created in these spaces, usually also engage or trigger within their visitors some issue of social conscience, or as will be suggested below-some shared emotion or an experience of involvement, with the death event.

The academic study of dark tourism gathered momentum in the early twenty-first century, and is reflecting the growing interest of the citizens of postmodern societies with the sites of death and disasters- an interest that needs deeper research to be understood fully (Powell & Kennell, 2015, p.303). So far as dark tourism in the context of Nepal is concerned, the area remained untouched for so long despite the immense possibility. The discourse only started after the 2015 earthquake and the very idea of dark tourism is premised on selective attention to instances of events that are, in fact, ubiquitous (Kunwar, Aryal&Karki, 2019). Hepburn's (2012,2017) article on dark tourism in the context of Nepal has highlighted different kinds and degrees of suffering in Nepal as the everyday darkness which hints Nepal as a unique dark tourism's potential supplier.

Attention given to events of death, suffering, and atrocity and the development of dark tourism sites is attributed to an inherent curiosity towards mortality and the darker aspects of humanity (Foley, 2009; in Fonseca et al., 2016, p.1; Kunwar & Karki, 2019) as humans have always been curious about the end of life (Titta, 2010; Kunwar & Karki, 2019). It is this very premise of the human condition that lies at the crux of the dark tourism concept. Reckoning to this facet, Pashupatinath Temple- a place of pilgrimage for the followers of *Sanatana*(Eternal) Vedic religion which shows the comprehensive aspect of Hindu death rituals, symbols and processes has been chosen as a part of this study. Travel and tourism being one of the major sources of revenue in Nepal, the cultural heritage and pilgrimage tourism are one of the key contributors from ancient times. On account of religious, cultural, archaeological and natural importance and value, Pashupatinath temple complex has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list in 1979 and the region is an integrated form of history, religion, culture, art, customs and traditions (PADT, 2019, p.1).

Despite the immense influence of the site in the tourism industry, the eastern dark tourism potential induced by the Hindu death ritual has not been recognized formally by the tourism stakeholders. However, it is widely consumed informally by the western visitors as a tourist element. The existence of crematoria (*ghats*) at

Pashupatinath area is a reminder that all life eventually comes to an end and as mortal finite beings, we shall live so we shall die. Henceforth, as the central tenet of dark tourism being the death, Hindu death rituals in Pashupatinath could be firmly brought into the realms of dark tourism discourse. Death rites are often performed as a ritual not necessarily to mark the passing of the deceased but rather to heal the wounds of families, communities, societies, and/or nations by the deceased. The pilgrimage to sacred sites and ancient places within the context of dark tourism has more to offer in terms of understanding the process of death and meaning-making. The study attempts to understand the convergence of cultural heritage sites, pilgrimage and death rituals at Pashupatinath area and whether travelling to religious sites and witnessing live cremation events of deaths at the cremation ground can also fall under the broader context of dark tourism.

The study focused on answering the following questions: Can the presentation and consumption of open pyre Hindu cremation ritual be included in the dark tourism discourse? What is the cultural and religious importance of the Pashupatinath area? How are the death rituals and cremation performed according to Hindu rituals at Pashupatinath *Aryaghat*? How could cremation be commodified on the basis of edutainment? The general objective of this research paper is to explore dark tourism prospects in the Pashupatinath area. More specifically, the article aims to explore the cultural and religious importance of Pashupatinath area, and to discuss how the death rituals and cremation performed according to Hindu rituals at *Aryaghat* can be brought into the dark tourism discourse in Nepal.

Significance of the study

Death, disaster and atrocities in touristic form are providing potential and spiritual journey which are becoming an increasingly pervasive feature within the tourism landscapes for the tourists/visitors who have a special interest in death and anything associated with death. Pashupatinath area has been a major tourist attraction for Hindus and non-Hindu visitors/tourists due to its antiquities, monuments, socio-cultural practice, religious belief and activities, festivals, norms and values and the cremation ground where open pyre Hindu death rituals are performed. This study has been undertaken with an objective to explore whether Pashupatinath *Aryaghat* exhibits the aspects of dark Tourism or not. The study attempts to understand the convergence of cultural heritage sites, pilgrimage and death rituals at Pashupatinath area and whether travelling to religious sites to witness live open pyre burning death rituals at the cremation ground might fall under the broader context of dark tourism. As there is a difference in cultural and religious value, aspects like engaging entertainment, education/learning, personal connection, suffering, memorial sites, dead and dying between the eastern and the western view of dark tourism and the former is not prioritized in dark tourism academia.

The Pashupatinath *Aryaghat* has been able to attract a number of tourists however it has never been presented as a dark tourist site. The researchers realized the prospective to discuss the broader spectrum of the site prior to presenting it as a dark tourism site. There are several classification frameworks available for dark tourism (Sharpley, 2005; Stone, 2006; Dunkley et al., 2007) which do not adequately address questions as to how a place can draw reverence and voyeurism at the same time, or what constitutes an authentic dark tourist experience. Also, dark tourism has not sufficiently addressed the case of witnessing -live deaths of others as opposed to the vast literature that exists with respect to the commemoration of past deaths (Sharma, 2016).

The death rituals in Pashupatinath is an integral component of this paper because these rituals contribute to generating multiple meanings from the site which can be related to the aspects of dark tourism that have failed to address in existing dark tourism classification frameworks. Although formally labelled as a Hindu pilgrimage and cultural heritage destination, the sites and its spaces of death in the form of cremation grounds has not been analyzed yet and how this experience of encountering death fits into the overall religious experience has not been discussed, hence this can be of much significance in dark tourism discourse of Nepal. The tourist interest in the death-related rituals will be fulfilled by having opportunities for tourists to witness the cremation grounds, popularly referred to as the *ghats*. Furthermore, this paper would also offer scopes to scholars researching dark tourism in Nepal. The findings will offer valuable information to those who wish to carry out research about dark tourism in Nepal. This research paper will also be beneficial to stakeholders to devise plans and policies and direct new avenues for the tourism sector of Nepal. As Minic (2012) quotes that, a journey through history is the way of finding new dark tourism destinations. Of course, without good promotion of various cultural and historical values for tourism, states lose a lot. With promotion of the destination, countries would gain much, but many of them do not make efforts in this field and the result is missing (Minic, 2012). And when it is evident that, the theme of dark tourism is becoming increasingly popular in a time when tourists have new needs and interests. In accordance with these trends tour operators should adapt their supply and with their creativity they to meet market needs.

The research has its own limitations, with regards to dark tourism, it includes religious and pilgrimage sites of Pashupatinath area which also serves as a cultural heritage destination and cremation according to Hindu death rituals in the *ghats* of the site. The study is limited to the study of dark tourism within the study site. The familiarity of the dark tourism concept amongst the respondents was negligible. However, when the researchers explained about the fundamentals of the phenomenon, the practice was quite significantly prevalent in the area. Similarly, due to the covid-

19 pandemic, the travel restriction and rules of social distancing, visitor/tourist at the premises was very low. Likewise, targeted respondents were not available for experience and knowledge sharing.

Research methodology

The theoretical concepts of this study are highly influenced by Nitasha Sharma's (2016) work entitled "Beyond the Shades of Darkness: A Case Study of Varanasi, India", where she puts forward the arguments of showcasing Hindu pilgrimages with death ritual elements as a potential dark tourism destination. And, as a counteractive approach to address the knowledge gap in relation to pilgrimage and cultural heritage based dark tourism perspectives in Nepal, the death rituals at Pashupatinatharyaghat are studied. At first, field work was conducted by the second author while working on Master's Thesis in the year 2020 entitled *Dark Tourism in Nepal: A Case Study of Pashupatinath Aryaghat*. The duration of the fieldwork was 15 days. Later on, other two authors collectively decided to thoroughly review his study and conducted additional fieldwork in the study area in early 2021. The authors are not unfamiliar with the Hindu death rituals and tourist attractions in Pashupatinath.

