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Luxury Shopping as a New Opportunity for Tourism Market Development

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Abstract

The global economic development and changing perception of customers led to increasing amount of consumption in luxury products, yet the academic interest on luxury tourism shopping remained as limited. The aim of this manuscript is to fill the gap by taking the attention to the unused potential of luxury shopping in tourism market. The methodology of this study will be literature review related to the findings in the previous literature, and the critical evaluation of the findings. The research will begin with a brief introduction of luxury goods and the motivational factors for customers to engage in luxury shopping. Then, the focus will shift to the context of tourism, with current examples of luxury shopping tourism practices across the world such as in Dubai, Hong Kong and so forth. Finally, the study will conclude that the development of luxury shopping tourism in a particular destination can be facilitated through the contributions of governmental bodies to lure international brands to the region with necessary fiscal arrangements such as tax reductions, as well as local stakeholders to improve the conditions for luxury shopping tourism infrastructure including accommodation facilities, means of transportation, shopping malls, as well as development of new high-quality brands for the consumption of both international and national tourists.

Keywords: *Luxury shopping, tourism, destination marketing*

Introduction

Shopping opportunities have always been an integral part of tourism activities where tourists tend to purchase new goods which they cannot find in their home countries, or in some cases, they are able to find the same good for a more considerable price in the destination countries, or they are merely interested in collecting some memories materialized in their purchases from souvenir shops. The average tourist spending was recorded as 920\$ in 2014, where shopping accounts for the second largest tourism expense after accommodation (Suhartanto, 2018). Despite the substantial impact of shopping in tourism, it should be noted that there is a clear distinction between the terms of tourist shopping and shopping tourism. First of all, tourist shopping includes all sorts of purchasing behavior while travelling, such as duty free shopping in airports, luxury goods shopping, shopping mall or outlet visits, local brand discovery and so forth (PATA, 2018). Since shopping satisfies several social and psychological needs, it is considered among most memorable touristic experiences through increasing the satisfaction of tourists (Brochado et al., 2018). Moreover, tourists might be interested in special offers and discounts, entertainment purposes or just following others' consumption patterns regarding to social expectations, while they are engaging in shopping activities (Murphy et al., 2011; Régi et al., 2016). Regardless of its motivation, tourist shopping implies that the main target of tourism activity is not shopping itself, but rather it is an additional activity that enhances the satisfaction of tourists during their visits through expanding their experiences and turns these experiences into more memorable ones by solidifying their memories in the items they have purchased.

As opposed to tourist shopping, shopping tourism is an activity where the primary concern of tourists is shopping, and the target goods are generally luxury goods (Danziger, 2017). In other words, the main motivation of shopping is linked to several other tourism offers. For instance, Dubai appears as the common example of the new trend of "retailtainment" combining the shopping activity for luxury goods with leisure time entertainment activities for the tourists (Brochado et al., 2018), and tourists are visiting Dubai primarily because of its offers in luxury shopping, and other entertainment activities such as swimming and sunbathing, cultural sights, gastronomical tours, and so forth, are present as accompanying activities. The literature regarding to luxury shopping as the main motivation factor for tourism activity is limited although luxury shopping has recently become one of the primary touristic activities accounting for a significant share of tourism expenditure (Choi et al., 2016). Previous studies suggest that the luxury purchasing patterns vary among the types of tourists, and it is dependent on the frequency of shopping and the degree of importance attached to shopping (Park et al., 2010). In addition to this, findings of previous literature indicate that shopping tourists are likely to stay more at a particular

tourism destination and spend almost four times more than other tourists (Choi et al., 2016). Although the impact of luxury products on the purchase intentions of consumers have been addressed by several studies (Hwang & Hyun, 2017), the role of luxury shopping in the development of tourism market in a destination has not been investigated sufficiently. In order to understand the dynamics of luxury shopping tourism and its contribution to tourism development as a new opportunity, the motivations behind luxury consumption need to be clarified properly.

Motivations behind Luxury Consumption

To begin with the definition of luxury, the term comes from Latin word “luxus” referring to the gratification of senses (Hwang & Hyun, 2017). Apart from being the synonym of “prestige”, luxury consumption has an intrinsic value both for the consumer as well as for the spectators, since the luxury consumption is related to a sense of status, which is hard to obtain for others (Loureiro et al., 2017). The consumption of luxury goods has been mainly associated with middle aged individuals in their forties or fifties who are belong to the upper socio-economic segment of the society, yet the scope of luxury consumption has recently expanded to younger segments, and showing a rapid growth at a global scale (Kang & Park, 2016). Moreover, previous studies also indicate a difference between novice and experienced luxury consumers, such that new entrants of luxury shopping tend to purchase luxury goods with conspicuous motivations signified by logos, brand names, and so forth, while experienced luxury customers are more inclined to involve in “low-key” consumption instead of logo-displaying behavior (Atsmon et al., 2012; Hung et al., 2018).

Parallel to the economic growth, the consumption of luxury products has increased so rapidly that the phenomenon was even named by Frank (1999) as “luxury fever”. There are several motivations behind this growing inclination for luxury consumption, such as impression of other people, an urge for enhancing social status, satisfaction of hedonistic desires, representation of uniqueness, or seeking high quality in products, especially in electronic goods (Hung et al., 2018). Compatible with these motivations, the perception of luxury goods is generally shaped by five major constructs, namely quality, hedonism, conspicuousness, exclusivity and extended self (Hwang & Hyun, 2017). The study conducted by Kang and Park (2016) revealed that luxury brand consumers have more narcissistic tendencies with respect to their conspicuous requirements and impression management, compared to other individuals. In a study by Ioana-Daniela et al. (2018) on luxury cruise tourism, the role of fantasy as a social value in luxury brand preference is also highlighted. Furthermore, the consumption of luxury goods and services is inherently dependent on the global economic situation, given the huge price discrepancy compared to normal goods (Kang & Park, 2016). As corroborated by numerous studies, the motivations of individuals for luxury consumption preference cannot be reduced to a few factors;

rather the consumption patterns vary regarding to an amalgamation of psychological factors whereby consumers perceive, evaluate and value the luxury goods as well as external issues such as economic development, accumulation of capital, changing tastes within the global trends, and other social influences.

Considering the fact that shopping experience is a combination of products and services offered by retailers, in-store atmosphere and location of the store, and tourists are capable of evaluating those elements separately (Suhartanto, 2018), the satisfaction of consumers as a result of luxury good consumption is not only limited to quality of goods or the value of brand, rather it is also dependent to internal and external factors on luxury shopping stores such as internal decoration, service quality, or placement of the store. For that reason, luxury consumption is not solely based on the relationship between customer and brand, but instead it fundamentally requires the creative participation of stakeholders, since their marketing strategies appear to have significant impact on the consumer preferences in the domain of luxury goods. In short, the individual efforts as well as collaboration of luxury suppliers are capable of motivating customers and increasing their likelihood to purchase luxury goods, which in turn, increase the revenues for the shopping destination.

The Development of Luxury Shopping Tourism

Having provided a brief discussion on the motivational factors of luxury consumption, the focus can be shifted to the development of luxury shopping tourism in particular destinations. In today's world, several regions in different parts of the world are considered as prominent destinations for luxury shopping and associated with shopping tourism, such as Hawaii and Las Vegas in North America, Paris and London in Europe, Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the Middle East, as well as Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand in Asia-Pacific (Martens & Reiser, 2017; Correia et al., 2018). Within the context of tourism industry, luxury shopping has become an important market segment for tourism development with its rapid growth rate where the sales are expanding 7% annually (Park et al., 2010; Brochado et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the development of luxury tourism in these locations is not a coincidence; rather there are various underlying factors which render the establishment of luxury shopping tourism and contribute to the development of existing tourism facilities into luxurious consumption services.

Starting with the most common example of luxury shopping tourism, previous studies confirmed that Dubai is strongly associated with "luxury" and "shopping" concepts along with architecture and beach holiday (Martens & Reiser, 2017). Furthermore, an investigation on the development of luxury shopping in Dubai revealed that tourists generally perceive Dubai as a top shopping destination with respect to several factors such as the availability of impressively wide range of retail

services, presence of high-quality shopping malls, variety in products and shopping venues, special offers, promotions or availability of bargains, along with social, economic and political elements including annually organized unique shopping festivals, opportunities of entertainment and leisure which creatively combined with shopping experience, strategic location of Dubai with its relative proximity for luxury consumers in Europe, Middle East and Asia-Pacific as well as the political stability of the country (Alhosani & Zaidan, 2014). In this sense, luxury shopping tourism development cannot be reduced to the mere existence of brands; rather there are several other reasons from geographical location of the destination to quality and variety in the products.

Besides that, tourism infrastructure also plays a significant role in luxury shopping tourism development, as well as other tourism activities. An earlier study by Brenner and Aguilar (2002) on the impact of luxury tourism development in Mexico suggests that promotion of luxury tourism facilities in coastal areas such as five-star resorts, restaurants, activities, shopping malls and so forth, led to fast growing, highly concentrated enclaves especially for foreign investment. The promotion of tourism infrastructure and luxury tourism facilities can be encouraged by the involvement of luxury brand owner local and national stakeholders as well as the efforts of government for selectively transforming some of these destinations for the concentration of luxury tourism services with tax cuts, branding subsidies and so forth, which would in turn increase the competency of luxury brands in certain destination by decreasing the cost for their sales.

Despite the concentration of luxury shopping tourism in certain destinations in the world, the competence still exists for these destinations, since luxury tourists have the capacity to travel further destinations compared to other tourists groups, therefore they can easily change their destination preferences if a destination fails to compete with their rival destinations at a global scale. For instance, Hong Kong was previously the main luxury tourism destination for Chinese tourists, but over time Japan and European countries have taken the leading position of Hong Kong and became new popular luxury shopping attractions (Hung et al., 2018). Moreover, the completion of an additional shopping center in Abu Dhabi, namely Yas Mall, is also expected to increase the competition between Abu Dhabi and Dubai in terms of luxury tourist arrivals in United Arab Emirates (Martens & Reiser, 2017). Therefore destinations need to be actively investing in their luxury tourism facilities in order to maintain their competitive positions vis-à-vis other luxury shopping tourism destinations.

Nonetheless, the investments in luxury tourism are generally considered as risky. For example, conversion of luxury tourism facilities to other uses appears to be difficult in the absence of luxury tourists due to their long-term tax abatements as in the case

of Sri Lanka, whereas more modest facilities are claimed to be employed for a larger extent in domestic and international tourism, or in the worst scenario, they can be easily converted to public use like clinics, schools, or house projects (Richter, 1999). Given the incapability of using luxury tourism facilities for other purposes in the case of failure, the sector does not develop in many destinations without subsequent incentives provided by market demand, or government subsidies and tax cuts, since the expected returns in the middle and long-run are very unpredictable.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, luxury shopping tourism has emerged as an important tourism alternative with respect to economic developments at a global scale and changes in the tastes and preferences for costumers. In addition to the contribution of tourism shopping to the development of retail sector in the destination areas, it also provides economic and social benefits for other residents in the destination (Lin & Lin, 2006). Compared to the potential of luxury tourism for providing an important amount of tourism revenue, there are only a few destinations in the world which lure upper socio-economical segment of tourists for luxury shopping as a primary goal of their travel.

As mentioned previously, the motivations of consumers for luxury product consumption are bounded to numerous, interrelated factors but the development of luxury shopping tourism in a destination is mainly dependent on the collaboration of local/national stakeholders and government, where the stakeholders promote their existing brands, develop new ones, invest in luxury consumption, creatively shape the store atmosphere and service quality; and government is responsible for encouraging the stakeholders for their investments with subsidies, tax cuts, and ensuring the political stability of destination, as well as arrangement of further steps such as establishment of the means for allocating the tourism revenues to the host community or protecting the surrounding natural environment to assure the sustainability of tourism activities. Furthermore, like in all other sectors in economy, there is a competition among luxury shopping destination despite their scarcity. For that reason, destinations must be continuously investing in their luxury tourism and luxury tourism-related potentials such as shopping malls, infrastructure, accommodation facilities, promotion of events, and so forth.

However, it should be also noted that the shopping motivation is not generalizable for all tourists, since previous studies also conceptualized the notion of “anti-shopping tourism”, indicating the resistant attitudes of tourists towards consumption and money spending while shopping-related tours (Régi et al., 2016). Therefore, the luxury shopping tourism needs to be developed in a realistic manner, i.e. targeting the involvement of tourists from upper and upper-middle segments of the societies

and creating strategies accordingly. All in all, tourists differ in tastes, preferences and with respect to their socio-economic backgrounds, and diversification of tourism services in a particular destination would eventually lead to positive outcomes for all tourism participants.

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Relationship between Social Carrying Capacity and Tourism Carrying Capacity: A Case of Annapurna Conservation Area, Nepal

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Abstract

The paper aims to examine the relationship between social carrying capacity and tourism carrying capacity in the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA), Nepal (along the popular Annapurna Base Camp Trail). Carrying Capacity is a key indicator in assessing the sustainable tourism development at a given place. The study used Survey Research Design to obtain information from tourist and local residents. From the research, it was evident that the visitors were highly satisfied with the tourism activities, along with conservation and development activities at ACA. Similarly, local residents were satisfied with the development of tourism in ACA, yet they perceived crowding, and congestion, cultural degradation as some impending challenges in the near future. Social Carrying Capacity in the ACA has not exceed its threshold, even though this popular trekking destination has been witnessing robust growth in the number of tourist in the region post armed-conflict (1997-2007). Hypothesis test result indicate that the relationship between dependent variable [Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC)] and independent variable [Social Carrying Capacity (SCC)] has a positive correlation. Adequate and appropriate management intervention

by the Nepal Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC)/Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) there has been well-planned and sustained tourism growth in the region.

Keywords: *Carrying capacity, tourism, conservation, tourist satisfaction*

Introduction

The predominant form of tourism in Nepal is mountain tourism, thanks to Nepal's ecological diversity and cultural richness (Zurick, 1992). Nepal has world's highest eight mountain (out of ten) which is a pull factor to attract tourist around the world. Nepal has experienced unprecedented growth in the past thirty years, approximately 6,000 tourist arrivals in 1962 to almost 1 million tourist arrivals in 2018. The Tourism Policy 2009 and the subsequent policies by the governments identifies tourism as an important vehicle for economic and social development. The focus of government has been for development and expansion of tourism activities, quality improvement of tourism services, increasing revenue and expansion of employment opportunities to improve the living standard of Nepalese people. In the same line, the policy "Vision 2020" envisions to increase tourist arrival to two million and tourism related employment to one million (GON, 2016). Due to the increase in international visitors, it is likely to develop this sector to generate more revenue, employment and other benefits, considering the low level of tourism development in the country. Regarding the much-needed foreign exchange, the government's tourism philosophy is to attract tourist, and afterward hopes to generate more income, employment, and tax revenues. But the tourism development is depend upon the improvement of basic infrastructure, information, facilities, access, transportation options, safety and security, which are all needed in the case of Nepal. A report by the Nepal Rastra Bank, earnings from tourism stood at Nepalese Rupees 58,526,918,000 for 2016/17 (around 551,000 thousand US\$) (GON, 2018). This according to the report is more than 40 percent than 2015/16. Similarly, the tourist per day expenditure was USD 54.

Tourism for long identified in Nepal as a powerful means for socio-economic transformation; however, the sector retains a relatively minor role in Nepalese development planning. Most of the planning activities have revolved around increasing – agriculture productivity, infrastructure development, hydropower production, but without much consideration on tourism's increasing importance as a source of foreign exchange and employment and its continuing steady growth in an otherwise stagnant economy have brought it growing attention in national economic planning (Stevens, 1986, pp. 76). The country has experienced over six decades of tourism development. Until 1950, Nepal was closed to foreign visitors apart from foreign dignitaries and individuals with special status, whose travel was restricted to Kathmandu. It was not until 1955 that Thomas Cook offered the first organized tour of Nepal for Western

visitors. The advent of organized mountain trekking in the late 1960s affirmed its position as a popular international destination. Until the late 1970s, the Nepalese Himalayas were considered an exotic destination, but their Shangri-La image has gradually been transformed to that of a cheap, rugged and dirty destination popular mainly for budget backpackers. The findings indicate that approximately 138148 persons were engaged in the tourism sector at the time of survey in 2014 and about a quarter (24%) of the employees were seasonal. 80% were male and about one-third (32%) had secondary job as well. Furthermore, about two-third (68%) employees were of age between 20 to 40 years, half of the employees had completed intermediate level of education and 19% were high skilled employees (GON, 2014).