Hence, the emic perspective of researchers with personal experiences and emotions are reflected in this study, and also the researchers' observation and interaction while assisting foreign colleagues witnessing the live death rituals are taken into reference. During the interaction with foreign visitors, there was a major prevalence of culture shock and cultural confusion amongst the foreign visitors. Oberg (1960; Kunwar, 2017, pp.177-179) has defined culture shock as a "transitory concept precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all one's familiar signs and symbols of social interaction" (Oberg, 1960, p.177; in Hottola, 2004, p.452). Confusion may not be as exciting a word as shock (Hottola, 2004, p.453).

Furthermore, the study is based on explorative research design. The qualitative description focuses on describing and understanding a phenomenon with reference to concept, actions, process and relationship. Wide range of literature has been consulted for prescribed objectives. The researcher collected primary data, unstructured questions, and observation, key informant interview, focus group discussion and interview with different stakeholders (tour guides, local authorities of Pashupatinath, ticket sellers). The tourist guides were interviewed to gain the idea of tourist perception and experience regarding the visit at Pashupatinath area particularly on cremation ground. Both domestic and international tourists who visited the cremation ground were interviewed as per convenience. However, due to the covid-19 pandemic, the flow of international visitors was very low which affected the richness of data.

Review of literature

The very concepts of dark tourism are grounded in specifically Western ways of thinking about relationships between the living and the dead that may not fit to the other parts of the world where the relationships between societies and their death take different forms. Dark tourism scholarship, so far, has mostly confined itself to western interpretations of rituals and death. Henceforth, reconnoitering into the basic essence of Eastern or non-western death paradigm is of utmost importance.

Dark tourism is getting dynamic with time. Stone's (2011) paper highlights the dynamicity of dark tourism typology and increasing trend amongst scholars to use dark tourism to scrutinize broader socio-cultural considerations, managerial and political consequences, or ethical dilemmas (Stone, 2011). Adding up to that, Minic (2012) interprets dark tourism as a way of specific manifestations of cultural tourism, with the resources such as religious monuments, public monuments, historic buildings, castles and palaces, parks and gardens, forts, archaeological landscapes, industrial archeology buildings. It can be concluded that cultural and dark tourism have direct connection, but dark tourism insists on additional elements which includes the suffering and death (Minic, 2012). In general, dark tourism as a cultural representation of particular death has been referred to as a contemporary mediating institution between the living and the dead (Walter, 2009), whilst Stone (2011, p. 25) suggests, dark tourism provides an opportunity to contemplate death of the self through gazing upon the significant other dead. However, the current literature is finding it increasingly difficult to differentiate among religious pilgrims, secular pilgrims, dark tourists, heritage tourists and pilgrimage, as they all are recognized as part of the growing phenomenon of tourist interest in sites that add meaning to life (Collins-Kreiner, 2016).

Nitasha Sharma's (2016) paper entitled "Beyond the Shades of Darkness: A Case Study of Varanasi, India", focuses on two types of Hindu death-related rituals performed at the cremation grounds and attempts to understand the convergence of pilgrimage and death and how travelling to religious sites and witnessing live events of death can also fall under dark tourism, and how these religious sites exhibit darkness. Her arguments are supported by theories pertaining to the notions of place, sacredness, and authenticity in tourism literature. To start with, she has highlighted Rodman's (2003: 12; in Sharma, 2016) anthropological notion of place and the term "multilocality," which says that a single physical landscape can have multiple meanings for different users. Sharma (2016) borrows Lane's (1988; in Sharma, 2016) axioms on sacred place, one of which states that "a sacred place is an ordinary place, ritually made extraordinary." Furthermore, the definition of ritual from Victor Turner's "The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure", which says that "a ritual is a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and

objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests" (1977: 183; in Sharma, 2016) is an important base of unique portrayal of Hindu death ritual. Sharma (2016) also uses theories on authenticity in tourism literature to elucidate the ambiguities associated in labelling a site as authentic or inauthentic, MacCannell's (1976; in Sharma, 2016) authenticity serves as an important motivation in tourism. Bruner's (1991; in Sharma, 2016) tourists' desire for self-transformation through an encounter with cultures that are authentic, and Gianna M. Moscardo and Pearce (1986; in Sharma, 2016) believes that satisfaction derived from a tour depends on the tourists' search for authenticity, Steiner and Reisinger's (2006; in Sharma, 2016) preferring existential authenticity over object-oriented forms of authenticity. Berger's (1973; in Sharma, 2016) existential authenticity as a special state of being in which one is true to oneself and acts this way as opposed to becoming lost in public roles and public spheres. Author registers the typology of authenticity as: objective, constructive, and existential authenticity where existential authenticity referring to an experience that involves personal or intersubjective feelings activated by the liminal process of tourist activities (Wang, 1999; in Sharma, 2016) matches the experience of witnessing the co-existence of life and death in the Great Cremation Ground (Sharma, 2016) of Varanasi, where multiple feelings are interspersed in a sacred landscape. Varanasi, a holy city in India attracts scores of both domestic and foreign tourists. Situated on the banks of the Ganga River, it is known to be the place for the final transformation of one's life. The west bank of the Ganga River on the eastern side of the city is divided into segments each consisting of a series of steps down to the river, called the *ghats* where several corpses are burned each day. Sharma (2016) analyzed tourist perceptions towards two death-related rituals within the domain of Hinduism that are closely associated with each other. The first type, the Hindu death rituals, referred to as *Antyeshti* (the last sacrifice), that broadly involves burning the deceased over a funeral pyre, the second is a type of death-related ritual practiced by a group of ascetics, known as the Aghoris, which is considered as an extreme and aberrant cult. These small sects of Hindu ascetics are rigid renouncers and worshippers of the Hindu deity, Shiva. Although these two rituals constitute opposing ways of handling human mortality, they share the same complex of interconnected assumptions about the relationship between life and death (Sharma, 2016). Amongst these two rituals, Nepal's Pashupatinath pilgrimage site only practices the *Antyeshti* death ritual of Varanasi which have similar attributes with the Pashupatinath pilgrimage site's death ritual. The latter is not practiced in Nepal, hence, the authors have adapted the inspiration based on the former death ritual to portray the potential dark tourism through the involvement of a public display of death in open funeral grounds.

Collins-Kreiner's (2016) *Lifecycle of Concepts*, asserts that pilgrimage tourism in its traditional way has reached a stagnation point. She states that dark tourism is part of the rejuvenation of pilgrimage, as they both emerge from the same milieu to include the sites of dramatic historic events that hold extra meaning. In her paper she concludes with the prediction that pilgrimage will re-emerge when the many similar segments – particularly, spiritual tourism, heritage tourism, religious tourism, dark tourism and secular pilgrimage – are re-identified as pilgrimage: a mobility for the search for meaning that contains an element of transformation that is often deep and enduring (as they were viewed at the dawn of humanity and for thousands of years).

Sharma & Rickly's (2019) paper entitled "The smell of Death and the smell of Life: Authenticity, Anxiety and Perceptions of Death at Varanasi's Cremation Grounds" explains the encounters with death at dark tourism sites as reminders of one's own mortality affecting one's attitude towards death, perception of self, and even challenging one's personal values. Existentialists assert that anxiety is a condition of existential authenticity, and therefore moments of the existentially authentic experience are not always pleasurable. Dark Tourism is capable of transforming tourists' perceptions about death, engaging tourists' existential anxiety, and leading to an emerging self. These encounters produce experiences, rooted in epiphany, where the transformation of self has the potential to take place. Representations of death at dark tourism sites serve as reminders of one's own mortality affecting one's attitude towards death, perception of self, and therefore attitude about lifestyle choices.

Sharma's (2020) paper entitled "Dark Tourism and Moral Disengagement in Liminal Spaces" discusses how the concept of dark tourism has always raised moral conflicts at a collective and individual level while providing new spaces in which morality is communicated, reconfigured and revitalized. Socio-structural practices at a cremation ground create liminal conditions (an in-between position) favorable for moral disengagement, where the tourist is in a flux and is torn between a set of (current and previously held) moral beliefs. This behavior arises due to an obscuring and fragmentation of human agency during moral disengagement thereby making it possible for tourists to not take ownership of the consequences of their actions. The rhetoric of dark tourism sites, especially through euphemistic labeling, plays an important role in shaping tourist thought patterns which in turn, is likely to govern their actions and experiences.

Death in Hindu tradition

Death is not seen as the end in the Hindu tradition; rather, it is the gateway to another beginning. Death follows life, and rebirth follows death; the individual is only a temporary figure in this cosmic cycle of sustenance. At the funeral rituals, the sanctifier's body is also a kind of actual oblation, in which the body is not to be

devoured, but prepared for the world beyond, where the crematory fire will take him (*Rig Veda* 10.16.5; Samarth, 2018, p.15).

Burn him not up, nor quite consume him, Agni: let not his body or his skin be scattered,

O all possessing Fire, when thou hast matured him, then send him on his way unto the Fathers.

When thou hast made him ready, all possessing Fire, then do thou give him over to the Fathers,

When he attains unto the life that waits him, he shall become subject to the will of gods.

The Sun receives thine eye, the Wind thy Prana (life-principle, breathe); go, to earth or heaven.

Go, if it be thy lot, unto the waters; go, make thine home in plants with all thy members. —Rigveda 10.16 (Samarth, 2018, p.15)

The Hindus divide the body into two: the “*Deha*” and “*Sharira*”. The word “*Deha*” comes from the root “*Daha*” which means to burn. The cremation ceremony of the dead body is called *Daha Sanskara*. The *Sharira* comes from root “*Siryate*” which means that perishes (Ghimire (Poudyal), 1998, p.60). For Hindus, death is the separation of the soul from the body (at the time of the death the soul, which is believed to be residing in the body, throws away the body as one casts off his garment or in other words death could explained as the state of soul, when it changes a body (Ghimire (Poudyal),1998). This transformation is sequentially conducted through various processions called Sanskaras. The word *Sanskaras* means to “complete”, “prepare”, “make over”, “fully form” and above all, to purify (*shuddhi*). Every *Sanskara* is regarded as a transformative action that “refines “and “purifies” the living body, initiating it into new statuses and relationships by giving it a new birth (Inden& Nicholas,1977). It is believed that “through the *Sanskaras*, one conquers the earth after the birth and conquers the heaven after death” (Boudhayana Pitrimedha Sutra; in Ghimire (Poudyal), 1998, p.54).The Hindu scriptures teach us to perform the sixteen rites (Sanskar) during a human life. *Antyeshti Sanskaris* the final rite performed for the eternal peace of the Soul (Samarth, 2018, p.16). It is a series of rituals performed to mark the death of a person. The rituals consist of washing and preparing the dead for cremation. The intent of the *Antyeshti* ritual is to convert the body into substances that formed the body at birth i.e. water, air, fire, earth, and ether, so that they can return back into the universe at death, completing the cycle of life at an individual level, and keeping the cosmic cycle in motion at a macrocosmic level (Samarth, 2018, p.16).

The last sacrament in the life of a Hindu is the *Antyesti Sanskara* or the funeral with which he closes the concluding chapter of his worthy career. At his departure from this world, his survivors consecrate his death for his future felicity in the next world. This *Sanskara*, being post- mortem, is not less important because for a Hindu the value of the next world is higher than that of the present one (Pandey, 2006, p.234). In this study, the word *Sanskara* denotes that it is a life cycle ritual. The major part of last sacrament is the practice of reducing a corpse to ashes, burning it down which is called cremation (Ghimire (Poudal), p.53). The Hindus have multi-aspects of cremation whereas they mostly practice cremation with the help of fire, i.e., burning the corpse on the open pyre. Notably the hermits, saints and children are buried (Neupane, 2020, p.84). Cremation purifies various impurities through *Agni*(fire). If these *Antyesti Sanskar* (Final Rites) are carried out with proper eligible ceremonies, the soul is blessed with eternal peace and gets the opportunity to enjoy the heavenly happiness it desires. The relatives also receive condolence and they gain strength from knowing that their loved one is at peace (Hindu Funeral Rites and Rituals, 2006, p.16). According to the observation of the researchers, the deceased body covered with white cloth is taken out from the stretcher and placed on the *Bramhanal* with its feet touching the water of the Bagmati River, then the deceased body is purified by sprinkling the holy water that comes to *Bramhanal* from the main sanctum of the Pashupatinath temple. The priest chants mantras and hymns during this process. The clothes along with other items are taken off from the deceased body and flown in the Bagmati River. The body is then wrapped with white cloth and then with yellow cloth known as *pitambar* and on top of it with a sacred orange cloth. The body is then taken from *Bramhanal* and placed on a bamboo stretcher. Relatives, near ones, offer flowers and garlands especially of marigolds and give condolences. After that the corpse is tied at three places with a cord made up of *babiyo* (*Eulaliopsis binata*). The corpse is then carried on the stretcher on four sides. Paddy and lava (made from roasting paddy) are spread ahead of the corpse till on the way to the pyre. The corpse is moved around the prepared pyre anticlockwise three times and then placed on top of the pyre heading north. The cord is cut off. The eldest son or the one who lights the pyre gets cleaned oneself, moves three rounds with *dagbatti* (fire), facing south and lights the pyre at the mouth of the corpse. During the process the priest provides guidance and chants mantras and hymns. When the pyre starts burning the Cremator (*Ghate*) covers the pyre with wet straw and adds fire from beneath and side. During this process male mourners shave their hair and change into white clothes, some change the clothes at the places where *kaj-kriya* is performed. Normally it takes 2 to 2 ½ hours for the complete burning of the corpse. The remnants of the pyre are cleaned with water separating *astu*, which is covered with a wet white piece of cloth and kept on a small earthen or bronze container, later on it is flown at Bagmati River or buried at bank of the river. The cremation process is completed after this. During

the observation some corpse's clothes were taken off at the pyre while clothes of most of the corpses were taken off at *Bramhanal*. Likewise, some corpses were brought covered with white, yellow sacred cloth prior to *ghat*.

There is an intense period of mourning immediately following the cremation which lasts thirteen days. The performance of *Kriya* is one of the crucial Sanskaras, or rites of passage, that mark the journey of a Hindu through life and engage not just the recipient but the whole family. Traditions vary, but there are often said to be 16 rites of passage. The first is conducted before birth; the last involves a series of rituals after the soul has left the body to help it complete its transformation from a *preta*, or disconnected spirit, into a *pitri*, or honored ancestor. Typically, the mourners who sleep at the *Kriyaputri Bhawan* (mourner's house) are the sons, daughters and daughters-in-law of the deceased, who engage in the strictest austerities and greatest number of rituals (*Hinduism Today*, 2014). Mourners are considered impure, which does not mean bad but rather a state of vulnerability and distress. It is an unsettled period when the spirit of the deceased is still attached in a subtle sense to the living, and neither the living nor the dead have quite moved on. Working to purify the body aids in purifying and focusing the mind. A person who is ritually impure also is not in the right condition to make divine offerings, so purification and prayer bring them to a state where they will be able to do that again. It should be noted that mourners at the *Kriyaputri Bhawan* are near Pashupatinath temple but not inside the temple complex, where mourning would not be conducted. Hindus often try to stay near sacred sites during mourning, but funerals and mourning don't occur inside temples. The mourning goes on for twelve days. The picture of the deceased is placed and a lamp is lit in front of it. The family members must ensure that the lamp is on during this time. It is believed that during this time the soul is still wandering. On the thirteenth day a big ceremony is arranged as per the ability of the family. People are invited and delicacies are made. A puja is arranged for the departed soul. With this the *kriyakaram* (death ritual also called *kriya karma* in Nepali) ceremony comes to an end. Each region has different variations to these ceremonies. However, the overall ceremony is almost the same for all (Bhatt, 2013).