The concept of conservation friendly tourism-development has long been debated (Wight, 1993; Garrod and Fayal, 2000; Robinson, 2004). The increased tourism development at places of touristic interests, particularly at protected areas has far-fetched consequences, not just for tourism but also for the ecosystem and the resources on which tourism and other economic activities depend on. Protected Areas (PAs), globally and in Nepal, have been used as an environmental conservation tool in maintaining the representative sample of unpolluted and unaltered species and ecosystems for the future, and equally to limit the potential for environmental degradation through human management of resources (Grant, Kratli, Mahiba, Magnussen, Saavedra and Rodrigues, 1998). The main purpose behind establishing PAs varies globally. According to Grant, et al. (1998) management reasons for establishing protected areas are: (1) wilderness protection, (2) preservation of species and genetic diversity, (3) maintenance of environmental services, (4) protection of specific natural and cultural features, (5) scientific research, (6) tourism and recreation, (6) education, (7) sustainable use of resources from the natural ecosystems, and (9) maintenance of cultural and traditional attributes. Protected Areas are key to tourism growth and development in Nepal. With increased tourism growth and development in Nepal, there will be increased demand for PAs resources for tourism. Which is why it becomes important to consider several management tools and practices, such as Carrying Capacity, to understand the state of tourism growth and development in these parks and to plan for the sustained and equitable development in and around those resources.

Literature Review

Concept of Carrying Capacity

Carrying capacity means different things to different people; there is no universal definition, and “is centered on tolerance-levels’ (Cooper et al., 1998 *as cited in* Simon, Narangajavana and Marques, 2004). The ‘Carrying Capacity’ (C.C.) concept focuses on ensuring sustainable development at places of touristic interest. The C.C. concept refers to the maximum-use, which can be made of a site without causing detrimental effects

on its resources, diminishing tourist satisfaction levels or generating socio-economic problems for the local community (Getz, 1983 *as cited in* Kunwar, 2012). According to Simon *et al.*, (2004) a large range of factors, including socio cultural, economic, psychological and perceptual factors besides the environmental aspect of carrying capacity should be considered, however based on particular (specific) concern.

Thomas Malthus first published the concept of carrying capacity in 1798 with a broad understanding of limiting the population and economic growth and it has become the foundational concepts of current environmental movement (Narasimmaraj, 2012). Mathieson and Wall (1982) (*as cited in* Saarinen, 2006, p. 1125) defined carrying capacity as - the maximum number of people who can use a recreational environment without an unacceptable decline in quality of recreational experience.

There are several studies on the issue of Carrying Capacity, but are focused on the quantitative operationalization of the concept, thereby neglecting the qualitative aspects. In addition, the concept has sometimes been related to the concept of sustainable development (Coccossis & Parpairis, 1992 *as cited in* Clivaz, Hausser and Michelet, 2004). However, only selected attempts have been made to operationalize the concept by taking into account the economic, ecological and social aspects. There have been significant studies carried out to understand and estimate the carrying capacity of protected areas in the Europe and Australia (see Table 1); there are limited and surficial studies carried out in Nepal in general and ACA in particular. Table 1 presents synopsis of some of the previous studies on determining carrying capacity at different places.

Table 1: Results of Previous Studies Determining Carrying Capacities
Methods and results of previous studies determining carrying capacities for protected areas around the world

S.N	Methodology	Reference	Location	Capacity
1	The cost-benefit analysis and the voting rule method	Brandolini & Mosetti (2005)	Mass tourist sites in Europe	0
2	Based on qualitative and quantitative data research. The focus is not to determine a specific number as various authors have noted that this is not feasible in a changing regulatory environment	Bretlaender & Toth (2014)	Kwanini, Pemba Island, Africa	0

S.N	Methodology	Reference	Location	Capacity
3	Methodologically, this paper based upon a mixed-methods approach (social network analysis, kernel density analysis, gravity model, and other statistical analyses) in examining the impacts of various theme park attraction and spatial layout attributes on visitor movement	Zhang, Li, Su & Hu (2017)	China's Wuhu Fantawild Adventure theme park	0
4	Develop a multidimensional model in the form of a mathematical programming application to assess tourism carrying capacity	Pazienza (2004)	Gargano National Park (South Italy)- San Giovanni Rotondo, Vieste, Manfredonia	San Giovanni Rotondo- 2249 per day, Vieste - 5080 per day, Manfredonia- 1208 per day
5	Qualitative analysis TCC dimensions regarding the Valley of Whales natural heritage site. Secondary data via analyzing documents, while, the primary data collection includes a semi-structured interview with the official employees who are in charge for managing the Valley of Whales (total 28 interviews), and direct observation checklist.	Wafik, Awzy and IBRAHIM (2011)	Valley of Whales, Natural Heritage sites, Egypt	0

S.N	Methodology	Reference	Location	Capacity
6	a measure of central tendency and spatial variability in the visitors' pressure indicator, to evaluate the spatial pattern of recreational pressure on protected areas	Kostopoulou & Kyritsis (2006)	Mount Olympus National Park, Greece	105,000 visitors over the 23,841 Ha
7	Groups at Any One Time (GAOT), which determines the level of visual and physical interference associated with a visit. Similarly, Other methodologies, such as the Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) and Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC), in which environmental and social qualities of the visitor sites are determined, have been used for zoning of public use space	Reck, Casafont, Oviedo, Bustos & Naula (2008)	Galapagos National Park	102425 per year

Source: Various

Tourism and Carrying Capacity

The practice of carrying capacity as the principal concept in tourism management undertakes that there is a direct relation between the numbers of visitors and a tourist destination and its effects on the environment, wildlife, social and culture (Reck, Casafont, Oviedo, Bustos and Naula, 2008). According to Reck *et al.*, (2008) such impacts could be managed through regulation of the number of people or groups of people that access visitor places. It was reported that the progress and development of tourism industry has been causing positive and negative impacts at the tourist destinations ever since it was considered as a means for economic development. Therefore, carrying capacity of the tourist destinations should be considered while managing the mass tourism activities. In the same line, Zelenka and Kacetl (2014) points the opportunity of carrying capacity in the protected area as – “the carrying capacity application has the best potential in protected regions, in every cultural and

natural attractions, and in connection to supporting the lifestyle of local community and tourism destination potential in general (p. 641).

The UNWTO (1999) has defined Tourism Carrying Capacity as “the maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing destruction of the physical, economic and socio-cultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors’ satisfaction ” (*as cited in* Castellani and Sala, 2012). Each tourism destination can sustain a specific level of acceptance of tourist development and use, beyond which further development can result in socio-cultural deterioration or a decline in the quality of the experience gained by visitors. Researchers have learned that not only biological environments are dynamic in reference to carrying capacity, but so too are human values, needs, benefits, expectations and levels of satisfaction. In the given context, setting up specific numerical limits in outdoor settings will not be successful in controlling the effects of outdoor recreational use (Fennel *as cited in* Weaver, 2001). Similarly, Lindberg (1997) (*as cited in* Weaver, 2001) states that the focus has shifted away from ‘How many is too many?’ to one of ‘What are the desired conditions?’ In response to the shortcomings of carrying capacity, a number of preformed planning and management frameworks have been developed with the purpose of balancing biological and social components of outdoor recreation settings, experience, and use.

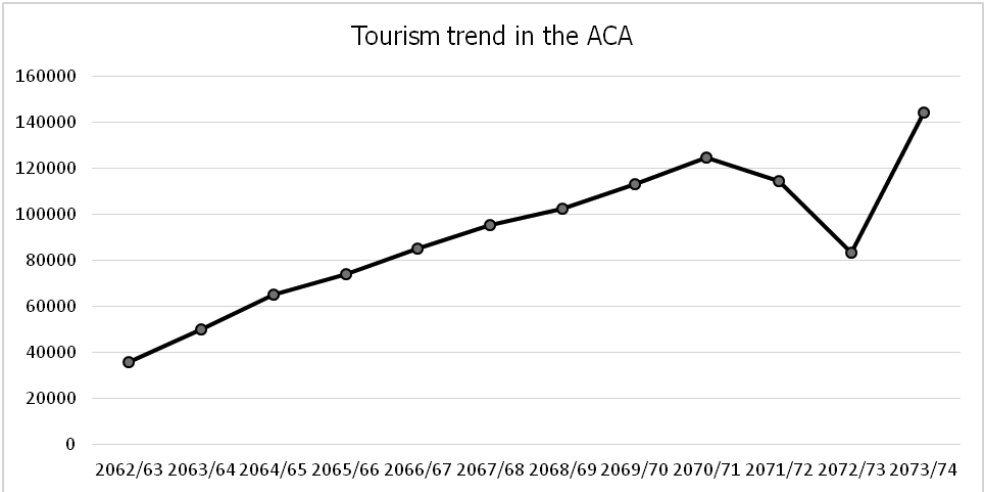
Tourism in the ACA

Nepal acknowledged its vulnerability to environmental risks as early as the 1960s. By the mid-1970s, Government of Nepal started establishing protected areas in areas of social and natural importance. According to Nepal Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) (2018) in the last three decades only, Nepal has put aside over 19% of the aggregate land zones as ensured regions under different categories. The Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) was initiated in 1986 from Ghandruk village as a pilot project integrating nature conservation and community development. ACA is the first initiative in conservation history of Nepal where local communities were directly involved in the management of the protected area. It is the ACA, where NTNC developed and tested integrated Conservation and Development Program (ICDP) model of conservation, which has now become the role model both at national and international level.

About tourist flow to the Annapurna Conservation Area, it is undoubtedly one of the famous trekking destinations among the foreigners visiting Nepal. Tourism is essential part of local economy in the ACA. For more than two decades, ACAP has been striving to develop tourism programs to minimize environmental impacts, help educate visitors and local people about the benefits of sustainable environmental practices and generate sufficient revenue to manage the protected area (Baral, Stern

and Hammett, 2012). As per the record of ACAP, 158,578 foreign tourists visited the Annapurna region in 2017, which is 38.88 percent higher than the figures of 2016. Due to the increasing number of tourist visit to the ACA, it is assumed that the carrying capacity will possibly exceed in near future. Increased usage of natural resources like water, fuel wood and encounter with wildlife animals is common in ACA due to tourism. The increasing number of tourists is one important factor that will affect the nature and that is why it is important to consider the carrying capacity at ACA. Researches globally asserts that carrying capacity sets limits on tourist number, resulting in steady tourism growth and development so that the overall natural, social, economic and ecological circumstances can tolerate without minimizing the tourist satisfaction. Which is why, it is advocated that the continued growth of tourism in the ACA might experience the ill effects of tourism (in terms of social, economic and environmental) on the very resource in which tourism is dependent on. For the last few decades, the ACA has become one of the most popular tourist destinations in Nepal. Thus, ACA will experience the ill effects of such a large number of physical, social, economic and ecological issues in future. For details on the number of tourist to ACA, refer to Figure 1.

Figure 1: Tourist Arrival in Annapurna Conservation Area from 2062/63 to 2073/74



Source: Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Nepal.

Research Questions, Objectives and hypothesis

Carrying Capacity consideration revolves around three basic components: physical-ecological carrying capacity, social carrying capacity, and political-economic carrying capacity. However, only social carrying capacity in relation to tourism has

been considered for the purpose of this paper. Thus, the study aimed to find out the following research questions.

Research Questions 1: What is the social carrying capacity in ACA?

Research Questions 2: What is the relationship between dependent variable [(Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC))] and independent variables (social carrying capacity)?

ACA is one of the most visited touristic places in Nepal. That is why, it was imperative to understand the impact of increased tourism activities along the main trekking trail in the ACA. The research is fundamentally based on the two-core principle of Carrying capacity, i.e. 'How much is too much? In addition, 'how much change is acceptable?'

Based on the above research questions, the main purpose of the study was to examine the social carrying capacity of ACA. The specific objectives of the study were to-

- examine the social carrying capacity in ACA; and,
- study the relationship between dependent variable (TCC) and independent variable (social carrying capacity).

Research hypothesis

In order to find the relationship between dependent [Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC)] and independent variable (social carrying capacity indicator), following research hypothesis was set:

H1: There is significant relationship between TCC and social carrying capacity indicator.

Study Area: Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA), Nepal

To examine the relationship between tourism carrying capacity and social carrying capacity of the ACA, the research was carried out along the base camp trail from Bire Thati, Ghangruk, Chhomrong, ABC, Landruk, and to Dhamphus (see Figure 1). These areas represent the social, physical, ecological and economic aspects (employment opportunities, living standard and income from tourism activities). ACA is the largest protected area covering 7,629 sq. km. in Nepal and spreads over 57 VDCs in five districts. It is home to around 100,000 people belonging to different ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups. The cultural diversity of ACA is rivaled by its biodiversity, which is a treasure house of 1,226 flowering plants, 102 mammals, 485 birds, 41 reptiles and 23 amphibian species. The area is one of the most popular trekking destinations for visitors from all over the world (NTNC, 2018)

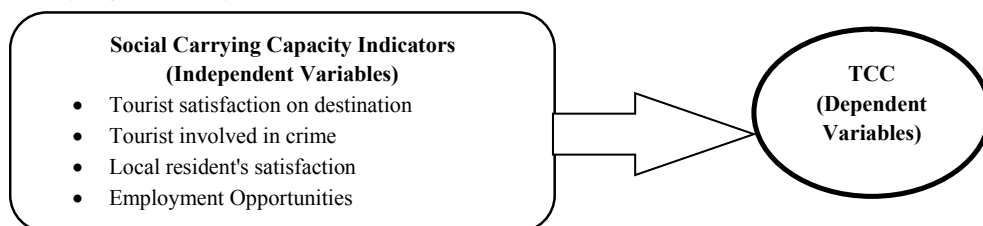
Conceptual Framework of the study

There has been continuous debate/discussion on the concept and the issue of carrying capacity in tourism in the last three decades. However, it was difficult to find a universal accepted practice. It was evident that much of the discussion are of operational purpose that too varies from destination to destination. Based on the assumption made by Environmental Planning Laboratory of the University of the Aegean, Greece (2005), this study used the conceptual framework as presented in Figure 2.

Carrying capacity considerations revolve around three basic components or dimensions: physical-ecological, social carrying capacity and political-economic. These dimensions reflect the range of issues considered in practice. One such study carried out at Phong Nha Tourism Center in Vietnam centered around three basic components: ecological, economic and social impacts and the findings of the study have presented that Dong Hoi tourism center have the highest TCC, about 71,000 visits per day. Similarly, the Phong Nha National Park has a lower TCC than other centers in Quang Binh, with 11,000 visits per day (Tran, Lan, Thai, Mai and Thanh, 2007). However, European Commission (2002) points that setting capacity limits for sustaining tourism activity in a place involves a vision about local development and decisions about managing tourism. These should be carried in the context of democratic community strategic planning which requires participation of all major actors and the community at large.

The Social carrying capacity dimension is associated to all the elements, which concern social communities, as well as the problems of interrelation between local resident population and tourists. In general, social carrying capacity is the reaction of the local people towards the tourism development of a place (Mohamad, Jaafar and Marzuki, 2014). More specifically, from the review of the literature it was found that the Social Carrying Capacity (SCC) of a tourist area is defined from two different points of view. From the point of view of residents, the SCC represents the social interaction between residents and visitors, and it is the MNV (Maximum Number of Visitors) tolerated by the host population without reducing their quality of life. Yet again, from the point of view of visitors, the SCC describes the interaction between the visitors themselves, and is defined as the MNV tolerated by the visitors themselves without reducing the quality of the recreational experience or desiring to go to an alternative site or return home (Brandolini, 2005). From the literature review, some of the common and most cited social carrying capacity indicators were found to be - Employment Opportunities, Tourist satisfaction on destination, Tourist involved in crime, and Residents' complaints. That is why; these factors have become the center of the study of this research paper.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of Social carrying capacity and Tourism Carrying Capacity



It was evident in many of the researches that ‘community’ is at the center of sustained tourism development at a touristic place. It has been argued that community involvement is significant in destination management and growth. When considering levels of community involvement and government control in planning and management of tourism, most destinations in developing regions fall into community-based or state-controlled groups (Gartner, 1996; Snowdon, Slee and Farr, 2000, *as cited in* Nyaupane, Morais and Dowler, 2006).). Some authors suggest that members of the host community should be involved in tourism planning because they: (a) have an historical understanding of how the region adapts to change; (b) will be the ones most closely affected by tourism; and (c) will be expected to become integral part of the tourism product (Scheyvens, 1999).

According to De Ruyck, Soares and McLachlan (1997) social carrying capacity refers to the maximum visitor density in an area where the tourists quietly feel satisfied and perception of crowding should be managed if local people are to continue benefiting from tourism and minimizing the negative effects of tourism. Especially, the social carrying capacity impacts should be researched in order to get a precise idea of social change due to tourism and how it can be guided to avoid most common negative effects and optimize positive drivers (Bretlaender and Toth, 2014). Similarly, social carrying capacity dimension is associated to all the elements, which concern social communities, as well as the problems of interrelation between local resident population and tourists. In general, social carrying capacity is the reaction of the local people towards the tourism development of a place (Mohamad, Jaafar and Marzuki, 2014). More specifically, in literature the SCC (Social Carrying Capacity) of a tourist area is defined from two different points of view. From the point of view of residents, the SCC represents the social interaction between residents and visitors, and it is the MNV (Maximum Number of Visitors) tolerated by the host population without reducing their quality of life (Brandolini, 2005).

In the same line, Saveriades (2000) defines social carrying capacity as – the maximum level of use that can be absorbed by an area without an unacceptable decline in the quality of experience of visitors and without unacceptable adverse impact on

the area's society. From the review, it is evident that the two components of social carrying capacity are: (1) the quality of experience that visitors will accept before seeking alternative destinations (that is to say, the tourists' psychological carrying capacity); and (2) the degree of tolerance of the host population to the presence of tourists (that is to say, the residents' psychological carrying capacity).

The level of tourist satisfaction can greatly influence the prospect of repeat visits. A key outcome of tourism satisfaction that will influence future tourism intentions for revisits both in the short and long term is loyalty to the destination (Chen and Tsai, 2007). Depending on wildlife observation, accommodation, food, trail, facilities and visitors with a satisfying experience may become repeat visitors or recommend the area to future clients. In this way, social carrying capacity helps to maintain the balance between tourism benefits and local perception towards tourism activities.

Research Methodology and Data collection

This study uses quantitative method to meet the objectives of the research. The use of quantitative methods in tourism research has been widely used in recent years. Adopting a quantitative method approach helps understanding complex data and gives a more complete and comprehensive account of the enquiry (Bryman, 2006; Creswell, 2003). The quantitative research in form of a survey will provide numerical evidence and allow statistical analysis. The results from quantitative methods might be explained through the findings generated by the analysis offering a more complete understanding (Bryman, 2006). To examine the tourism carrying capacity in ACA, primary data were collected from the two important stakeholders (tourists and the locals).

Sampling Design and Size

Non-probability sampling design (purposive) was chosen to get data from local residents and visitors to examine the social carrying capacity indicators. According to Kumar (2011), non-probability sampling designs are used when the number of elements in a population is either unknown or cannot be individually identified. Therefore, in such situations the selection of elements is dependent upon other considerations. The primary consideration in purposive sampling is the researcher's judgment as to who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study. As a researcher, one only goes to those who in their opinion are likely to have the required information and be willing to share it with him/her. Thus, purposive sampling was the right option to adopt.

Questionnaire Design and Instruments

The research used self-administered questionnaire to collect data. The survey instrument comprised of local and tourist demographic information (such as - age, marital status, gender, level of education, monthly income, occupation, length of

stay of tourist, money spend per day by tourist, frequency of visit to ACA, purpose of using firewood). The measurement items/statements were taken from previous studies on social carrying capacity and tourism, mainly from visitors and local residents. All statements related to SCC and TCC were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represented strongly agree and 5 represented strongly disagree. Similarly, satisfaction (in relation to both tourists and locals) were measured on 5-point semantic differential scale that ranged from 'satisfied' to 'dissatisfied'. The questionnaire had more close ended-questions and few open-ended questions. The close-ended part comprised of twenty-seven Likert scale statement.

The survey questionnaire were administered to tourists and local residents at different times of the day over the three-week period at from Dhampus, Tolkha, Landruk, Jhinu, Chhomrong and Ghandruk of the ACA region, Nepal. A total of 250 questionnaires were returned. The sample size also fulfills the condition of 95% confidence level, standard deviation of 0.5% and $\pm 5\%$ margin of error.

Data Analysis and Result

The data collected for social carrying capacity and tourism carrying capacity were coded into SPSS and analyze with the help of descriptive statistics to examine the social carrying capacity and TCC. In the same way, correlation and regression analysis were done to examine the relationship between TCC and social carrying capacity. On the other hand, social demographic profile were analyzed through descriptive analysis in SPSS.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 2 shows the demography of respondents. Out of total respondents ($n = 250$), 60.8% were male and 39.2% were female. The majority of the respondents (36.8%) were of 20-29 years of age, followed by 30-39 (30.4%) and 40-49 (18.8%). About the education, it was evident that 27.6% of the respondents had Bachelor level education, followed by secondary level (23.2%), and Master degree (21.2%). Regarding income, majority of local respondents stated to have income level Rs. 30000-40000 per month (36 %) followed by Rs.40000 above (34%) and Rs.20000-30000 (18%). Similarly, regarding income, majority of tourists stated to have income level less than \$5000 per month (45.5 %) followed by \$5001-10000 per month (20.5 %) and above \$20000 per month (14.5%).

Table 2: Demographic Profile

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	152	60.8
	Female	98	39.2
Marital Status	Married	97	38.8
	Single	153	61.2

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 20	3	1.2
	20-29	92	36.8
	30-39	76	30.4
	40-49	47	18.8
	50 & above	32	12.8
Education	No Education	27	10.8
	Primary	43	17.2
	Secondary	58	23.2
	Bachelor	69	27.6
	Master	53	21.2
Income(per month) (local)	Less than Rs. 10000	4	8
	Rs. 10000-Rs. 20000	2	4
	Rs. 20000- Rs. 30000	9	18
	Rs. 30000- Rs. 40000	18	36
	Rs. 40000 above	17	34
Income(per month) (tourists) (in dollars)	less than \$5000	91	45.5
	\$5001- 10000	41	20.5
	\$10001- 15000	25	12.5
	\$15001-20000	14	7.0
	above 20000	29	14.5

Reliability

For the reliability of the data, Cronbach's alpha was calculated. Besides the reliability rest, other statistical tools such as frequencies and descriptive analysis were used for generating findings. For testing the hypothesis, correlation between the dependent and independent variables were calculated and evaluated based on p-value.

Table 3 shows the results of reliability analysis. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire and analyze the collected data. From the result it was evident that the Cronbach's coefficient was $\alpha = 0.668$ for social carrying capacity and $\alpha = 0.689$ for TCC. All of the measured values were above 0.60, therefore it can be concluded that there was consistency and reliability among the statement questionnaire. For the study following social carrying capacity statements were used: safe and secure during the visit; availability of lodging and food/tea house facilities on the trekking trail; congestion on scenic areas; well paved path on trekking trail; job opportunities for the local residents; awareness in conservation; police check-post, health post, School facilities; and status of crime and drug abuse due to tourism activities. Similarly, for tourism carrying capacity, the statement (derived from the work of DeVellis, 1991) were used such as - restriction on activities and use of natural

resources; state of natural environment in ACA; cultural changes in local residents; and the quality of accommodation in ACA.

Table 3: Reliability Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Social carrying capacity	0.668	8
Tourism Carrying Capacity	0.689	4

Social Carrying Capacity Mean Value

To measure SCC, four indicators were used and tested namely: (a) tourist satisfaction on destination; (b) tourist involved in crime; (c) local resident satisfaction; and (d) employment opportunities. From the analysis it was found that tourist satisfaction on destination mean value was 1.60, which indicates that tourist were satisfied with the social-cultural aspects and values were not degraded in the perception of tourist. Similarly, resident's perception towards tourist involvement in crime was neutral which has mean value of 3.16. On the other hand, residents were satisfied with the tourism development in the ACA, and the mean value were recorded 1.72. Local people perceived tourism has a key role in uplifting their standard of living. In the same way, perception of advantages of tourism were more favorable for the local residents (the mean value recorded to be 2.13), which indicated that tourism have significant role in the local community mainly in terms of creating employment opportunities and benefits for local people.

Table 4: Social Carrying Capacity Mean Value

Social Carrying Capacity	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tourist Satisfaction on destination	250	1.60	0.1957
Tourist Involved in crime	250	3.16	0.4120
Local Resident satisfaction	250	1.72	0.4473
Employment Opportunities	250	2.13	0.6660

Hypothesis testing

To test the hypothesis, correlation and regression analysis were done (refer table 5). It was found that there is positive relationship between TCC and SCC.

H1: There is positive relationship between social carrying capacity and TCC.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation Analysis was performed to understand the relationship between Tourism Carrying Capacity and Social carrying capacity (see Table 5), and was found to be 0.758, that is, strongly positively correlated. The p-value was recorded to be

0.000, which is highly significant. Thus, it confirms that TCC and social carrying capacity was found to be significant correlated with each other. It indicates that if social carrying capacity exceed, TCC will exceed too.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	Test	TCC	Social CC Indicator
TCC	Pearson Correlation	1	0.758
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	250	250
Social CC Indicator	Pearson Correlation	0.758	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	250	250

Regression Analysis

Table 6 clearly indicates that the strength of relationship between SCC indicators and TCC. From the analysis, it was evident that the degree of relationship between SCC and TCC was 17.9%. The definition of R- square is the percentage of the response variable variation that is explained by a linear model and R-square is always between 0% and 100% (Minitab Inc., 2018). In this case (as shown in the Table 6) R- square stands at 17.9%, which means 17.9% of variability in dependent variable (TCC) is explained by independent variables (SCC). Since the Adjusted R-Square value (17.6%) was close to the R-Square, it means the strength and relationship between the two variables (17.9%) is actual and realistic. Thus, if social carrying capacity exceed, it will have same impact in TCC by 17.9%.

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.424 ^a	0.179	0.176	0.62962

a. Predictors: (Constant), Socio demographic

ANNOVA-test

ANOVA test performed to understand the degree of the strength between social carrying capacity indicators and TCC, showed the relationship to be strong (see Table 7). A Sum of Squares 21.500 Mean Squares 21.500 and F value of 54.235 confirmed the strength of this relationship. The impressions from Sums of Squares 21.500; Mean Squares 21.500 and F value 54.235 is that the model of relationship between the study variables is highly significant at the 0.000 level. From the result, it was clear that the strength of relationship between SCC and TCC in ACA was strong and it can be concluded that there is significant stress of social carrying capacity indicators on TCC in the ACA.

Table 7: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	21.500	1	21.500	54.235	0.000 ^b
	Residual	98.311	248	.396		
	Total	119.811	249			

a. Dependent Variable: TCC

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social carrying capacity

Similarly, the relationship between social carrying capacity and TCC was performed using regression coefficient as indicated (see Table 8), which portrays that the Social Carrying Capacity has significantly impact on Tourism Carrying Capacity at (Beta = 0.575, $t = 7.364$, $p < 0.000$). It means the impact level of TCC will increase 0.575 unit when social carrying capacity indicators increase one unit while others remain.

Table 8: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.195	0.151		7.926	0.000
	Social Carrying Capacity	0.575	0.078	0.424	7.364	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: TCC

Conclusion

From the analysis, it was evident that the relationship between Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC) and Social Carrying Capacity (SCC) was 0.758, i.e. strongly correlated. Therefore, it can be concluded that if SCC surpass then TCC will surpass. Relationship of independent variables (SCC) to dependent variable (TCC) found to be a strongly positive and it can be concluded that there is direct impact on tourism carrying capacity. In the same way, it was found that the social carrying capacity in ACA has not exceeded. Hypothesis test indicated that the relationship between dependent variables (TCC) and independent variables (socio-demographic) has positive correlation at 0.05 level of significance. Based on the Table 8, the significant value of social carrying capacity indicators is 0.000, which is below p -value of 0.05. Hence, H_0 is rejected, which indicates that there is a positive relationship between social carrying capacity indicators and TCC. Multiple regression analysis indicated

that strength of relationship between dependent variables (TCC) and independent variable (SCC) was 0.179, which was strong, actual and realistic.

The fundamental approaches of tourism carrying capacity are physical, ecological, economic and social. Physical approach characterizes ideal number of visitors that a destination can allowed. Ecological approach manages resilience of visitors at the specific level at the spot. Economical approach states considerate accepting visitors' purpose without the loss of resident activities furthermore, their benefits from ecotourism improvement through local services. Social carrying capacity approach characterizes the contribution to the spot by community, guests and government. Stakeholders should motivate and provide necessary resources to the resident so that they maintain their socio-cultural resources and the areas as unique. The aim of the study was to examine the relationship of SCC indicators and TCC in ACA, and it was evident that the SCC has not exceeded. Carrying capacity varies, depending on place, season and time, visitors conduct, models and levels of administration, and the dynamic character of the environment themselves. The present researcher found that the concepts of carrying capacity and open access are useful in the analysis of the social aspects of tourism. The finding of the study demonstrate that an expansion and dispersal response to increasing tourist numbers is likely to lead to environmental degradation. In addition, defining a carrying capacity for tourism development, by identifying thresholds for particular indicators is difficult, but not impossible. Similarly, employment opportunities were only limited to lodge and hotel sector, employment opportunities should be diversified to other sector (such as agriculture) as well.

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Tourism Stimulated Prosperity and Peace in Provincial Destination: An Appraisal of Far West Nepal

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Abstract

Tourism thrives in peace. It is a major beneficiary of peace. Nevertheless, it is also be a benefactor to peace if it is planned, developed and managed from the perspectives of building socio-economic foundation, environmental wellness and socio-cultural contacts and communications. Such elements of peace through tourism are applicable to all destinations including provincial, national, local or international. This paper presents the general conceptual foundation on tourism stipulated prosperity and peace and relates this feature with Far West Nepal which is a newly established provincial destination in Nepal. It argues that peace related objectives of tourism can be achieved through planned development, operation and purposeful management of tourism directed to enhancing socio-economic foundations and intercultural relations. The responsibilities for such aspects lie at all actors (hosts and guests) and all levels of government like local, national and provincial. This aspect is truly applicable in Far West a newly growing regional tourist destination where the provincial government is on board with people's mandate and necessary resources.

Keywords: *Tourism, prosperity and peace, socio-economic foundation, far west destination*

Introduction

Conceptual foundation on tourism stimulated prosperity and peace

Global tourism, arguably the world's most-important economic sector, has drawn growing inspiration and hope for achieving prosperity and peace. Tourism stimulated prosperity and peace comprises a number of a crucial thematic areas (issues and elements) such as strengthening socio-economic foundations, inter-group communication and socio-cultural contacts, political framework, security, responsible corporate engagement (business sector and others) and reconciliation and justice to peace in their complex interdependent relationships (Castañeda & Burtner, 2011).