The rituals of *sraddha* are a way to pay a tribute and gratitude to the ancestors. It is believed that if the rituals are performed with full faith, love and respect, the ancestors get happy and blessed with all the good fortune. It is stated that by offering this puja to the forefathers and departed dear ones, their souls feel gratified and they bless the person with happiness and prosperity. The *shraddha* is performed during the lunar days of the *Ashwin* month. The *sraddha* is performed only at noonday, usually on the bank of a river or lake (Chowdhary, 2017). Conceptually, it is a way for people to express heartfelt gratitude and thanks towards their parents and ancestors, for having helped them to be what they are and praying for their peace. It also can be thought of

as a “day of remembrance”. It is performed for both the father and mother separately, on their respective ‘*tithi*’ - death anniversaries as per Hindu calendar - Bikram Sambat. In addition, it is performed for the entire community of ‘*pitri*’ - both from paternal and maternal side -collectively during the *pitrupaksha* or *shraddhapaksha* (Fortnight of ancestors), right before Shraddha Navaratri in autumn (Prashad, 1995). The ritual is observed at the bank of the Bagmati River at Pashupatinath area opposite to the *ghats*.

Rudiments of Hindu death ritual in Pashupatinath

The *ghat* is the funeral or crematorium site situated at the bank of the river, the confluence of river where the last rites especially of Hindus are performed in order to burn the deceased body and flow the residual ash into the flowing water (Neupane, 2020, p.82). The most significant role of the *ghats* is observed during the funeral rites. There are several ghats for the cremation and funeral rites of the deceased constructed on the bank of the Bagmati River which falls under Pashupatinath area. *Ghats* are the abode of *Ghate-Vaidhyastoo*. The meaning of the words comes from merger of two words, *Ghate* means belonging to the cremation ground and *Vaidhya* means doctor or traditional physician, whose main duty is to forecast the death although his announcement has no legal value. He lives near the cremation ground (Ghimire (Poudyal), 1998, p.61).

The *Aryaghat* is situated on the eastern side of the Pashupatinath temple and the *Bhasmeswarghat* on its southern side are the famous ghats of this Pashupatinath Area. The *Aryaghat* is the main crematory site of Kathmandu valley and the most sacred one to the Hindus due to the presence of the holy river and Lord Pashupatinath. There are two pyres at *Aryaghat* among which pyre one is near *Bramhanal*. There is a tradition of placing the corpse at *Bramhanal* and purifying it with holy water and then bathing the corpse at Bagmati river water prior to fire cremation (*Pashupatinath kshetrako Sanskritik Sampada*, 2020). There was a tradition in the past, members of the royal family used to get cremated with state honors at no. 1 pyre of *Aryaghat*. Till date these pyres are considered special. Likewise, no. 2 pyre was for Rana rulers and their family members’ cremation. The cost of cremation is more in comparison to *Bhasmeswarghat* as it takes around 15000 Rs for cremation at no. 2 pyre of *Aryaghat* which is higher than that of *Bhasmeswarghat* (*Pashupatinath kshetrako Sanskritik Sampada*, 2020).

Table 1.1: Cremation per day

S.N.	Description	Approx. Number	Remarks
1	By wood	15 to 20	
2	Electrical cremation	10 to 12	

Source: Administration Office, PADT (2020)

An average of 15 to 20 cremations are conducted on a daily basis by wood, while the electrical cremations are also being conducted. Due to the recent covid-19 pandemic, the pattern of cremation has changed slightly. The covid-19 related death cases are cremated at electrical cremation while number of cremations at the ghat has increased to an average of 30-45. On the 24th of January 2016, Pashupatinath Area Development Trust inaugurated the first functioning modern electric crematorium in Nepal at the traditional cremation site near the Pashupatinath temple, at the bank of holy river Bagmati (Hadders, 2017). Cremating a body in an electric crematorium is much cheaper (Rs 3,000) in comparison to cremation at ghat. It also consumes less time as it takes about 45 minutes to burn a body in the electric crematorium. The crematorium building has a cooling store that could hold up to 20 bodies and separate rooms with hot showers for the mourners. The facility has two incinerators (*The Kathmandu Post*, 2016).

Table 1.2: Room facilities for Mourners (Kriyaputri)

S.N.	Description	Approx. Number	Remarks
1	With attached toilet	24 rooms	
2	Without attached toilet	10 rooms	

Source: Administration Office, PADT (2020)

Bhasmeshwarghat is on the southern side of *aryaghat* and has 10 pyres. It takes about 10000 Rs for cremation of the corpse at *Bhasmeswar ghat*. There is a belief that the dead one will be free from all the sins and liberated when the smoke and ash rises and falls on the *Bhasmeswar Shivalinga* during cremation of the corpse (Pashupatinath Kshetra ko Sanskritik Sampada, 2020). Since the historical period, people of various castes who have been residing in the Deopatan area have their own ghats for cremation and death rituals. For e.g. *Pingalaghat* (destroyed during road expansion), *Rajeswari ghat*, on the opposite side of *Ramghat*, *Sitaghat*, *Laxmanghat*, *Satrughanghat* etc. In Present context, these funeral grounds are rarely used by those communities. Nowadays these communities also perform their death rituals at *Aryaghat* and *Bhasmeswarghat* (PashupatinathkshetrakoSanskritikSampada, 2020).

The *Bramhanal* is a flat stone slope where the deceased is laid down in such a manner that the feet are touching the water of holy Bagmati River. The water offered to the main shrine exits and flows down through the *Bramhanal* touching the body placed there and into Bagmati River. Laying body at the *Bramhanal* and offering the holy water is considered an act of liberation for making deceased soul free from terrestrial world.

Statistics of visitors in Pashupatinath

Pashupatinath temple has been a major destination for pilgrims from a very large period. Hindu pilgrims from various parts of Nepal, India and other parts of the world have been visiting Shree Pashupatinath temple from the time of existence of the temple. Thus, there are many tourists who visit the area for religious as well as non-religious purposes. It is estimated that around 25- 35 thousand people visited the area daily on a normal day. On Saturdays the number of visitors would reach between 35 thousand to 45 thousand. However, during festivals like *Shiva Ratri* (the festival of Lord Shiva- Shiva's night observed in February- March), New Year, *Shrawan* (July-August) and *Haritalika* the number of visitors grew exponentially. In the early stage of covid-19 pandemic the visitors of the Pashupatinath temple were not allowed to enter the Pashupatinath temple core premises, the restriction lasted for almost 10 months. However, it was found that there were a number of visitors who visited the Pashupatinath area for various purposes like cremation, exercise, meditation and to gain spiritual energy.

Table 1.3: Visitors in Pashupatinath area

S.N.	Description	Approx. No.	Remarks
1	Daily	25-35 thousand	Before Pandemic (Pandemic)
2	<i>Shiva Ratri</i>	5-7 lakhs	"
3	New Year	2-3 lakhs	"
4	<i>Shrawan</i> Monday	1.5-2 lakhs	"
5	<i>Haritalika</i> (Teej)	3-4 lakhs	"
6	Saturday	35-45 thousand	"

Source: Administration Office, PADT (2020)

Among the visitors, non-Hindu visitors/tourists visit the temple during 1000 hrs to 1200 hrs in the morning and 1400 hrs to 1700 hrs noon. Majority of such visitors come in groups and guides help them in providing necessary information. A normal tour includes 45 minutes to 1 hour, among which the majority of the time is taken

to answer the queries. As per the Focused Group Discussion (FGD), some the major queries that the tourist generally ask are listed below:

- a) Can we visit the main temple? Can we take photos?
- b) Why white- and orange-colored clothes put on the dead body?
- c) Why are dead bodies burned on open pyres?
- d) How long does it take to burn the body? Are dead bodies chopped and burned?
- e) Why do they put fire on the mouth of the dead body? Why only males lit the fire on the pyre?
- f) Would they have rebirth?