Economically, tourism has a wide range of positive impacts to support peace building. It contributes directly to sales, profits, jobs, tax revenues, and income in direct (formal) as well as indirect (informal) actors like hotels, restaurants, transportation, airlines, travel agents, trekking agencies, paragliding companies, tourist book shops, cyber cafes, trekking equipment shops, embroidery and garment shops, tourist taxi, dairy and agro products, etc. It also affects most sectors of the economy through the changes in economic activity from subsequent rounds of re-spending of tourism money (multiplier effects) (Leong, 2008). However, the potentials of tourism for prosperity and peace are confined not only in economic values but these can go beyond it through spreading the diversity of varied positive consequences. Thus tourism can offer social-cultural and environmental benefits that add to its allure. Tourism can contribute to preserve culture in spite of the globalization induced cultural homogenization, restore and conserve environments through eco-tourism, and promote cross-cultural understanding between people, etc. It is argued to contribute to the well-being of tourists by giving them restorative holidays that fulfill many human needs. It can be an important force for the restoration or conservation of environments through ecotourism endeavor (Richardson, 1993). Thus tourism is undoubtedly one of the most important forces that can shape our world for lasting prosperity and peace at the start of new millennium (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000). In Nepal, Far West is a new provincial tourist destination. In spite of its position at the beginning of its tourism growth life cycle, this destination indicates high potential for tourism led local prosperity and peace.

Methodology

This study has adopted the eclectic approach based descriptive and analytical method to assess the present condition of tourism in Far West Nepal. Information is generated through both primary and secondary source of information. A total of one hundred one persons associated with varied tourism professions in nine districts of Far West, were interviewed with structured and unstructured questionnaires in

relation to the observatory field visits to nine districts in Far West. Aforementioned methods are integral part of carrying out an assignment by the author on 'identification of a sustainable business model for the Tourism Development Society as a destination marketing organization and support in formulation of policy and institutional structure for a provincial tourism board in the Far West' during the months of November 2018 to January 2019. This assignment was offered by the Inclusive Development of the Economy Programme (INCLUDE). INCLUDE is a joint Nepali-German initiative under the guidance of the Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation, Government of Nepal. Technical assistance to the programme is provided by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. INCLUDE programme focuses its intervention in a selected number of districts of Karnali Province and Province Five and Far-West in West Nepal. The development of the tourism value chain in West Nepal is a core intervention of INCLUDE

The author and his team worked closely with the GIZ INCLUDE core team which entailed regular contacts and, where appropriate, jointly participate in selected activities like interaction and sharing workshops with provincial Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forest and Environment and Tourism Development Society (TDS) core team. TDS is a nongovernmental organization involved in the field of tourism in Far West. It has the record of accomplishment of working for Far West tourism awareness, advocacy, development and promotion for five years since its inception. Through building and standing on its own achievements, TDS envisions scaling up its position as a Destination Management and Marketing Organization (DMMO) for Far West province while strengthening its financial position as a self-sustaining business entity.

The author also worked closely with destination level elected leaders, tourism associations like Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents Far West, Tourism Action Group of nine districts, West Nepal Tourism Alliance (a loose network of tourism related stakeholder in West Nepal) members, Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises (hotels, travel agencies, rafting agency, homestays, tourist type restaurants, etc.) and Tourism Professional Associations in Dhangadhi and Tikapur for aforementioned assignment.

Far West Nepal as a Provincial Tourism Destination Area

The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal was divided into seven provinces as per the new constitution of Nepal which was adopted on 20 September 2015. Far West (the term 'Far West' is used frequently for Sudurpashchim Pradesh in the article) is one of the seven new provinces, which is constituted as per the new constitution of Nepal 2072 BS. Spread over 19,153 Square kilometers and located towards Far West in

Nepal's map, this province was formulated by covering nine districts namely Achham, Baitadi, Bajhang Bajura, Dadeldhura, Darchula, Doti, Kailali and Kanchanpur (Far West, 2018).

Figures 1 and 2: Location of Far West in political map of Nepal and its administrative division in nine districts

Source: Survey Department



This province borders the Tibet Autonomous Region of China to the north, *Karnali Pradesh* and Province number 5 to the east, the Indian states of Uttarakhand to the west and Utter Pradesh to the south. Initially known as Province number 7, the newly elected Provincial Assembly adopted *Sudurpashchim Pradesh* as the permanent name for the province in September 2018. As per a 28 September 2018 Assembly voting, the city of Godawari (adjacent to Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan city) has been declared the capital of the Far West. The province is coterminous with the former Far-Western Development Region, Nepal.

This *Pradesh* has geographically covered Himalayan, mountains and Terai regions. The altitudinal variations on the landscapes of this province has caused great diversity in topography, geography, climatic conditions (tropical monsoon to tundra), vegetation (sub tropical rain forest to alpine desert), people and their local traditional culture (lower area resided Tharu people to Saukas in upper land of Byas in the foot hill of Api Himalayas).

A brief overview of Far West Nepal is offered in the table below.

Table 1: General overview of Far West in nutshell

Location	Far-west spread between 28°.22" to 30°.09" northern latitude and 80°.03" to 81. 25" eastern longitude
Area	19539 Sq. km (13.28% of Nepal's total area) Mountains region = 7932.834 (40.6%), Hills = 6,748.7706 (34.54%), Terai = 4857.3954 (24.86%)

Population	2,552,517 (9.63% of Nepal's total area) (2011 Census) Mountains = 462,345 (18.16%), Hills = 862,215 (33.78%), Terai = 1226,957 (48.06%)
Geography	Inner Madesh, Terai, Hill and Mountains
Altitude range	109 m (kailali) to 7132 m (Darchula, Api Himat)
Political administrative division and governance system	
Capital	Godavari (adjacent to Dhangadhi)
Zones & districts	Seti (Kailali, Doti, Achham, Bajhang & Bajura) and Mahakali (Kanchanpur, Dadeldhura, Baitadi, & Darchula) Mountain districts: Darchula, Bajhang and Bajura Hill districts: Doti, Dadeldhura, Acham and Baitadi Terai districts: Kailali and Kanchapur
Political constituencies	No. of House of Representative Constituencies = 16 No. of Provincial Constituencies = 32
Governance system	Chief Ministerial government system in provincial governmental level Mayor – council government system in local government units
Total provincial sector ministries	6
Total local governmental units	88 (1 Sub-Metropolitan city + 33 Municipalities + 54 Village Municipalities) which is 12% of total 753 local governmental units in Nepal
Provincial borders	→ East: Province number 5 (Bardia) & Karnali (Surkhet, Dailekh, Kalikot & Mugu) ← West: Pithauragadh district, Utterakhand India ↑ North: Tibet ↓ South: Lakhimpur district, Utter Pradesh India
Language	Nepali and local languages
Distance from Kathmandu	740 km
Distance from New Delhi, India	350 km

Identical cultural dance & music	Kailali = Sakhiya and mungrahawa dances, Kanchanpur = Jhijhi (Tharu) and Hori (Ranatharu) Acham = Hori and Chudke, Doti = Jorail Chaulo, Bajhang = Bhuwacholi, Bajura = Bhuwa baja Dadeldhura = Badal, Baitadi = Chaliyabaja, Darchula = Dhirbaja
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Source: Fieldwork

This province is located on the close proximity from the major domestic tourist hubs like Bardia and Banke National Parks (Province no. 5), Krishnasar Conservation Area (Province no. 5), and through trail-based connectivity with Rara National Park and Rara Lake. Far West Nepal is with the most inherent sites for natural mountainous landscape, precious flora and fauna, wild life, rivers, medicinal herbs, trekking routes, cultural and heritage sites, religious sites, pilgrimages, etc. This reflects its touristic appeal and potential (Ayer, 2003; Joshi, 2009 and 2015; Joshi, 2013; KTY 2075 MOC, 2018; Ojha, 2003; Pandit, 2013; Thapa, 2013).

Picture 1: Mountain landscape of Far West viewed from Khodpe with a highway on left passing to Bajhang



Source: Author

A brief overview of Far West province as tourist destination is offered in a table below which reveals about the existing and potential tourists spots.

Table 2: Existing and potential tourist spots in Far West

Major tourist spots (attractions)	Potential tourist spots
Suklaphanta National Park, Khaptad National Park, Tikapur Park, Api Nampa Conservation Area, Great Himalaya trekking routes [Mountain (Mt.) Api and Mt. Saipal Base Camp Treks), 7 sister goddess temples (Badimalika, Melauli Bhagawati, Niglasaini, Sahileshwori, Surmadebi, Tripurasundari and Ugratara), 5 shiva <i>dham</i> s (Shivpuridham Dhangadhi, Baijanatha dham Safebagar, Parsuram dham Amargadhi, Godavari dham Godavari, Tribeni dham Khaptad), Siddhababa temple, Karnali river and bridge, Khanidanda hill (Mahabharat Parbat), dolphins and Golden Mahseer in Karnali and other rivers, Dungri debi temple, Linga landscape, Dodhara Chandani suspension bridge, Aircraft museum, Homestays (Bhadagaun Tharu Kailali, Jhingrana Doti, Khar Darchula and Majhgaun Ranatharu Kanchanpur), Socio-cultural appeal of Tharu and Khas Chhetri people, etc.	Transit way to Mansarovar as the abode of Lord Shiva, Kailash Sacred Landscape, Budhinanda devi, Patal Bhumeswar cave, Raula Kedar, Aquatic spots (Ghodaghodi lake as a simsar site, Surmasarovar lake, Ramaroshan area, Dallek, Chapari, Jhilmila lake , Bedkot lake, Ali lake), Archeological [Ajaymeru <i>kot</i> (fort), Amarsingh <i>ghadhi</i> (fort), Betkot, Uku place remaining], Byas Himal, Bundar <i>Chahara</i> (waterfall), Nepal Government's identified fourteen priority destinations in Sudurpashchim out of 100 new destinations countrywide, and Dhangadhi as City of Cricket being famous for Dhangadhi Premier League

Source: Field visits and review of literatures

Though Far West occupies 13.8 percent of Nepal's total land area but the total arrivals of tourists is less than 2 percent (except Indians) in comparison to Nepal's total. Thus, Far West is by far the most unexplored part of Nepal. A total 452,781 international tourist visited Far West in 2017. Out of it, 450,000 tourists were from India. Amidst these Indian arrivals, 95 percent tourists' purpose of visit was for pilgrimage at places like Beheda baba, Shivpuri dham, Khaptad, Siddhababa temple, etc. and also health purpose to diagnose and treatment of eye at an eye hospital located at Geta in Dhangadhi (TDS, 2015).

The Interlink-age between Tourism and Peace in Far West Provincial Tourism Destination

The interlink-age between tourism and peace in Far West provincial tourism destination is stated from the perspective of socio-economic foundation in succeeding paragraph.

Table 3: Tourism created economic implications as supportive for peace building

Name of place	Number of accommodation		Economic implication as supportive for peace building	
	Hotels/ Lodges	Homestay	Local employment	Linkage in value chain
Dhangadhi (Kailali)	200	-	1240	Various supply linkage
Bhada gaun	-	1 (as community)	5	Various supply linkage
Mahendranagar (Kanchanpur)	50	-	300	Various supply linkage
Ranatharu Homestay	-	1 (as community)	3	Various supply linkage
Amargadhi (Dadeldhura)	20	-	70	Various supply linkage
Gothalapani (Baitadi)	11	-	54	Various supply linkage
Khalanga (Darchula)	15	-	55	Various supply linkage
Safebagar (Achham)	7	-	28	Various supply linkage
Mangalsen (Achham)	8	-	36	Various supply linkage
Dipayal (Doti)	14	-	66	Various supply linkage
Silgadhi (Doti)	3	-	11	Various supply linkage
Chainpur (Bajhang)	20	-	48	Various supply linkage
Bajura (Martadi)	14	-	28	Various supply linkage

Source: Field trip

As per table above, supply linkage in value chain includes dairy products, vegetables, fruits. Apart of socio-economic foundations, arrivals of international and

domestic tourists in Far West have offered immense opportunities for cross-cultural interaction and exchange between hosts and guests.

Conclusion

With the high profile of tourism as one of the world's largest industries coinciding with the multiplicity of its benefits, the global aspiration of tourism associating with its potentiality for socio-economic foundations and peace building is also at a soaring state. Economically, tourism has a wide range of positive impacts and supports peace. Tourism development is itself a positive force that addresses unemployment, poverty, underdevelopment, conflicts, etc. by developing economic opportunities and growth. Tourism plays vital role for the economic development and is one of the most prioritized industries of Nepal. Far West Nepal is a new provincial destination in Nepal. The great combination of its exotic landscapes in terrain, hills and mountains, unique culture, history, traditional and religious beliefs offer enormous importance for tourism. Tourism in Far West is a labour-intensive sector creating many employment opportunities for youth and women. Tourism led socio-economic foundations and subsequent implications on permanent and season employment creations and linkages in local value chain have paved roadmap for prosperity and peace. However, there is need to scale up tourism led prosperity and peace on this approach on sustainable way through the joint effort and appropriate plan and management by all stakeholders at provincial level and well coordination of province with local and national levels.

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Tourism in Protected Areas and Appraisal of Ecotourism in Nepalese Policies

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Abstract

Ecotourism is a form of nature-based tourism. It is recognized as the sustainable alternative to the mass tourism and is executed to contribute to the protection and enhancement of various component of the environment. As environmental and cultural diversity are considered as the greatest assets to ecotourism, Nepal with high cultural and environmental diversity is prime destinations for ecotourism and other forms of nature-based tourism. Ecotourism contributes to the conservation of biodiversity as a primary source of internal funding in the protected areas. Researches on the aspects of ecotourism in Nepal were focused towards potentiality evaluation, impact assessment and the impact of climate change including others. Despite the significance of ecotourism in the Nepalese economy, research on governance aspects of ecotourism is limited. This article aims to analyze the role of government

in ecotourism development in Nepal through policy-based approach. Beside this, data of visitation in the protected areas was evaluated. Tourist number in the protected area was observed to increase in a gradual fashion in response to the growing number of tourists visiting Nepal. Tourism policies of government primarily focus to increase the number of tourists in the country and fail to recognize tourism carrying capacity and environmental implication. Different tourism and other sectoral policies attempt to cover the issues of ecotourism, but, ecotourism specific policy is yet to be drafted. In addition to this, the tourism aspect is addressed by the species conservation action plan for species-level conservation within the country. In all, nine action plans reviewed, the provisions relating to tourism were found to be too general, most of them acknowledging ecotourism as a source of conservation funding but failed to define species-specific policy. A similar trend can be observed in the protected area management plan excluding the Chitwan and Banke National Park. Further study on the implementation status and formulation of new policy to address the holistic issues of ecotourism is an urgent requirement.

Keywords: *Biodiversity, conservation, ecotourism policy, nature based tourism, sustainable development.*

Introduction

Protected areas are the designated sites for sustainable management of natural resources. They are cornerstones of conservation in the face of growing global challenges. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines protected areas as “a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values” (IUCN, 2008). IUCN recognizes six different categories of protected areas, ranging from Strict Nature Reserve and Wilderness Areas (categorized as IUCN category I protected areas) to Protected Areas with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources (categorized as category VI protected area). The degree of restrictions is gradually loosening from category I to category VI. Tourism can provide the positive force for the conservation within all these categories of protected areas (Leung, Spenceley, Hvenegaard, Buckley, & Groves, 2018). The protected area is one of the prime destinations for ecotourism in most part of the globe. Protected areas based ecotourism are initiated with the aim of establishing mutually beneficial relationship between the local people, park authority and tourism (Xu, Lü, Chen, & Liu, 2009). Complex natural, social and economic background appears as a challenge to the establishment of an ideal relationship where all the three fronts of the environment are balanced and there appears the discrepancy

between theoretical and real field scenarios. Complexity level is determined by the ability of the local people to harmonize their livelihoods with the development and conservation needs considering the long term relationship between those issues (Xu et al., 2009). In such issues, the government can play an important role to develop the harmonious relationship between different actors involved in protected area based tourism through policy intervention.