Table 1.4: Visitors (Excluding Indians and Nepalese) in Pashupatinath area by Month (2014-2018)

Month	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
January	8592	9148	5960	6673	8045
February	12705	13167	6207	7503	10711
March	15066	14652	6463	11067	16073
April	17178	15777	8567	14204	22255
May	10266	1685	8447	8506	11214
June	5590	1786	7413	4319	5837
July	8444	3476	5604	4752	6729
August	12556	2501	5375	7053	10658
September	14758	4998	8047	9835	12131
October	28428	3994	13091	22709	27150
November	21997	4197	12918	18814	21926
December	10593	3299	7319	8745	10582
Total	166173	78680	95411	124180	163311

Source: Administration Office, PADT (2020)

Pashupatinath temple has been the center of attraction for the majority of the tourists as per the participant of FGD. Key Informant also supported this view, stating that majority of the tourist either religious, cultural, heritage, traveler and hippies visit Pashupatinath temple area. Tourists especially Hindus are attracted to worship Jyotirlinga of the Pashupatinath temple, while non-hindus were found fascinated by the artifacts, heritage, religious and cultural activities. Participant 3 stated that there had been few cases where tourists were specific on viewing the death rituals in the *Aryaghat*. They would cancel the trip if *Aryaghat* did not have any ongoing cremation process.

Commodification of the Hindu death ritual

The notion of darkness is a socially constructed rather than an objective fact constructed by some tourist scholars (Jamal & Linda, 2011). The action of Modernity-operated to break down the barriers between the sacred and the profane, the closed world of the cemetery and the outside world of commerce and spectacle with the rise of mass tourism, the metropolitan cemetery, with its collection of illustrious corpses, became a sight to see just like any other monument (Rojek, 1991). Sharpley (2005) considered two primary bases when analyzing dark tourism: the tourist as a consumer and the site/attraction as the object of consumption. In the context of tourist's motivation of the site, conferring to Stone's (2006) shades of darkness, on the darkest end are the locations where actual death and suffering took place. On the opposite, lightest end, are the locations just associated with death and suffering.

The findings from discussions, interactions and interviews with Focused Group and Key Informants revealed the cremation ground (*ghat*) among the major tourist attractions at Pashupatinath area caters the authentic curiosity of death in the visitors. During the fieldwork, the respondents agreed that the tourists were attracted to the open pyre burning death rituals that are taking place in the Pashupatinath *Aryaghat* area. Participant 1 stated that he had seen some of the tourists had cried while watching the funeral process. Similarly, participant 3 stated that some of the tourists remember their parents and become emotional. While some of the tourists simply gaze at the funeral the entire time without uttering a word. Participant 2 stated that some of the tourists who visit the cremation are with prior knowledge about the cremation, hence they like to observe such activity, and in few cases, they have seen them donating a huge amount to the *Yogis*, *Sadhus* (Holymen), beggars etc.

Similarly, the researchers interviewed the regular visitors of the Pashupatinath area, who shared that their main motivation of visit was to view Pashupatinath temple, morning walk, observe the cremation and indulge in spiritual activity. In response to the open pyre cremation observation, almost all the respondents stated that they felt sad when they viewed the cremation site. Similarly, a western visitor explained about

feeling horrified by the cremation site and stated that he had never visited the open cremation ritual. This can be the result of culture shock. In a new societal and cultural context, much of people's old knowledge is useless, if not misleading. So far as cultural confusion is concerned, it focuses on both the problems part of the adaptation process and on the frequently simultaneous presence of enjoyment, success, and learning. It acknowledges the reality of mixed emotions and oppositional developments instead of clearly definable stages of emotional dominances, thus including the complexity and diversity of individual's tourist's responses (Oberg, 1960, p.177; in Hottola, 2004, p.452). Especially in the Third World, a tourist may also encounter a "life shock". As defined by Bock (1970; in Hottola, 2004), this is a sudden and direct exposure to the less desirable facts of human life ...ageing, death, disabilities and disease are particularly disturbing when they are first encountered in an unfamiliar setting.

On the contrary, one of the native visitors stated that death is a regular part of the human cycle. One of the respondents was at the Pashupatinath area to cremate his maternal uncle and he felt sad to see his maternal uncle being burned in a pyre.

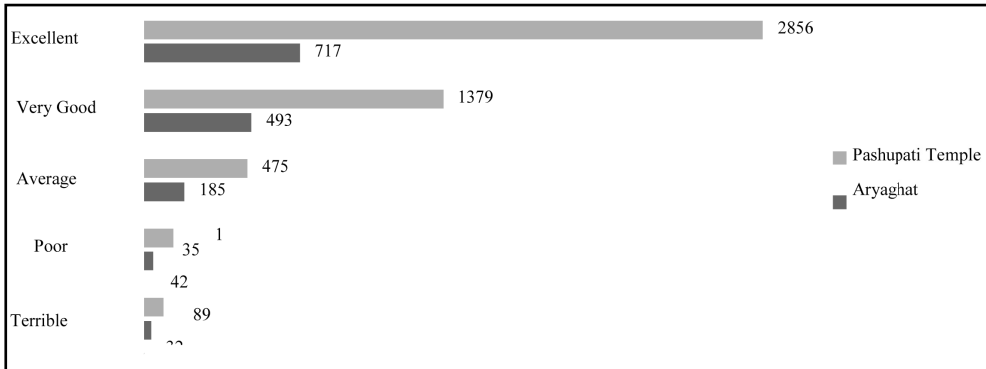
Cremation being one of the major activities in the Pashupatinath tour package, the soaring online views of the video on YouTube justifies the visitors' interest in crematoria. Some travel websites have already begun promoting Pashupatinath *Aryaghat* along with other crematoria at Pashupatinath area as a separate tourist package. The participants of FGD believed that the site could be one of the major tourist attractions among the visitors, even if promoted separately. The Tripadvisor (the travel website that provides reviews and other information for consumers about travel destination around the world) has enlisted the crematoria of Pashupatinath temple in its Travel website as *The Crematoria, Kathmandu Nepal* in its website. It has listed the Pashupatinath temple and crematoria as 5th and 12th of 178 things to do in Kathmandu respectively. There are 1,469 reviews (from March 2011 to March 2020) for *The Crematoria, Kathmandu Nepal* on the Trip advisor's website.

According to the travel review of the tourist about the place, one of them had stated that

Emotional place, all kinds of Hindu death ceremonies done in this place, You should have a strong heart if you want to see burning dead bodies.

To witness the ancient ceremony of burning a loved one on a funeral pyre was so humbling.

Reviews of Pashupatinath temple and crematoria



(Source: Tripadvisor.com, 2020).

The above graph shows that there has been at least 30 percent of visitors/tourists who had visited the cremation site, and posted their reviews. The total review of Pashupatinath temple has been 4,934 while Pashupatinath Aryaghat has 1,469 reviews. In 2020 (i.e. from January to March) total 11 visitors/tourists posted reviews on Tripadvisor's travel website. According to the reviews, it was found that the tourist respected the Hindu faith and ritual and also mentioned it as a sacred place. They found it useful to know the culture and traditions of Hinduism and the cremation site is a must visit for a lifetime experience. They were fascinated by how the funerals were happening where numbers of people were mourning at the same time at different venues.