Tourism

Tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world that emerged in the late 1980s with all the years since 2010 have seen the growth of at least 4% or more while in 2017, the growth rate was a whopping 7% (World Tourism Organization, 2018). The number of people who traveled and stayed overnight was 1.4 billion in 2018 following the momentum produced in the year 2017 with the growth rate of 6% despite Brexit uncertainty (UNWTO, 2019). The growth of tourism was led by the Middle East, Africa and the Asia Pacific region. Tourism industry makes a significant contribution to the economy by generating a substantial amount of revenue. Thus, tourism is often valued by the politicians/policy makers as an important source of wealth in the majority part of the globe. The economy of a country is not a single area, influenced by tourism, it has a substantial impact on the environment which can be considered to have two facets (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012). Some regard tourism as significant as Climate change, industrialization and logging for biodiversity degradation, while others have different ideas. As the fastest growing economic sector in the world, tourism is highly acknowledged by the rest for its potentiality for jobs and wealth creation, economic growth and poverty alleviation along with environmental conservation, ensuring the triple win situation if they are planned and executed properly (World Tourism Organization & United Nations Development Programme, 2017).

Despite the significance of tourism in the economy of a country, the benefits are rarely distributed to all the stakeholders. A significant proportion of the income generated through tourism are taken by outsiders, including tour operators and only limited fractions are retained at the local level. In fact, the group who has to make sacrifices due to tourism are rarely benefited from tourism. Tourism also comes with many externalities such as pollution, cultural encroachment, and price hike for goods in the market, including other, which largely affect the groups deprived of the benefits. Various elements of the ecosystem are highly affected due to tourism activities such impacts include environmental disturbance, alternation in habitat, disturbance to animals, erosion of the soil, increase in water demand causing exploitation of water from the natural sources, emission from the vehicles and transport causing air pollution and change in the behavior of the wild animals due to human presence (Kiper, 2013).

To ensure the benefits are supplied to the ground level, ecotourism should receive proper policy guidance. Properly planned and executed tourism activities are vital in uplifting the social and economic status in the country along with environment conservation (KC, 2016). To achieve this, the government plays an important role, through policy intervention, in promoting tourism for enhancement of the social and economic environment while minimizing the footprints in the physical environment. Alternative forms of tourism such as Adventure tourism, sports tourism, cultural tourism, and rural tourism are considered as the sustainable alternatives of mass tourism.

Nevertheless, alternative tourism bear positive features and address the environmental and cultural sensitivity; preserve, protect and enhance the quality of resources; enhance local heritage and environment for the development of visitors' services; and endorse sustainable economic growth within the carrying capacity of the environment (Wearing & Neil, 2009). Ecotourism as a form of alternative tourism; has some inherent characteristics regarding carrying capacity, environment conservation and local development (Moore, 2004). Ecotourism is primarily focused on the natural area (natural history) and focuses on education and interpretation which may not be the characteristics of other forms of tourism (Fennell, 2003; TIES, 2015).

Ecotourism

Ecotourism, the nature oriented niche of tourism, is defined differently by various scholars. The definitions of ecotourism in many cases have been equated with nature-based tourism, support for conservation, sustainable management of the resources and environmental education (Buckley, 1994). According to the Québec declaration on ecotourism adopted in 2002, any form of tourism can be attributed as ecotourism on the basis of five distinct characters viz. nature-based products, minimal impact management, environmental education, contribution to conservation, and contribution to the community (UNEP, 2002).

Ecotourism has been recognized by the United Nation Environmental Program (UNEP) as one of the sustainable green economy sectors owing to its role in the conservation of local natural, cultural and built resources while maintaining and enhancing the quality of life along with the enhancement of visitors' experience at destinations. Generally, ecotourism deals with living part of the natural environment with major focus to travel in destinations where flora, fauna or cultural heritages are the primary area of attraction.

As ecotourism is taken as the sustainable form of modern tourism, policy guidance plays a key role in making the tourism industry sustainable (World Tourism Organization & United Nations Development Programme, 2017).

The International Ecotourism Society (1991) defines ecotourism as the responsible travel to the natural areas that conserve the natural environment and improve the living standard of the local people. This definition was updated in 2015 to embrace education and interpretation involved in ecotourism. Ecotourism is now defined as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education” (TIES, 2015).

Similarly, according to Weaver (2002) ecotourism is a form of tourism that promotes learning experiences and appreciation of the natural environment, or some component thereof, within its associated cultural context which primarily enhances the natural and cultural resources with its best use and operation. Some other author mentioned that ecotourism is people for natural resources and natural resources for the people (Gajurel, 2004) where the activities of ecotourism in natural resources are for the prevention of wider usage and damage of natural resources through proper ecological planning and management (Cengiz, 2007). Ecotourism is deployed in order to provide the people around protected areas with financial benefits and also to protect the natural areas at the same time (Cengiz, 2007). Sustainability is one of the key components of ecotourism and four major different criteria that is needed to be incorporated are finance, ecology, visitation and economics (Aylward, Allen, Echeverria, & Tosi, 1996). Major goal of ecotourism must be sustainable use of natural resources ensuring the equitable sharing of resources to the generations by reducing the use and dependency of natural resources by locals.

The concept of sustainable tourism was emerged and accepted after the Rio Declaration on environment and development agenda 21 (WECD, 1987). Sustainable tourism is, however conceptualized between sustainable development and ecotourism, which is mainly concerned with the development of local livelihood and conservation of natural resources (Thompson, Gillen, & Friess, 2018). Ecotourism is one of the components of sustainable development which could be achieved through integrating the social, economic and environmental resources (Bhuiyan et al., 2012).

Ecotourism Policy

Ecotourism policy refers to the intention of the government to motivate or discourage the actions related to ecotourism (Hall, 2004). This includes the action, inaction, decisions, and non-decisions of government with regard to the choice of alternatives available for ecotourism promotion and development within the country (Hall & Jacksins, 2004). Ecotourism policy does not occur in a vacuum. They are the outcome of a policy-making process which reflects the interaction of actors' interests and values in the influence and determination of the tourism planning and policy processes (Hall, 2002). The policy is relevant to the tourism industry to make the choice and define priorities among the different forms of tourism available with

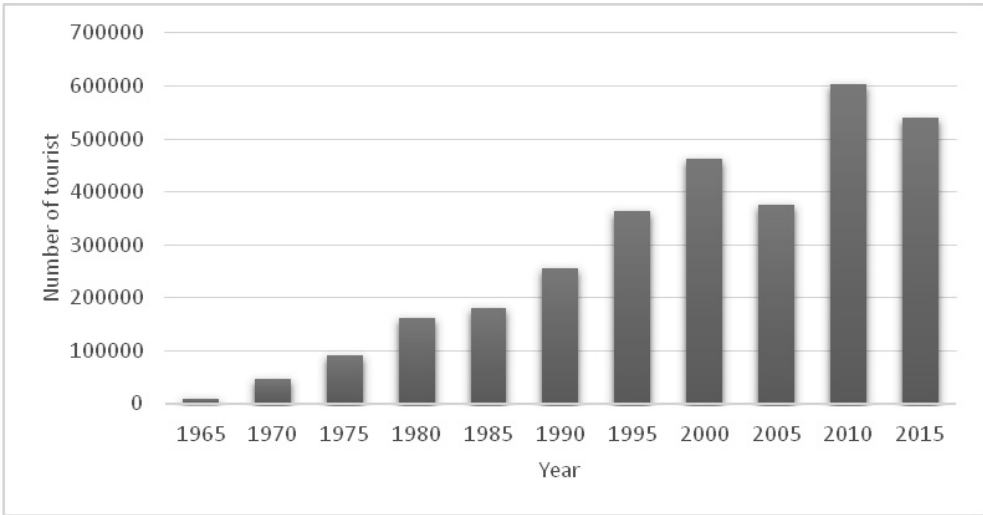
consideration of ethical approach to management, conservation of natural resources and willingness of local people (Dowling & Fennell, 2009). In the absence of such policy guidance, conflicting interests of multiple actors involved in different stages of ecotourism activities cannot converge. This will create a situation where balance between the conflicting interests such as conservation versus development, supply versus demand, benefits versus cost and people versus environment cannot be achieved and in turn tourism will hinder the sustainability of the system on which ecotourism is based (Dowling & Fennell, 2009). The policy is vital to turn out the challenges of ecotourism into opportunities. The harmonization of three fronts of the environment with relevance to ecotourism such as physical, social and economic (conservation, development, and livelihood) can be better achieved through ecotourism policy. For this, participation of the local people in policy-making process is equally significant as the provision of policy (Holtz & Edwards, 2002). Partnership in the policymaking process can be a good initiative measure for developing harmonization in an effort to reduce the adverse impact of tourism in all sectors (Holtz & Edwards, 2002).

Tourism and its impact in Nepal

Nepal bears peculiar property for the development in tourism sector exclusively because of, and a great variance in products, key attraction sites for the tourists such as trekking and adventure activities, and religious and diversification in cultural sites (Basnet, 2016). Nepal has been always a tourist destination with Manjushree regarded as the first tourist to visit Nepal (Shrestha & Shrestha, 2012). But the actual development of tourism takes place after 1950 which generates a large number of employment opportunities. Tourism is one of the easy source to the Nepal's revenue due to its variance in landscape, biodiversity and culture, it poses huge potential for the tourism as an industry (Gautam, 2008). Despite various efforts there always existed insufficient marketing and promotion of alternative tourist destinations and attractions around the country. For the last decade after the end of internal conflicts, the number of tourists visiting Nepal has been increasing (Bhattarai, Conway, & Shrestha, 2005). Currently, tourism is one of the major foundations of the Nepalese economy. Similar to the global trend, in the case of Nepal, the major bulk of share in revenue can be attributed to the tourism industry (Kafle, 2014; WTTC, 2018). The contribution of tourism and travel in the gross domestic product of Nepal in the year 2016/17 was 2.3 % (MoCTCA, 2018). With the increase in numbers in national and international tourist, it leaves many negative impacts, including depletion of environmental resources within and outside protected areas. Majority of international tourists entering Nepal (about 70%) mentioned their motive as trekking and Mountaineering in the year 2017 (GoN, 2018). Regardless of those positive effects of tourism, it has some negative aspects as well. As tourism in Nepal is more concentrated towards mountain tourism, the use of firewood for cooking

purpose is leading to deforestation (Nyaupane & Thapa, 2006). Degradation of the environment mainly due to the cutting of the hill foot for making foot trails and road, causes trail erosion, deforestation and environmental pollution in hilly regions of Nepal (Gurung, 1998). In addition to this, tourism in Nepal has enhanced the litter production, especially in Mountain areas, insufficient sanitation and disposal of the wastes as well (Pandey, Chettri, Kunwar, & Ghimire, 1995). Tourism has contributed to increased litter, inadequate sanitation and solid waste disposals in the mountain communities, while toilets built at the edge of local streams and rivers have resulted in water pollution (Boselli, Caravello, Scipioni, & Baroni, 1997). The total number of tourists in Nepal in a various year is shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: Annual variation of international tourist in Nepal



Source: Nepal Tourism Statistics 2017, MoCTCA 2018

Ecotourism in Nepalese Perspective

Nepal, a country of cultural and environmental diversity is prime destination for ecotourism (K.C., 2017). In Nepal ecotourism focuses on meeting the demands of major three dimensions which includes conservation of biodiversity, poverty reduction and promoting the local business using sustainable principles and practices (KC, 2016; K.C., 2017). However, tourism in Nepal is more concentrated towards mountain tourism. The government of Nepal has placed emphasis on mountaineering tourism and hence receives more and more tourists day by day for mountaineering purposes, but the most needed things are: the government should focus on sustaining the environment and tourism has to follow the principle of ecotourism. But today to minimize the situation, the climbers are not allowed to burn

fire woods on the trail and it has to be on the proper site if necessary. A few years back a group of climbers cleared two tons of debris as they are committed to climbing. The climbing expedition should be led by the companies which are totally committed to the environment of Everest. This is just an example and solution to the environmental effects of tourism (Thapa, 2012).

Protected Area based Tourism

Nepal is at the forefront in protected areas based conservation. Aichi target adopted by the convention on biological diversity has envisioned to expand the protected area coverage by 17% on the terrestrial environment, and Nepal was ahead on that front, where 23.39% of the land is allocated as protected areas (CBD, 2010). Chitwan National Park, established in 1973 was the first protected areas of Nepal. After that, coverage of protected areas is in increasing trend and as of now, there are 20 protected areas in Nepal. This includes 12 National parks, 6 conservation areas, 1 wildlife reserve and 1 hunting reserve (Table 1) (Shrestha & Pantha, 2018). These protected areas are important areas in terms of potentiality for ecotourism development (Aryal & Maharjan, 2017, 2018). Beside this, buffer zones of thirteen protected areas, ten Ramsar sites (Wetlands of International Importance) and protection forests, some of which overlap with the protected areas, all are considered as the protected sites which offer potentiality for ecotourism development.

Table 1: Protected Areas of Nepal

SN	Name	Estd. (AD)	Area Covered (Km ²)	Buffer Zone (Km ²)	Geographic region	Major Attraction
1	Chitwan NP	1973	952.63	729.37	Terai	Megafauna such as Tiger, Rhino and Birds along with tharu culture
2	Bardia NP	1976	968	507	Terai	Megafauna such as Tiger, Rhino & other mammals and Birds along with Tharu Culture

SN	Name	Estd. (AD)	Area Covered (Km ²)	Buffer Zone (Km ²)	Geographic region	Major Attraction
3	Sagarmatha NP	1976	1148	275	Mountain	Landscape Highest Mountain: Sagarmatha, Scenic Mountain, Himalayan tahr
4	Langtang NP	1976	1710	420	Mountain	Landscape, Musk Deer and other mammals, Trek to Gosaikunda, Helambu and Langtang valley
5	Rara NP	1976	106	198	Mountain	Rara Lake, landscape
6	Shey Phoksundo NP	1984	3555	1349	Mountain	Phoksundo Lake, Shey Monastery, Landscape, Snow leopard, blue sheep
7	Khaptad NP	1984	225	216	Mountain	Landscape,
8	Makalu Barun NP	1991	1500	830	Mountain	Landscape,
9	Shivapuri NP	2002	159	118.61	Midhills	Birds
10	Banke NP	2010	550	343	Terai	Tiger
11	Sukhlaphanta NP	1976 (2017*)	305	243.5	Terai	Barasingha
12	Parsa NP	1984 (2017*)	627.39	285.30	Terai	Tiger

SN	Name	Estd. (AD)	Area Covered (Km ²)	Buffer Zone (Km ²)	Geographic region	Major Attraction
13	Koshi Tappu WR	1976	175	173	Terai	Wild water buffalo
14	Annapurna CA	1992	7629	-	Mountain	Mountain range, Gurung culture, Snow leopard, blue sheep
15	Dhorpatan HR	1987	1325	-	Mountain	Wildlife hunting, landscape,
16	Manaslu CA	1998	1663	-	Mountain	Landscape
17	Kanchanjunga CA	1997	2035	-	Mountain	Landscape, Snow leopard, blue sheep
18	Api Nampa CA	2010	1903	-	Mountain	Landscape
19	Gaurishankar CA	2010	2179	-	Mountain	Redpanda, Landscape
20	Krishnashar CA	2009	16.95	-	Terai	Blackbuck

* Upgraded to National Parks, NP : National Parks, HR= Hunting Reserve, WR= Wildlife Reserve, CA= Conservation Area

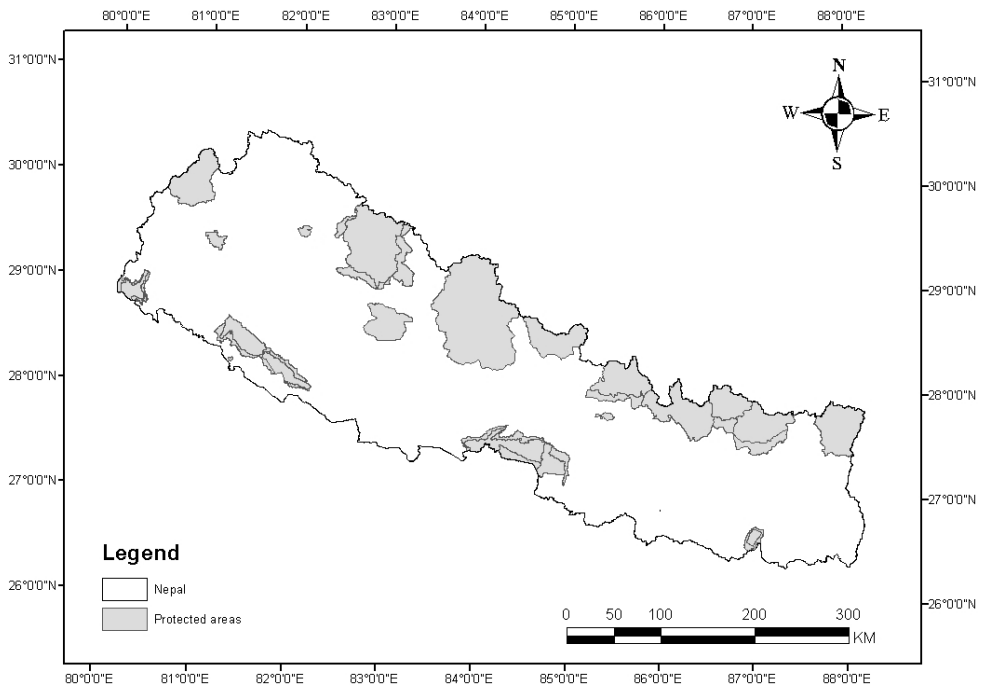
As Nepal in the frontline in community-based conservation strategies, conservation area and buffer zone programme of National parks and wildlife reserves are of great significance (Bhattarai et al., 2017). A country where nearly a quarter of total area is allocated for conservation and with some potential negative impact of those protected areas in livelihood involvement of local people in several tourism activities which could be the potential way-out for the conservation of the natural areas, increasing revenue through people's participation in tourism and sustainable management of resources (Bajracharya & Lama, 2008). In order to address such issues, the concept of ecotourism or eco-friendly tourism had emerged. In addition to this, the Government of Nepal has many policies, acts, rules, regulations, and action plans to discourse and implement ecotourism. Ecotourism potential of protected area, their role in conservation and sustainable development and impact of climate change in

ecotourism are explored by various scholars (Aryal & Maharjan, 2018; K. C & Thapa Parajuli, 2014; K.C., 2016; K C & Thapa Parajuli, 2015; Nepal, 2002). But the study on the policy discourse of ecotourism in case of Nepal are greatly limited in scope and number. This paper aims to identify the issues and opportunities of tourism in protected areas and the evaluation of ecotourism related policies in Nepal.

Materials and Methods

Study Area

Nepal (28.3949° N, 84.1240° E) with the area of 147,181 Km², covering about ~0.03% of the total area of the globe, is the country with diverse environmental and cultural resources. Despite its position within the sub-tropical zone of the globe, mountainous regions often cited as the third pole, climate analogous to all climate zones are found in Nepal, with the pseudo-tropical climate in the lowland areas, the sub-tropical climate in the Midlands and polar equivalent climate in the northernmost region. This diverse climate has resulted in high natural diversity. Within the short north-south transect of 150-200 Km, 118 ecosystem types have been identified and, 3.2 percent and 1.1 percent of the world's known flora and fauna, respectively. This includes 5.2 percent of the world's known mammals, 9.5 percent birds, 5.1 percent gymnosperms, and 8.2 percent bryophytes (GoN/MoFSC, 2014). With the population of Nepal is about 30 million, the threats to this diversity are very high. Thus, a protected area network of 20 different protected areas has been established in Nepal (Figure 2). These protected areas are one of the major attractions for ecotourism in Nepal. Beside these protected areas, there are 37 Important Bird Areas, and 10 Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites).

Figure 2: Map of Nepal with Protected area Network**Methods:**

Policy based approach was used to understand the role of government in the development of ecotourism. Except for the guidelines endorsed by the Ministry of Forest and Environment for the promotion of ecotourism in community forest, no specific policy document specifically dedicated towards ecotourism were available. Thus, the analysis was based on the provision of ecotourism stated on the other sectoral and national policy documents. For this, species conservation action plans, periodic plans (first to fourteenth), protected area and buffer zone management plans and tourism management plan (wherever applicable) of selected protected areas (based on availability as e-copy) were reviewed. To understand the status of ecotourism in protected areas, the data provided by DNPWC on its annual reports were analyzed. Ratio of tourists visiting to the protected areas were calculated as:

$$\text{Proportion of Tourists in PA} = \frac{\text{Number of tourist in Protected Area in particular year}}{\text{Total international tourist entering Nepal in that year}}$$

Trend of this proportion was analyzed for the year 2005/06 to 2016/17 by Man Kandel Tau and Sen Slope Index in trend package of R Software (Pohlert, 2018; R Core Team, 2018).

Results and discussion

Tourist in Protected areas of Nepal

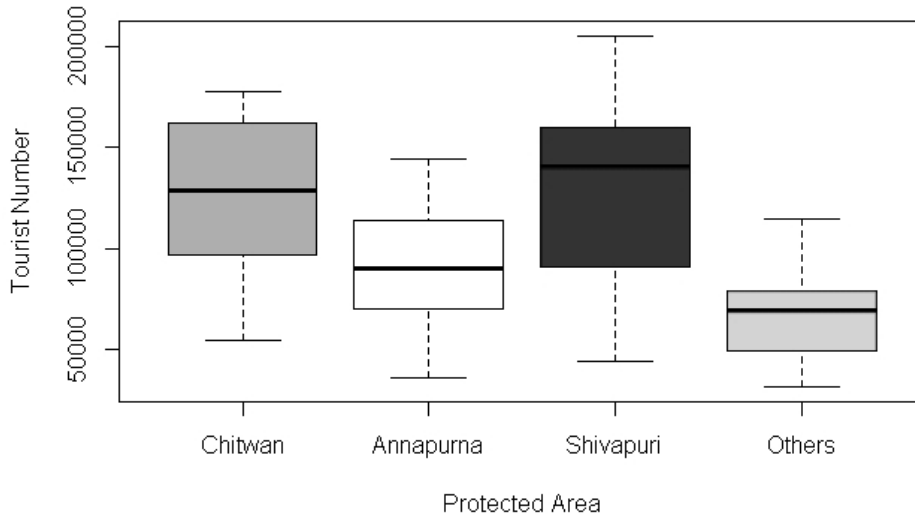
Majority of the tourist arriving in Nepal visit the protected areas. The proportion of the tourist visiting the protected areas of Nepal with reference to total tourist entering the country was found to be 48.48%. The proportion of total foreign visitors to the visitors visiting the protected areas of Nepal was found to increase gradually in twelve years of the period considered (between 2005/06 to 2016/17) as shown in the table 2 below. The rate of increase was found to be 1.8% per annum (1.3 to 4.09%).

Table 2. Trend Analysis of Proportion of visitors in Protected Areas with reference to International Tourist

Man Kandel Tau	Sen Slope Index		Z	p	N
	Estimate	95% confidence interval			
		Max Min			
0.4848	0.0180	0.0409 0.0013	2.1257	<0.05	12

In Nepal, twenty protected of different categories are established but tourist flow in three different protected areas outnumber rest seventeen protected areas by a million mile. As shown in figure 3 and table 3, tourist flow between Chitwan National Park (CNP) and Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park (SNNP) are comparable. A significant proportion of tourist visit to Annapurna conservation Area (ACA) as well. But, the number of tourist in other protected area combined do not reach the figure achieved by each of the three aforementioned protected areas. A high number of tourist in Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park can be attributed to its location. SNNP being the national park within the capital city of Nepal and close to the international airport could explain the high visitation to the park (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1996). CNP and ACA both offer a unique experience to the visitors. Status of CNP as the world heritage site along with high biodiversity and easy access to the park owing to its easy connectivity with the major cities of Nepal are attributable factors explaining the high visitation in the park. Presence of Charismatic species such as Greater One Horned Rhinoceros, Royal Bengal Tiger, and high avifaunal diversity within the CNP attracts visitors to visit CNP. ACA has been described as one of the top trekking destinations in case of Nepal.

Figure 3: Boxplot showing tourist number in different protected area (2005/06-2015/16)



(Data source: Annual Report 2018, DNPWC)

Table 3: Summary of Tourist flow in Selected protected areas

	Chitwan NP	Bardia NP	Langtang NP	Sagarmatha NP	Shivapuri Nagarjun NP	Annapurna CA
Mean	127000	9019	9496	31700	129800	90760
Std. Deviation	39920	4966	3450	6599	48320	31530
Range	123800	16570	10090	25010	161900	108400
Minimum	54450	1394	4230	20100	43800	36000
Maximum	178300	17960	14320	45110	205700	144400

NP= National Park, CA= Conservation Area (Data source: Annual Report 2018, DNPWC)

As mentioned above, higher tourist numbers are skewed towards few protected areas while rest despite of having diverse cultural and environmental attractions, receive a few number of tourists and their income through ecotourism activities are very insignificant. In the protected areas where the flow of tourist are significantly higher, they do have seasonal patterns of tourist flow and can be balanced by attracting internal tourist to the area. But, in many ecotourism destination communities have

mentality to consider that only foreigners as the tourist which needs to be revised and adopting an ecotourism policy that seeks to attract both foreign and domestic tourists is sensible. Indeed, the long term viability of these projects will depend also on how much domestic tourists these areas can attract (Nepal, 2007).

Government of Nepal and Ecotourism Development

Ecotourism policy to guide the ecotourism development in all sectors is yet to be promulgated. Recently, the Ministry of Forest and Environment have endorsed the Standard Operation protocol for implementation of ecotourism in the community forest of Nepal (GoN, 2018) (Protocol hereafter). The policy despite being the initiation of promulgation of policy for ecotourism in Nepal, have come with a limited scope. The Protocol envisions to develop the responsible travel in community forest with educational, observational, recreational motive within the principles of community forest-based ecotourism set forth by the protocol. The principles of community forest-based ecotourism are mainly engrossed on providing economic benefits, creating job opportunities, promoting local resources and culture as well as making a good relation among local people and tourist.

For this, each community forest is required to include the ecotourism into their operational protocol which is prepared periodically (5-10 years). Owing to the success of certain community forest in the promotion of ecotourism to generate revenue for conservation (Bhattarai, 2011), it can be expected that the protocol will be successful in scaling up ecotourism activities in the wider arena of community forest networks. But, the protocol has the provision for the establishment of a zoo within the community forest in the protocol. This provision is intended to attract more tourists to the community forest while ensuring guaranteed wildlife view and generating additional revenue for community forest conservation. But this provision can be counterproductive. As community forest user group and government officials within the regulating mechanisms have limited capacity to assess the status of wild animals within the community forest and impact of capturing the animals in the wild to keep in captive conditions. Excluding some of the buffer zone community forests of Terai, most of the community forest in Nepal operate with a limited annual budget. Which implies that they have limited capacity to invest for the establishment of the zoo taking the animal welfare issues in concern. Thus, they can turn out to become the exhibition centers instead of support for the conservation of wild animals.

Ecotourism in Tourism Policy

The Government of Nepal has introduced different tourism-related policies in the retrospective fashion. Tourism policy, long-term/mid-term/short-term plans, and Vision 2020 are the major policy documents of Nepal introduced with the objective of easing the rules and regulations for the smooth flow of tourism activities in the

country. There is a rising focus on infrastructure, particularly the modernization of airports and the development of new tourist destinations (Shakya et al., 2013). Tourism Policy 2065 and tourism vision 2020 are an important tourism-related policy in Nepal. Beside this two tourism policy, policy statement made through different tourism related laws (act, regulations, and guidelines) is of equal significance to understand the role of government. Both Tourism Policy 2065 and Tourism Vision 2020 have a common policy at core i.e. they envision to develop tourism infrastructure, increase tourism activities and in turn create employment opportunities in rural areas through tourism and share the benefit arising from the tourism industry at the grassroots level. Most of the policy document related to tourism are focused towards increment of tourist number.

Tourism policy 2065, has recognized ecotourism as a separate niche of tourism. Besides that, there are other provisions which carry the motive of ecotourism. This policy has recognized the need for addressing the environmental concerns for the sustainability of the tourism sector. In article 8, tourism policy 2065 (BS), need for the prioritization of the environmental sector in the development, construction, and implementation of tourism infrastructures is addressed (GoN/MoCTCA, 2009). The policy also envisions about the utilization of the certain fraction of the income from the rural tourism for development of tourism infrastructure and to conserve environment at the local level. Ecotourism and tourism for the poor community have been identified as a tool for the conservation of the environment as well as sustainable use of natural resources. This includes sustainable utilization of cultural and natural resources, prioritization of ecotourism over commercial tourism and enhances people's participation to enhance tourism sectors (MoCTCA, 2008). It also recognizes the need to diversify the tourism industry and to attract the elite group of tourist from the national parks to the rural areas. Besides this policy also recognizes the need for sustainable management of trails, mountains, rivers used for water transportation and enhancement of the cultural diversity (MoCTCA, 2008). The policy is not limited to propose the action for the development of ecotourism and other forms of tourism in the country. It also identifies the environmental pollution as one of the challenges for tourism/ecotourism industry in the country (MoCTCA, 2008). The provision in this policy is well addressed by tourism-related acts rules and regulation. For instance, Tourism act 2035, in its article 35 stresses to the pollution free tourism where a mountaineering excursion team, shall comply with the prescribed conditions in order to not causing the environmental pollution at the time of mountaineering (GoN, 2016). Beside this, Travel and Tourism rules, 2006 in its article 12 has provision related to the environmental cleaning and waste management where tourist are responsible for the management of waste generated by them during trekking or camping. Tourism act 2035 in its article 35 states the pollution free tourism where a mountaineering excursion team, shall comply with

the prescribed conditions in order to not causing the environment to be polluted at the time of mountaineering. Rafting rules 2063 (GoN, 2006) have a provision relating to the environmental clearing and management of wastes in the river due to rafting activities where the rafting entrepreneur is responsible for the collection of wastes and should not be near the source of water resources. It also assigns the responsibility for proper management of wastes to the river guides under Article 17. Mountaineering Expedition Rules, 2059 (2002) explicit that the mountaineering team shall not damage or destroy natural and cultural resources in the route of mountaineering and team shall work for non-polluting as recommended by Government of Nepal. Standard Operating Protocol for Homestay Operation in Nepal has obliged the operators of homestay to involve tourist in different cultural and nature-based tourism activities such as cultural dance, bird watching, jungle walk, wildlife viewing among other. Besides, the protocol also obligate the visitors to be responsible for biodiversity and ecology of the environment (GoN, 2010).

Ecotourism in other sectoral Policy

Nepal is a signatory of Convention on Biological Diversity and each party to the convention are obliged to prepare their national level policy for the conservation of biodiversity within their jurisdiction (CBD, 1992). Nepal prepared Nepal Biodiversity Strategy in 2002 (hereafter NBS-2002) and Nepal Biodiversity Strategy Implementation Plan in 2006 (hereafter NBSIP-2006) for the fulfillment of the obligation of the convention. Tenth Conference of Parties of CBD was held in 2010 in which Aichi Target for the conservation of biodiversity was adopted. To tie up with the changed targets along with the learning of implementation of NBS-2002 and NBSIP-2006 government prepared Nepal Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2014-2020 (hereafter NBSAP-02) (GoN/MoFSC, 2014) and promulgated in 2014 which contain a target for short term and mid-term (2020 and 2040 respectively). Now, NBSAP-02 is one of the important policy for Nepal. The major provisions related to ecotourism in NBSAP-02 (GoN/MoFSC, 2014) are:

- a. Identification of Protection Forest such as Madane Protection Forest (Declared in 2010) and Panchase Protection Forest (Declared in 2011) as an important ecotourism destination.
- b. Envision to promote eco-friendly tourism, with a particular focus on community-based ecotourism for management of mountain diversity.
- c. Identification of ecotourism as an important internal funding source for the conservation of biodiversity inside and outside protected areas.
- d. Acknowledge the importance of linking communities to the benefits of protected areas which could play a role in the management of protected areas. Also envisions to increase the revenue from the tourism in protected

areas which could be an economic opportunity to the local communities for sustainable tourism.