However, few of the tourists felt uncomfortable at seeing the cremation and even noticed the difference of wealth during the cremation process. One of the reviewers was saddened to see the funeral of a young child. To fully understand the process, the reviewer recommended taking a guide with proper knowledge, who will familiarize them with the knowledge about the death rituals. Similarly, there are number of videos that has been made and uploaded in YouTube. A list of some of the videos, its view and its analysis are listed below:

Table 1.5: Analysis of YouTube video

Video Title	Channel	Number of Views	Like	Dislike	Only Funeral Activities
Hindu Cremation Ceremony, Pashupatinath temple	Kara and Nate	224,917	1700	161	No
Hindu Cremations at Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu	Lixinan	4,903,001	7700	3200	Yes
Kathmandu Hindu Cremation Ceremony at Pashupatinath temple in Nepal	Tess the Travel Addict	766,476	1400	438	Yes
Hindu Cremations at Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu Nepal	World on Video	349,699	447	486	Yes
Cremation Dead Corpse Body, Pashupatinath temple, Kathmandu	OzgurCagdas	152,861	267	109	Yes
Hindu Cremations at Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu	ShivamAnbe	732,613	1900	1500	Yes
Pashupatinath temple in Nepal- Cremation Ceremony	Mark K.	84,297	46	91	Yes

Video Title	Channel	Number of Views	Like	Dislike	Only Funeral Activities
Pashupatinath temple, Nepal. Hindu Cremation	Phillip Powell	515,917	828	296	Yes
Pashupatinath temple January, 2017	Strandphoto1	4,929,901	2600	2300	Yes

Source: YouTube, 2020

It was found that a number of videos regarding the funeral site of Pashupatinath area have been uploaded with a high number of viewers as well. However, the participants of FGD are against promoting it as a dark tourism site. Participant 5 stated that Pashupatinath temple has been one of the sacred places for Hindu religion, promoting only the cremation area as dark tourism will have a negative impact on the belief of the people. It may further impact the religious and cultural significance of Pashupatinath temple.

The stakeholder was also with a similar view who opposed the idea of cremation ground being a tourist attraction. He questioned the morality of the people who visit the site for the purpose of entertainment. He further stated that the relatives and kin of the deceased are in deep sentiments, shock, in tears and grief. In such environment, the tourist who visits the site may intrude and make the mourner irritative who may interpret it as disrespect, which may result in clashes. The commodification of the *Aryaghat* might result in an influx of tourists particularly to view the death rituals. He questioned how someone's tears of grief can be a source of entertainment to others. He put forward the idea of adding more electric crematoria, which he suggests might decrease the demand of conducting funerals in open pyre burning in the days to come along with the increasing interest of the people towards electric crematoria rather than open pyre. He is with a view that Pashupatinath is a symbol of faith and belief for millions of Hindus worldwide as well as a center of attraction to others having socio-cultural and religious value apart from being rich in heritage, archaeology and artifacts under such circumstances overcrowding to see a death ritual in the form of dark tourism will be perceived negatively by the society. He further opines that understanding the death ritual is not enough to know about life and death in Hindu religion, as one must have the knowledge of other 15 Sanskars to have complete understanding about life and death. He thinks instead of promoting *Aryaghat* as a dark tourism site, the whole Pashupatinath could be promoted with religious and spiritual message.

Furthermore, to add upon the discussion of Hindu death rituals being a matter of global interest. We can take reference of celebrity and VVIP's cremation process and their global coverage in mass media. The year 2001 was a tragic one for Nepal and the royal family. Ten members of the royal family died at the Narayanhiti Palace massacre on June 1st. The funerals of the royal family members were covered by national and international media, while many of them were broadcasting live. Nepal Television of Nepal and BBC had covered the whole process live. Even today such an archive of the video is available on YouTube. The analysis of the view of such video is enlisted below:

Table 1.6: Analysis of YouTube video of Royal Family Funeral

Title	Channel	View
Cremation ceremony for slain Nepalese royal family (with sound)	AP Archive	1248,384
Royal Family Funeral	Aaron Ginoza	98,549

Source: YouTube, 2020

Similarly, a number of national leaders and renowned persons were also cremated at the Pashupatinath Aryaghat which has further promoted the cremation area. The funerals of renowned personalities has been triggering an influx of visitors in the *Aryaghat* area to view the funeral and rising number of audiences who observe it via mass media. It is evident through these instances that the visitors eager to experience dark tourism locations might want to see the reality behind the media images or may even have a personal connection to the location or individuals associated with the location. Either way, the fascination with dark tourism locations has raised several ethical dilemmas over the years (Foley & Lennon, 1996).

Emotions triggered by the acts of memory

Death rites are often performed as a ritual not necessarily to mark the passing of the deceased but rather to heal the wounds of families, communities, societies, and/or nations by the deceased's passing (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2009). Mourners visit specific grave sites and usually perform meditations for the dead. Pilgrims had a personal connection to specific burial sites in some way, whether it is a religious connection to the individual or they served as a personal hero (Raine, 2013).

Pashupatinath area holds a number of death rituals daily with an average of 15-20 funerals. In reference to how the ritual impacts the insider who has lost their loved ones, emotional turmoil is severe while participating in the different funeral rites. The rituals also provide an opportunity for a meaningful memorial of their deceased loved ones, and experiencing déjà vu of lighting the pyre as well. Similarly, a 13-day

practice of mourning is conducted by the close relatives of the deceased person in the *Kriyaputri Bhawan* (House) and a number of relatives and friends visit the mourning members to provide sympathy and pray for the dead. Such practice provides ample time to remember the deceased person.

For an outsider, a dark tourism site such as a cremation ground can be considered as a complex, culturally contested and ideologically laden liminal place. Such a liminal, threshold place may offer freedom and peace for some, but are likely to cause anxiety, constraint or threat for others. Seaton and Lennon (2004) argued that dark tourists often exhibit a certain emotional state akin to a pilgrim. Therefore, visiting the site can be a fulfilling experience for them. It is also likely for dark tourists to develop empathic responses after visiting a dark site (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). When one develops empathy, they are more likely to be able to relate and understand others, and more capable of forgiveness (Hodgson & Wertheim 2007). One of the reviewers of tripadvisor.com had stated that the burning pyre, especially that of a child, had made him uncomfortable. To justify it with the field-based experience, during an interview with a visitor, when asked about the perception of *Aryaghat*, the respondent shared about the feeling of empathy that is generated while observing and participating in the memorial process. Similarly, the FGD session brought up the prevalence of tourists' connection to the dead or death ritual after seeing the death rituals and mourning of the people. Apparently, it can be said that individuals will realize an emotional connection to known or unknown death.

In response to tackling the distressing emotions like anxiety, constraint or threat for others. An individual is most likely to introduce a defense mechanism to 'an emphasized focus on facts, logics, and abstract reasoning to assert control over and reduce unpleasant emotions associated with internal or external events' (Cariola, 2017). This Psychodynamic defense mechanism of accepting the reality and taking the lesson through the experience of the others can be called as intellectualization of emotion. To those who fail to do it, suffering from the inability to show or verbalize emotions has been also identified as a defining symptom of alexithymia. Alexithymia literally means "no words for emotion" and represents a disorder which involves difficulties in expressing emotions (Sifneos, 1972; in Cariola, 2017).

Site authenticity

Pashupatinath cremation ground is the first preference of Hindus residing at Kathmandu valley as this area has historical, religious, and socio-cultural values and practices. The cremation ground holds cremation according to Hindu rituals of the deaths that have occurred at various places. Though it is not the actual site where the death or suffering has occurred but it represents final rites of both natural and unnatural deaths like mass casualties (for e.g. earthquake victims, 2015, insurgency

related, Ojha, 2019), violent death/massacre (for e.g. Royal massacre including King Birendra, 2001) etc.

The cremation ground at Pashupatinath area, inclusive of all the death-related rituals, is a threshold of transition and transgression, a place in between life and death. The deceased will be free from any sins and his soul will be in salvation when the funeral rites of the deceased are performed according to HinduSanskara (AntyesthiSamskara) rituals at this particular cremation ground.