Owing to the success made on the conservation after initiation of Buffer zone program in some protected areas of Nepal especially the protected areas with high income, the strategy has acknowledged the importance of linking communities to the benefits of protected areas to scale up peoples role in the management of protected areas (Bhusal, 2015; Dhakal & Thapa, 2015; GoN/MoFSC, 2014). It also envisions to increase the revenue from tourism in protected areas which could bring economic opportunities to the local communities from sustainable tourism (GoN/MoFSC, 2014). After implementation of buffer zone program in the protected areas of Nepal, which has the provision to return 30-50% of the income of protected areas to the people of buffer zones through standardized mechanism, sustainable development works are being initiated in selected areas of Chitwan National Park, Bardia National Park and other selected parks of the country with high number of tourist and high income. As revenues collected by the park are proportional to the number of visitors, ecotourism can become important initiator for sustainable development in other parks as well which requires collaborative actions of different stakeholders.

Environmental policies of Nepal have accredited the importance of ecotourism in Nepal. Nepal Environmental Policy and Action Plan (NEPAP 1993) which was promulgated prior to the implementation of buffer zone policy can be considered to be the pioneer to develop the concept of redistribution of a certain portion of income for community development. It also ensures the fuel wood not to be sue by the trekkers and trekking companies and recognizes the need to promote biodegradable materials during trekking and encourage effective waste management systems in national parks of Nepal. Sustainable development Agenda for Nepal is another policy which acknowledges the need of promoting public participation in forest sector as a means to contribute to the sustainability of the physical, social and economic environment and recognize the need of promoting protected areas as a tourist destination (HMG/NPC & MoPE, 2003). Nature conservation strategy recognized ecotourism as a climate-sensitive sector and vulnerable to climate change (GoN/NPC, 2015). Beside this other sectoral policy related to environments such as forest and wetland sector have acknowledged the ecotourism as a tool for sustainable development.

Forest sector policy have recognized forest-based ecotourism as the major contributor to sustainable development in the country. Forest sector policy 2000 has recognized the need to regulate protected areas and to be kept within the carrying capacity of the protected areas (GoN/MoFSC, 2000). Forest sector policies prepared after the initiation of buffer zone programme in protected areas of Nepal have made their acknowledgment towards the principles underneath the buffer zone concepts highlighting the need of redistribution part of the income of protected areas for

community development. Forestry sector strategy 2016-2025, which is developed as the future development of Nepal's forestry sector has recognized the forest sector as the areas with the cultural and environmental significance for ecotourism development (GoN/MoFSC, 2016). The strategy aims to increase the role of the private sector for developing enterprise for ecotourism and recognize community-based management as an entry point for ecotourism development. Forest Sector strategy has also recognized ecotourism as a viable option for low-intensity forest management plans focusing on forest conservation for biodiversity and envisioned to create employment opportunities by expanding ecotourism activities in all protected areas and other areas outside protected areas (GoN/MoFSC, 2016). Protection Forest concepts introduced to protect and restore important biodiversity areas and conservation corridors outside protected areas also acknowledge the role of ecotourism in the conservation of those forests (GoN/MoFE, 2018; Kafle, Aryal, & Baral, 2016). Newly formulated National Forest Policy 2075 BS has also acknowledged ecotourism as one of the tools for sustainable utilization of forest resources.

In addition to this, Wetland areas of Nepal are also important with respect to culture and environment and are important ecotourism destination as acknowledged by wetland-related policies of Nepal. National Ramsar Strategy and Action Plan, Nepal (2018-2024) has recognized ecotourism as one of the potential sources of funding to implement the strategy (Ministry of Forest and Environment, 2018). Wetland action plan also highlights the need to involve the private sector to develop wetland as an important ecotourism destination. The strategy also acknowledges the importance of wetland ecosystem in higher elevational regions as the sites having higher importance from ecotourism perspectives compared to their lowland counterparts (Ministry of Forest and Environment, 2018). Other policies related to the management of wetland are in the forefront to acknowledge ecotourism for its sustainable management. For example, National wetland policy 2059 (2003) has its provision for the Development of environmental friendly tourism with minimum environmental impacts and mobilize acquired profits, as far as practicable, for wetlands management and ensure the benefit of local people and local people's participation in the preparation of work plans for the conservation and management of wetlands. Wetland policy was updated in 2012 which recognizes the role of wetland to contribute to the economy of the country through ecotourism (GoN/MoFSC, 2012). The policy envisioned to classify the wetlands on the basis of their importance and has proposed to classify the sites with ecotourism potential as national wetlands. Now people are aware of the values of wetland and goods and services provided by wetlands. They have recognized the importance of wetland from ecotourism perspectives and are showing initiation to restore and maintain ecological integrity and promote ecotourism as illustrated in case of Jokhad Tal (Kailali district) and Betana Tal Morang, which are restored and

managed by local management committee and are performing successful ecotourism initiatives (GoN/MoFE, 2018).

Ecotourism as a cross-cutting issue can be recognized in other sectoral policies as well. National Urban Development Strategy-2017 has proposed to promote the environment, heritage, and tourism friendly economic functions in the Kathmandu Valley as one of the proposed actions (MoUD, 2017). Climate change policy of Nepal also highlights tourism as one of the sectors with the potential to be affected by climate change (GoN, 2011). This understanding has been a central element to the climate change-related other policy in the country. Handbook prepared to guide the process of harnessing Green Climate Fund (GCF) has identified tourism as one of the climate-sensitive sectors in Nepal and also identified tourism based livelihood and engaging in the tourism industry as one of the potential methods to improve climate resilience in Nepal (Ministry of Finance, 2017).

Ecotourism in Species Action Plans

Species conservation action plan were available for nine species which includes six mammals, two birds and one reptiles. All the management plans have acknowledged ecotourism/tourism as the important source of revenue for conservation of that particular species (Table 4).

Table 4: Species action plan and ecotourism

SN	Species	Implementation Period	Acknowledgement of Tourism/ Ecotourism	Source
1	Tiger (<i>Panthera tigris</i>)	2016-2020	Identify tiger based tourism as important income source for local economy	(DNPWC, 2016b)
2	Snow leopard (<i>Panther uncia</i>)	2017-2021	Aims to pilot at least one snow leopard based ecotourism project. Propose to develop nature-based tourism plan for high priority mountain PAs	(DNPWC, 2017a)
3	Greater One Horned Rhino (<i>Rhinoceros unicornis</i>)	2017-2021	Envision to promote nature based tourism to benefit local communities	(DNPWC, 2017b)

SN	Species	Implementation Period	Acknowledgement of Tourism/ Ecotourism	Source
4	Asiatic Elephant (<i>Elephas maximus</i>)	2009-2018	Ensure breeding of captive elephants with their wild counterparts to maintain heterozygosity and contribute to tourism	(DNPWC/ MoFSC/GoN, 2009)
5	Red Panda (<i>Aluris fulgens</i>)		Identify ecotourism as a means to foster local development and to enrich local and visitors about the ecological importance of Red Panda Recognize the cautious approach to be implemented while promoting species based tourism Envisions to develop red panda based ecotourism promotion manuals Aims to increased Red Panda based tourism sites	(DNPWC & DFSC, 2019)
6	Pangolin (<i>Manis sps.</i>)		Identify pangolin based ecotourism for enhancing local livelihood. Aims to design and implement community based ecotourism and train local people for the same.	(DNPWC & DoF, 2018)

SN	Species	Implementation Period	Acknowledgement of Tourism/ Ecotourism	Source
7	Bengal Florican (Houbaropsis bengalensis)		Acknowledge the need to explore the potential of managed tourism to link Bengal Florican conservation with livelihood of local people. Aims to assess the potentiality for Bengal florican based tourism through stakeholder involvement (local people and tourism professional) Propose to sensitize local people for tourism, incorporate its conservation issue in tourism guide training and promote home stay tourism. Also propose to explore and implement livelihood enhancement programs including the potential for suitably managed tourism	(DNPWC, 2016a)
8	Vulture	2015-2019	Envisioned to promote community-led vulture-based ecotourism in proposed Vulture Safe Feeding Zones(pVSZs) and Vulture Safe Feeding Zones (VSZs)	(DNPWC, 2015)

SN	Species	Implementation Period	Acknowledgement of Tourism/ Ecotourism	Source
9	Gharial (Gavialis gangeticus)	2018-2022	Restrict tourism in the designated utility area of the gharial Propose to conduct survey on "willingness to pay" with national and international tourists, donors for sustainable management of Gharial Conservation and Breeding Centre	(DNPWC, 2018)

Ecotourism in Periodic plan of Nepal

In the history of more than 62 years of periodic planning, ecotourism are hardly acknowledged by the periodic plans of Nepal. However, with the phase of time the development on importance of ecotourism by periodic plans have been recognized. The major agenda of tourism and ecotourism is shown in table 5.

Table 5: Ecotourism Provisions in Periodic Plans of Nepal

SN	Periodic Plan	Policy for tourism	Ecotourism in periodic plan	Source
1	First five year plan 1956-61	– Focused on improvement of facilities for tourism – Acknowledged the need for promotion for tourism – Worked for the Renovation of cultural, natural and mountain tourism	– Recognized natural resources as matchless asset for tourism development	(NPC, 1956)
2	Second three year plan 1962-1965	– Focused on basic facilities and promotion activities	-	(NPC, 1962)

SN	Periodic Plan	Policy for tourism	Ecotourism in periodic plan	Source
3	Third Five year Plan 1965–1970	– Envisioned to increase the annual flow of tourist to 20,000 (excluding Indian tourist) – Focused on construction of modern fitting and facilities		(NPC, 1965)
4	Fourth Five-Year Plan 1970-1975	– Envisioned to develop first Master plan for tourist sector – Seeks to increase the day of stay of tourists – Seeks to search alternative of Kathmandu valley – Emphasis for increasing tourist facilities and construction of information centers		(NPC, 1970)
5	Fifth Five-Year Plan 1975-1980	– Emphasis for preservation of historical, culture and geographical attractions of the country		(NPC, 1975)
6	Sixth Five-Year Plan 1980-1985	– Emphasis on infrastructure effective, touristic spot eye catching, and encourage use of domestic products and involvement of people as provision of employment opportunity	– Acknowledged wildlife sanctuaries and national parks as tourist destination and planned	(NPC, 1980)

SN	Periodic Plan	Policy for tourism	Ecotourism in periodic plan	Source
7	Seventh Five-Year Plan 1985-1990	Acknowledged the need to develop tourism without any harm to the natural resources and the cultural heritage	– To develop tourism without any harm to the natural resources and the cultural heritage	(NPC, 1986)
8	Eighth Plan 1992-1997	– Aimed to involve and encouraged private and foreign investor in tourism industry.	- augmented the use of local materials and services in the tourism industry - Envisaged for the environmental plans - envisioned for the special care for the recovery on environmental pollution and ecological loss	(NPC, 1992)
9	Ninth Five Year Plan 1997-2002	Promote tourism as key employment sector Emphasis on expansion of tourism in villages	Focused on promotion of ecotourism through the development of model tourist villages, development of new trekking areas, maintenance of environmental quality conducive to tourism	(NPC, 1997)

SN	Periodic Plan	Policy for tourism	Ecotourism in periodic plan	Source
10	Tenth Year Plan (2002-2007)	Worked on the development of making Nepal as one of the major tourism destination	Gave special emphasis on the participatory forest management and development of eco-tourism by proper management of the forest, wild life and vegetation in the leasehold forest handed over to institution or entrepreneurs	(NPC, 2002)
11	Eleventh 3 year interim plan 2007/08-2009/10	Considered for Broadening the concept of tourism market by developing education tourism, health tourism, wildlife tourism, and agro eco-tourism, sports, mountaineering and trekking tourism, adventure and entertainment tourism, cultural tourism, seminar tourism, movie tourism, and religious tourism in addition to mountain tourism	Envisaged for generating Employment opportunity by managing eco-tourism in the conservation areas with the involvement of the private sector and non-governmental organizations.	(NPC, 2007)

SN	Periodic Plan	Policy for tourism	Ecotourism in periodic plan	Source
12	Twelfth plan (2011-2013)	Increased productivity of tourism sector	Develop balanced and coordinated program to integrate rangeland, biodiversity, climate change, agriculture for implementing ecotourism to address livelihood issues of nomads and forest dependent communities.	(NPC, 2011)
13	Thirteenth Plan (2013-2016)	Explored new areas and services for tourism To address institutional and policy level obstacles for tourism development To achieve annual growth rate of 8.6% in tourism sector	Developed legal basis for development of ecotourism	(NPC, 2013)

SN	Periodic Plan	Policy for tourism	Ecotourism in periodic plan	Source
14	Fourteenth Plan (2016-2019)	Enhancing partnership with general public and private sector to develop and enhance tourism related activities – To enhance public participation for rural tourism – To promote internal tourism for coping up with seasonality in tourism sector – To develop and diversify tourism sector and promote new and established destination in coordinated and unified manner	– State the need to enhance access and involvement of public in sustainable management of biodiversity and watershed areas, and re-construction and re-establishment of ecotourism areas. – Target to involve private sector to develop and design programs and infrastructures for ecotourism development in Rara and Khaptad Area	(NPC, 2016)

Ecotourism in Protected Area Management Plan

Management plans of all the protected areas have acknowledged the importance of ecotourism/tourism as an important source of funding for conservation. CNP has developed tourism plan for park and its buffer zone so as to preserve the biodiversity and cultural heritages within CNP (CNPO, 2017). Ecotourism has been identified as the major conservation strategy of the park. The policy envisions to enhance positive impacts of ecotourism and regulate negative one. Besides CNP has recognized the essence of an ecotourism model based partnership between the concerned stakeholders including tourism entrepreneurs, forest community buffer zone and national park (CNPO, 2017). Owing to the high diversity of avifauna in Koshitappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR), management plan of KTWR has envisioned to develop

nature based tourism focusing on avi-tourism. Management plan has acknowledged the essence of promotional activities, periodic monitoring of impact of tourism along with the need of local participation (KTWR, 2018). Krishnashar Conservation Area where conflict exists between the people and park authority due to the issue of force resettlement also envisioned importance of ecotourism around the park to reduce conflict and improve the livelihood of local people (Khanal & Chalise, 2010; KrCA, 2017). Banke National Park has prioritized the zonation of park areas for tourism activities and envisioned to monitor and regulate the activities within the protected area. Besides, promotion and institutional coordination activities are also highly acknowledged by the management plan of the park (BaNP, 2018). Plan has acknowledged community based ecotourism in buffer zones as a means of sustainable livelihoods. Parsa National Park has prioritized the development of tourism infrastructure considering the area as high potential for ecotourism development. The management plans of PNP also prioritized the essence of partnership with the concerned stakeholders to minimize negative impacts (PNP, 2018). As in case of all protected area, infrastructure development has been identified as essence for Sagarmatha National Park. Besides that, need to maintain delicate balance between conservation and development, diversification of ecotourism and local involvement are identified as potential areas to address (Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, 2016). Api Nampa Conservation area, owing to its pristine destinations, is identified with cultural heritage as the unique features it can offer to the tourists and is wished to promote tourism activities with minimal harm to the cultural and biological environment (GoN/MoFSC/DNPWC, 2015). In fact, all the management plans of protected areas reviewed have given high importance to the ecotourism activities as the potential source of funding to the park and as a means to develop harmonious relationship with the park authority and local people. But, most of the plans of the protected areas are identical to each other and failed to recognize the special products they can offer to the visitors. The dark side of the tourism are hardly recognized by those management plans (Buckley & Dodds, 2009; DeFries, Karanth, & Pareeth, 2010).