Based on Casey's (1996) writings, Feld and Basso (1996, p. 9), suggest that place is the most fundamental form of embodied experience – the site of a powerful fusion of self, space, and time. Tourists derive meaning by participating in the site, the activities there and, through this; they understand both themselves and the landscape in different ways. Therefore, the 'lived experience' of an event or site informs its meaning. This includes the psychological motivations woven together with the body acting as a 'living envelope' of all our intentions (Bullington, 2013, p. 29). As such, the interpersonal dimension of existential authenticity involves attention to the body and the senses and emotions of dwelling in place (Belhassen et al., 2008; Buchmann et al., 2010; Kim & Jamal, 2007; Rickly-Boyd, 2013).

At the cremation grounds, the smoke from the burning wood pyres overtakes every other smell. Most tourists are unable to describe this smell of death, which is a mix of the sandalwood or general wood, clarified butter or 'ghee' (that is used on the dead body), flowers, smoke, ash, incense sticks and that of the human flesh. The common description of the smell was 'engulfing', 'consuming', 'over-powering', and anything but pleasant, yet also having a sacred or an authentic character. One tourist described the persistent smell of ashes and the smoke from the cremation grounds as 'overwhelmingly sensual', 'deeply etched in his mind', and that moving away from the cremation ground made him 'understand the difference between the smell of death and the smell of life'. Thus, it is through one's body and its interaction with Pashupatinath as a place that basic ideas about life and death are affirmed. However, in relation to one's own perception and anxiety about death, notions of spirituality, religion, morals and ethics come into play.

Gazing at death in a funeral ground is complex as it is situated in a landscape known as an important religious destination for the Hindus and every ritual performed at the funeral ground symbolizes multiple meanings. Not only a Hindu believer encounters the death rituals and takes away diverse meanings from it, but tourists from other cultural backgrounds do so as well. In dark tourism or than a tourism literature, extreme than a tourism also involves a connection with live events: witnessing death and deprivation or associated rituals as they happen (Dunkley et al., 2007), examples of which include observing public executions and attending burials, such as

the Bali cremations (McLaren, 1997). Unlike other Dark tourism sites where tourists would both learn and relish, Pashupatinath cremation area is the site that helps to witness live cremation through which the visitors will gain knowledge of Hindu death ritual and experience emotions and sentiments that will be heart rendering.

Incidental visitors

Raine (2013) discovered a group of tourists in her study that were classified as sightseers, retreaters, and passive recreationalists. These individuals were themed as incidental because the natures of their visits were often unplanned and they were visiting the site for reasons other than to experience events related to death and burials. These visits were of interest to sightseers because of the general interest in the area and retreaters wanted to experience the location for reasons of escape from stresses of everyday life (Raine, 2013). These circumstances could coincide with the visitor's spectatorship of the open pyre dead body cremation in Pashupatinath. Furthermore, coinciding the aforementioned phenomenon, Dunkley's (2005; in Karki, 2020) convenience model as one of the various inspirations that may hasten visits to dark tourism destinations is quite relevant to the case of Pashupatinath. The primary motivation of the visitor is the heritage component, however, special interest tourism like dark tourism can intersect with the mainstream tourism forms as a matter of convenience (Dunkley, 2005; in Karki, 2020). There were several sharings during the fieldwork where it was found that the visitors who visit the Pashupatinath area were brought to the cremation site during their heritage tour. It was a part of the tour experience. Majority of such tourists have low knowledge about the overall death rituals, as well as their queries about the rituals are mostly naïve. However, after bringing them to the *Aryaghat* area, they are more curious to learn/know about it. But in some cases, visitors even have the pre-knowledge about the death rituals and pay for viewing it. They enquire about whether the funeral rite is being carried out or not, which shows their interest about the death rituals in the Pashupatinath area.

Edutainment

Educational elements encourage tourists to be "aware" as well as increase satisfaction and the subjective meaningfulness of a tour. Here it is noteworthy to mention the newly invented concept that is 'edutainment' combined by two components of dark attraction and entertainment (Roberts, 2018; Dale & Robinson, 2011) perceived by the tourists through gazing (Urry, 2002) or seeing and photo taking of the events. Seeing is believing is the motto of dark tourism (Shim, 2014). This is the way of consuming the others' culture and tradition. The potential of edutainment has been highlighted by Walter (2009) where he states that, "Body Worlds, though ostensibly edutainment can also function as a *memento mori*" (Walter, 2009, p.49). Farmaki (2013) shows that education, remembrance and the strengthening of a national identity are key drivers

for a visit to dark sites. Henderson (2000) recognizes that visitors of dark tourist sites can be motivated by a quest for knowledge. Also, some kind of cultural interest, including history, represents an important motivation for the overall satisfaction of travel (Crompton, 1997; Pearce, 1983). Dark tourists could be classified into tourists as information seekers and hobbyists. These individuals are at burial sites and graveyards to explore and make discoveries. Often, they are there for educational purposes and might not engage with the site as a burial ground; usually they are emotionally detached and only visiting for a pleasurable experience (Raine, 2013). For example, hobbyists may be a photographer taking photos of the location because of their hobby of photography rather than their connection to death and disaster at a specific location. Pashupatinath *Aryaghat* provides an opportunity for the visitor to learn about the culture, tradition and practice of death rituals according to the Hindu religion. It provides them with an opportunity to learn about the cosmology and belief of Hindus regarding death as well. Each tradition and step that are taken during the death ritual represents some meaning which might attract the tourist to learn more. There are a number of photographs and videos that are uploaded in various social medias and websites about the *Aryaghat* where they have analyzed and interpreted the overall death rituals. This shows that *Aryaghat* provides a unique learning experience for the tourist.

Education can offer a form of catharsis, and Seaton (Seaton, 1996), in his study of dark tourism concludes that the observation of death as the goal of achieving catharsis is not a new concept. Visits to sites of death and suffering and tributes, allow for visitors to better understand death. Direct experience of visiting dark tourism sites, provides actualization of events associated with great suffering. The number of sites connected with suffering display the need for the educational function, so people could learn by example of previous errors. Therefore, dark tourism exhibits are rightly promoted and justified as an educational component.

Chronis (2005) recognizes that areas of suffering can be symbolically transformed and used by tourists to boost patriotism and national unity. Because of this, death and suffering could be seen as attractive factors in order to learn and maintain the memory with the tourists. Certain tourists visit such sites as a socially acceptable way of expressing interest in death and suffering, while some come to learn about the history that is associated with an event. Visitation of the Pashupatinath *Aryaghat* provides people with a knowledge that death is imminent and when one is born, at some point of time, he has to leave the world. A man is born empty and leaves the world empty handed which is evident from the death rituals. The body that is made of the five elements is released back to the universe. However, the view is in contrast with one of the stakeholders, who stated that learning about the death rituals only would not be sufficient to understand and learn the Hindu culture, which consists of a total of 16 rituals.

Moral disengagement

Dark tourism, despite its typological, interpretative, political, and moral dilemmas has death both real and representational at its core and dark tourism sites, being emotionally charged spaces, are often referred to as places of symbolic and sacred consumption of death. As tourism spaces, different cultural values and norms interlace in these sites. Some values are treated as absolute because they are rooted in an individual's moral and ethical principles. As such, these are often non-negotiable and thus are protected from trade-offs with other values (Tanner & Medin, 2004; Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000). This occurs to both locals as well as tourists, hence there might occur moral dilemmas and trade-off scenarios. Over the years, psychological studies have demonstrated the centrality of moral identity in determining moral action while investigating the relationship between moral judgments, moral behavior, and emotions (Aquino, Freeman, Reed, Lim, & Felps, 2009; Frimer & Walker, 2009; Haidt, 2001; Hoffman, 2000; in Sharma, 2020). However, when it comes to understanding how individuals engage in cognitive strategies to change meanings in a particular situation or use psychosocial maneuvers to disengage from immoral behavior, it is the process of moral disengagement which seems to offer an explanation. A psychological mechanism that plays an important role in unethical decision making is moral disengagement that operates at both individual and collective levels (Bandura, 1999; in Sharma, 2020).

Moral disengagement refers to the cognitive deactivation of moral self-regulatory processes in decision making. It mediates the relationship between the moral principles that individuals hold and their behavioral transgressions. Through this process, unethical decisions can be made without individuals feeling apparent guilt or self-censure (Bandura, 1999; in Sharma, 2020). In the context of tourism, the moral disengagement mechanisms are useful in explaining how tourists reconstruct their actions to appear less immoral resulting in shifting of ethical boundaries (Sharma, 2020). Associating this context to the dark tourism consumption in the cremation grounds that offers a liminal space for tourists to exercise their moral agency in an inhibitive form, as well as proactive form and that transgressive behavior (Sharma, 2020). Analyzing the moral mechanisms involved in tourist consumption of death-related rituals in Pashupatinath, it was observed that the experience differs from person to person. Many of the visitors validated their consumption of the death ritual as the universal phenomenon of knowing about death before actually dying, and discussed the opportunity of sensitization of real grief through the grief of strangers. Many of the visitors called the process an awakening process of inevitability of death. Additionally, quoting Sharma (2016) about the pull factors of Hindu death rituals that keeps aside the morality and applies moral disengagements amongst foreign visitors to Hindu crematorium, 'the proximity of death is so alien to Western visitors

that it exerts a hypnotic pull, and many people find themselves lingering a long while, talking in hushed voices as they peer at the flames. There is something compelling about seeing death as a public event in the burning *ghats*' (Sharma, 2016). In due course, the cremation grounds can transform tourists' self-perceptions and lead to a discovery of one's own unrealized perceptions about life and death. This is evidenced by narratives of the tourist who had reviewed in the tripadvisor.com, who opined that the cremation site made him realize about the death and was deeply saddened when he saw a dead body of a child. One of the respondents stated that life and death is a normal cycle.

Conclusion

The concept of dark tourism refers to the intriguing phenomenon by which sites of death and disaster are transformed into sites of popular tourist attraction (Dermody & Brennan, 2014). These spaces of death, and the events that have taken place or are re-created in these spaces, usually also engage or trigger within their visitors some issues of social conscience, or as will be suggested below-some shared emotion or an experience of involvement, with the death event. Death, disaster and atrocities in touristic form are providing potential and spiritual journey which are becoming an increasingly pervasive feature within the tourism landscapes for the tourists/visitors who have a special interest in death and anything associated with death. It is this very premise of the human condition that lies at the crux of the dark tourism concept. Reckoning to this facet, Pashupatinath Temple- a place of pilgrimage for the followers of *SanatanaDharma* (eternal religion) which shows the comprehensive aspect of Hindu death rituals, symbols and processes has been chosen as a part of this study.

Pashupatinath area has been a major tourist attraction for Hindus and non-Hindu visitors/tourists due to its antiquities, monuments, socio-cultural practice, religious belief and activities, festivals, norms and values and the cremation ground (*ghats*) where open pyre Hindu death rituals are performed. The exclusive element of live death ritual possessed by Hindu death ritual has captivated the western visitors and is widely consumed by visitors and promoted by travel companies as a tourist attraction without formal recognition. Despite the immense influence of the site in the tourism industry, the eastern dark tourism potential induced by the Hindu death ritual has not been recognized formally by the tourism stakeholders. As the central tenet of dark tourism being the death, Hindu death rituals in Pashupatinath could be firmly brought into the realms of dark tourism discourse. The existence of *ghats* at Pashupatinath area is a reminder of death and its inevitability. Henceforth, the pilgrimage to the site with the ancient history along with the dark tourism attribute has more to offer in terms of understanding the process of meaning-making by tourists. This study attempts to understand about the convergence of cultural heritage sites, pilgrimage, death rituals and tourists' sightseeing at Pashupatinath area and discusses

the potentials of categorizing the acts of witnessing live cremation events of deaths at Hindu-religious sites under the broader context of dark tourism.

The phenomenon of Hindu death tradition in the *ghats* of Pashupatinath is inclusive of all the death-related rituals and is a threshold of transition and transgression, a place in between life and death. The findings are narrowed down to the aspects of dark tourism like emotional feeling, personal connection, death and suffering, and unique learning experience. There is a difference in cultural and religious values, aspects like engaging entertainment, education/learning, memorial sites and dying and dead between the eastern and the western view of dark tourism. Overall, the key themes of recognizing the dark tourism attribute of Pashupatinath is emphasized as a conclusion.

While deliberating on the emotional facets of visiting cremation grounds, it surely is considered as a complex, culturally contested and ideologically laden liminal place. It may offer freedom and peace for some, but are likely to cause anxiety, constraint or threat for others. In response to tackle the distressing emotions, an individual is most likely to introduce a defense mechanism to 'an emphasized focus on facts, logics, and abstract reasoning to assert control over and reduce unpleasant emotions associated with internal or external events' (Cariola, 2017). This psychodynamic defense mechanism of accepting the reality and taking the lesson through the experience of the others can be called as intellectualization of emotion.

The other phenomenon that encourages sites consumption as a dark tourist product are the incidental visitors (Raine, 2013) whose visits to the sites are often unplanned and their visit to the site is for reasons other than to experience events related to death and burials. As a result, the accidental visitors turn into dark tourists as death rituals are processes that anchor every human being. Henceforth, they participate in the spectatorship. Another model that coincides along with it is the convenience model (Dunkley, 2005; in Karki, 2020), which suggests that, irrespective of the primary motivation of the visitor being the heritage component, the special interest tourism like dark tourism can intersect with the mainstream tourism forms as a matter of convenience.

Additionally, dark tourists could be classified into tourists as information seekers and hobbyists. These individuals are at burial sites and graveyards to explore and make discoveries (Raine, 2013). For a hobbyist, maybe the photographs are more significant than their connection and emotion of death rituals at Pashupatinath *Aryaghat*. In contrast, for someone with the quest, it is the opportunity for the visitor to learn about the cosmology and belief of Hindu regarding death. Each tradition and steps that are taken during the death ritual represent some meaning which might attract the tourist to learn more. There are a number of photographs and videos that are uploaded in various social media and websites about the *aryaghat* where they have

analyzed and interpreted the overall death rituals. This shows that *aryaghat* provides a unique learning experience for the tourist. The amalgamation of both offerings at one site is called edutainment.

Dark tourism, despite its typological, interpretative, political, and moral dilemmas has death at its core and dark tourism sites, being emotionally charged spaces, are often referred to as places of symbolic and sacred consumption of death. In order to defend the moral dilemmas of dark sites the visitors tend to practice moral disengagement. Associating this context to the dark tourism consumption in the cremation grounds that offers a liminal space for tourists to exercise their moral agency in an inhibitive form, as well as proactive form and that transgressive behavior (Sharma, 2020). Analyzing the moral mechanisms involved in tourist consumption of death-related rituals in Pashupatinath, it was observed that many of the visitors validated their consumption of the death ritual as the universal phenomenon of knowing about death before actually dying, and discussed about the opportunity of sensitization of real grief through the grief of strangers.

Despite all these prospective of dark tourism in Pashupatinath, the mere promotion of the crematory site may send a negative connotation to the site and raise moral and ethical concerns. Hence, tourism stakeholders should consciously introduce the phenomenon as an accompaniment to the popularized mainstream religious and cultural value of the site. Furthermore, the Hindu death ritual site that offers authentic death related experience should be brought into dark tourism scholarly debates. As a final point, this paper intends to offer new avenues to scholars working on dark tourism in Nepal. The findings will offer valuable information to those who wish to carry out research about dark tourism in Nepal. This research paper will also be beneficial to stakeholders to devise plans and policies.

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