Conclusion

Tourist number in the protected area of Nepal was found to be increasing in a gradual fashion in response to the increasing international tourist flow, improved tourism infrastructure, relatively peaceful environment and increased charm of traveling among Nepalese youths. As the tourism industry is one of the important sector recognized by Nepalese economic sectors, different policies relating to tourism can be found. Despite having a high potential for ecotourism, policy and institutions guiding the ecotourism in Nepal are limited in scope and number. But, sectoral policies relating to Biodiversity (forest, wetland, and environment) and other policies

have acknowledged ecotourism within them. In addition to this, periodic plans of Nepal, species conservation action plans, protected area, and buffer zone management plans also guide ecotourism development in their respective fields. The contradiction between the government policies, some recognizing ecotourism as a separate niche while others failing to do so, is prominent. And in case of species action plans, provisions in most of them are too general, most of which just recognize ecotourism as a source of funding but fail to recognize the strength weakness, opportunities, and threats in implementing the ecotourism for species conservation. Similar is the situation with the protected area management plans. Regardless of the integration of ecotourism tourism and other sectoral policies, the government has acknowledged the fact that the sincere efforts have not been made to cash up the potentiality offered by the cultural and biological resources (GoN/MoFE, 2018). Potential benefits from ecotourism activities can be properly harnessed when existing tourism policies are backed up with practical plans and budgets. Also, separate institution and ecotourism policy are of urgent essence to address the issues of prioritization and specificity about ecotourism in existing policies and ease in promotion through the development of detailed action plans and strategies. In such plans and strategies prepared, allocation of specific responsibilities and specified timeframe, milestones, targets for facilitating the process of monitoring the progress made in the ecotourism sector and embracing adaptive management options are the ways forward.

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Information Technology in Tourism & Hospitality Industry: A Review of Ten Years' Publications

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Abstract

Tourism and hospitality industry today, is changing significantly with the application of information technology in its fundamental to strategic activities. It is driven by the competition inherent within the industry as well as the evolving innovative ideas and practices. So, to match the competitive environment and to catch the changing disruption, use of information technology is inevitable. This study reviews the previous research studies related to the information technology (IT) in tourism and hospitality industry with the aim of assessing the recent changes and applications of IT in the industry. Particularly, seven major tourism and hospitality journals published in the last 10 years are reviewed which included 64 research articles relevant to IT in tourism and hospitality industry. The content analysis of the articles is categorized into three major themes, namely: fundamental purpose, internal business process or process redesign and value creation & competitive advantage. The study showed that IT in tourism and hospitality industry is most commonly used in fulfilling information need, studying behavior & performance, managing operation process and innovation process. The use of IT in promotion & marketing, customer management process and value creation & competitive advantage is yet to be explored.

Keywords: Information Technology, Business Process, Innovation, Competitive Advantage

Introduction

Technology is changing so rapidly across the industries. Tourism and hospitality industry is also evolving faster with the disruption of information technologies. The development of modern technologies has introduced a series of changes in the tourism market that are manifested on both, tourism offer and tourism demand (Januszewska, M., Jaremen, D. E. & Nawrocka, E., 2015, p. 66); Buhalis & O'Connor, 2005, p. 7). Law and Jogaratnam (2005, p. 11) further suggested that It is important for hoteliers to proactively incorporate IT into their efforts to improve service quality. An ongoing improvement of IT knowledge for all hotel employees can help achieve this goal. However, hospitality traditionally lags other sectors in adopting information technology (Buick, 2003, p. 243).

Technologies have evolved towards mobile and web 2.0 applications which are going from market innovation to applications. Consumer websites are playing a major role in all PR and marketing activities to reach a large number of consumers around the globe. The significant role of social media in pre-trip travel planning, decision making, and for sharing tacit knowledge is increasing. The adoption of ICT is also offering tools for clustering and working together and for globalization and creation of a critical mass (Khatri, 2018a, p. 25). In this way, the adoption of IT has several effects in tourism by changing the competitive scope.

ICT systems are being widely used in these two interrelated sectors-tourism and hospitality. Generally, it is used to optimize the communication between travel service providers, travel agencies and travelers. So, it is being an obvious part of the tourism and hospitality industry that is adopted in different touristic sites, hotels, transportation and also by other associated service providers. Now the practice of e-tourism and digitalized tourism and hospitality activities is in the rise such as online reservation, flashpackers, travel blogs, e-tour guides, online platforms for services and so on.

This paper tries to review the recent changes, development and adoption of information technology in tourism and hospitality industry, particularly over the last one decade. So, the paper attempts to analyze the content of research articles published in the major tourism and hospitality research journals which focused on information technology. It will contribute to the previous researches on IT applications in tourism and hospitality by analyzing the research studies from the last 10 years to understand the recent development and applications of information technology.

Methodology

The paper analyzed research articles that were published by major high impact journals in tourism and hospitality industry. As the study intends to cover the research studies published in the last 10 years or the last one decade, only the research studies published in the period 2009-2018 are taken into consideration. First of all,

I used SAGEPUB, ScienceDirect and Wiley databases to find the 7 major travel and hospitality journals which included the list of *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Management*, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Tourism Management*, *Journal of Travel Research*, *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* and *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*. The preliminary search of keyword 'information technology' found in these journals resulted 2,123 articles. To be more specific, I refined the search by finding the term 'information technology (IT)' in the abstracts which resulted to 75 research articles. With the thorough content analysis of those 75 articles, only 63 are found to be more relevant to this study.

These articles are reviewed in the following part of the paper by categorizing them into different themes of use of information technology in tourism & hospitality industry. O'Connor and Murphy (2004) reviewed recent research on information technology in the hospitality industry and revealed three broad research areas: the Internet's effects on distribution; on pricing; and on consumer interactions. Similarly, Buhalis and Law (2008, p. 610) grouped the main themes of e-tourism research into: consumers and demand dimensions; technological innovation; and industry functions. These are used in most of the later publications on the subject. In this paper, going through a rigorous content analysis, I identified three main themes in recent use of information technology in tourism and hospitality industry, namely: fundamental purpose; internal business process (adopted from Kaplan & Norton's strategy map, 2004) or process redesign; and value creation & competitive advantage. The paper contributes to the literature; and also provides the implications with the suggestion of operational solutions for the industry.

Results & Analysis

In this section, the comprehensive review of research articles considered for the study is provided. The articles are studied by categorizing them into three thematic areas of use of information technology in tourism & hospitality industry.

Fundamental purpose

Initially, information technology is integrated in the tourism and hospitality industry to facilitate associated service activities. The fundamental activities in tourism and hospitality such as accommodation, transportation, communication etc. are supported by the information technology to benefits both the service providers and travelers. So, the fundamental purpose covered by information technology in the reviewed literature are discussed below:

Information need

The social media, mobile and information technology on tourism and hospitality is widely used for information search, sharing and exchange. As found from the

studies, such as tradeshows for information exchange (Han, H. Y. & Verma, R., 2014, p. 239); as the primary information source for both consumers and business on hotel service performance (Duan, W. et al., 2015, p. 282); role of SNSs' network externalities in sharing information (Kang, J. & Namkung, Y., 2015, p. 739); wikis in knowledge-based digital economy for collaborative learning (Benckendorff, P., 2009, p. 102); for information access in travel planning (Okazaki, S. et al., 2014, p. 191).

The advent of web 2.0 is changing fundamentally the tourist information search and destination choice process (Lo, I. S. et al., 2011, p. 725); new technologies offer easy access to a large amount of tourism information (Rodriguez, B. et al., 2012, p. 926); the increased availability of smartphone and mobile gadgets has transformed the tourism industry and will continue to enhance the ways in which tourists access information while traveling (Jung, T. et al., 2015, p. 75); search engine is one of the frequently used information sources while the PC is the most used device for both searching and booking (Murphy, H. C. et al., 2016, p. 44). Thus, a solution for the information need in the tourism and hospitality industry is fundamentally provided by information technology. The review found a significant amount of articles related to the fundamental purpose of information need.

Promotion & marketing

Tourism and hospitality industry is a competitive industry. There is a big competition within the industry, and many destinations are competing with each-others to attract the visitors (Khatri, 2018a, p. 15). In such a scenario, promotion & marketing of tourism & hospitality products and services is very important. The destination development, management and promotion are important marketing functions of tourism marketing (Khatri, 2018b, p. 70). Liu, S.Q. and Mattila, A.S. (2016, p. 162) studied the way to advertise technology-based hospitality services. Kim, J. et al. (2014, p. 340) indicated informational media (textual vs pictorial) have significant influences regarding the impact of psychological distance on travelers preferred promotional information. ICT enables multilateral communication patterns in destination marketing (Choi, Y. et al., 2017, p. 116); Lately, augmented reality (AR) has been increasingly adopted by various industries as a marketing tool (He, Z. et al., 2018, p. 127; Jung, T. et al., 2015, p. 75). ICTs application in promotion & marketing is yet to be exploited. The review study shows limited studies focused on promotion & marketing.

Behavior and Performance analysis

Information technology is used in many behavior and performance studies. For example, predicting browsers & purchasers of hotel websites (Wu, E. H. C. et al., 2012, p. 38); predicting employees' adoption behavior of new ICT (Cheng, S. & Cho, V., 2010, p. 488); producing psychological effects on a tourist's perceptions (Choi, Y. et al., 2017, p. 116); determining the tourist activities and the temporal preferences for

each activity at different destinations with new type of data called venue referenced social media data (VR-SMD) (Vu, H. Q. et al., 2018,); capturing the movements and travel patterns of tourists at a large scale (Vu, H. Q. et al., 2017b, p. 883); examining the determinants of purchasing flights from low-cost carrier websites (Escobar-Rodriguez, T. & Carvajal-Trujillo, E., 2014, p. 70); finding the online purchase intention of rural tourism services (Martin, H. S. & Herrero, A., 2012, p. 341) and studying usage behavior of hotel information system (Kim, T. et al., 2010, p. 710).

The study of peoples' behavior with information technology seems as an increasing phenomenon in tourism and hospitality industry. It is also revealed by Xiang, Zheng et al. (2014, p. 511) who studied travelers use of the web for trip planning and how they have adopted the internet over time. Similarly, Ying, T. et al. (2014, p. 16) analyzed the networking patterns of different tourism stakeholders in cyberspace. Caber, M. et al. (2012, p. 106) classified the attributes of a tour operator's extranet system in terms of its asymmetric influence on its user (travel agency sales representatives) satisfaction. Sanders, D. & LeClus, M. (2009, p. 94) evaluated tourism marketing students' expectations and experiences of lecture podcasting. No, E. & Kim, J. K. (2013, p. 534) investigated the determinants of travelers' adoption of travel information on smartphone which showed usefulness, ease of use, social influence and satisfaction with travel websites.

Internal business process or process redesign

Internal business process includes many processes operating in an organization at the same time, each creating value for the products or services. The change in the process to optimize the value is called process redesign.

Operation management process

Berne, C. et al. (2012, p. 205) indicated that the restructuring process of the tourism sector and of the distribution channels caused by Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) may have altered the power positions in the channels. Leung, R. & Law, R. (2012, p. 25) examined information technology applications, the adoption of electronic data interchange among hotel systems, and management support for IT departments which have significant effect in operation process. Similarly, Noone, B. M., & Coulter, R. C. (2012, p. 122) studied modern robotics technologies which can augment workers' cognitive capacity in addition to replacing direct labor. Web based self-service technology (SST) in airline industry (Lee, L. Y., 2013, p. 162) is also affecting the operating process of the industry.

Customer management process

The emergence of the internet has changed the traditional relationship between hotels and travel agents as business partners (Lee, H. A. et al., 2012, p. 95). CRM

is widely used in the tourism industry, with loyalty programs keeping customers returning and travel websites yielding a large volume of e-transactions (Vogt, C. A., 2010, p. 356). Tourist kit which creates customer loyalty by utilizing smart technology aimed at collecting accurate tourist information (Angeloni, S., 2016, p. 187). ICT may offer support to establishing hospitality networks that shape a physical and virtual environment for the delivery of services to developing client demands (Breukel, Ad & Go, F. M., 2009, p. 184); smart tourism is regarded as an individual tourist support system within the context of information services (Li, Y. et al., 2017, p. 293). However, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, when addressed by using emerging Big Data techniques for efficient client profiling, is still in its early stages (Talon-Ballesterro, P. et al., 2018, p. 187).

Innovation Process

Rapid technological change is leading to the introduction of new ways of providing services in the tourism industry (Arana, J. E. et al., 2015, p. 772). E-capability of visitor information centers (D'Ambra, J. & Mistilis, N., 2009, p. 206; Lyu, S. O. & Hwang, J., 2015, p. 54); water use technology of a destination (Sun, Ya-Yen & Hsu, Ching-Mai, 2018, p. 1); use of registered travelers' biometric systems in air travel as an innovativeness and security (Morosan, C., 2011, p. 436); e-lienation as a specific form of alienation in ICT-enabled tourism (Tribe, J. & Mkono, M., 2017, p. 105); geo-based technology in place experiences (Tussyadiah, I. P. & Zach, F. J., 2012, p. 780); usefulness of podcast tours as an interpretative media (Kang, M. & Gretzel, U., 2012, p. 440); tourists' mobility using GPS (Zheng, W. et al., 2017); Aerial digital imagery in combination with Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data and geographic information system (GIS) mapping and analysis (Yang, B. et al., 2012, p. 840); and so on are the recently adopted innovative process in the tourism and hospitality industry as found by this review study.

Paris, C. M., (2012, p. 1094) provides some interesting insights into contemporary backpacker culture and the continuing convergence of physical travel with information and communication technologies. Divisekera, S. & Nguyen, V. K. (2018, p. 157) studied the innovation inputs in tourism and found one major input is information technology. Aldebert, B. et al. (2011, p. 1204) highlighted the intensity of innovation activity in tourism and gave evidence about the rapid evolution of the tourism industry as well as the substantial impact of ICT on this evolution. In one study, Liu, J. & Nijkamp, P. (2018, p. 1) showed that though the inbound tourism may be a new and powerful driving force for regional innovation, while the effect of inbound tourism on technological innovation appears to be weaker than that on social innovation.

Regulatory and social process

Social and regulatory process emphasizes the social, environmental and legal part of the business. In many cases, information technologies facilitate the compliance to social and regulatory process. Fuchs, M. et al. (2009, p. 165) indicated that the majority of today's information and communication technology (ICT) impact studies disregard infrastructural, organizational and environmental factors typically responsible for successful e-business adoption. Use of e-participation for sustainable cultural tourism management is yet to be utilized (Chiabai, A. et al., 2011, p. 35). In this regards, a study revealed that satellite images or remote sensing data enable the investigation of eco-environmental changes (Wu, S. & Chen, Y., 2016, p. 23). Sharing practices through social media appear as valuable articulations of sociability and emotional support (Munar, A. M. & Jacobsen, JKS, 2014, p. 46). The study finds limited studies related to this issue.

Value Creation and Competitive Advantage

Value creation is associated with the activities by which a firm is able to increase the value of goods or services to consumers. Competitive advantage enables the firm to create superior value for its customers that of customers get from its customers.

Value creation

Value is created by lowering cost such as Diaz-Chao, A. et al. (2015, p. 862) analyzed new co-innovative sources of firm labor productivity or by adopting differentiation as Yepes, M. F. (2014, p. 58) studied the restaurant tablet menus with color, light and other graphic features which showed a significant correlation to its perceived influence on food choices and also for attractiveness ranking. An appropriate diffusion of the ICTs in this sector can improve the social and economic impacts demonstrate how these factors affect the capacity of markets and destinations to meet and interact effectively in a global tourism environment (Minghetti, V. & Buhalis, D., 2009, p. 267). Cabiddu F. et al. (2013, p. 86) suggested that operators that achieve superior performance in terms of appropriating value do so because of superior strategic fit with the objectives of the value co-creation initiative, synergy with other members of the network, and IT readiness to conduct business electronically.

Competitive advantage

Lin, S. (2016, p. 126) stated Current application service provider (ASP) is an emerging type of information technology outsourcing service that offer a comprehensive of information technology services for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to obtain information capabilities and maintain competitive advantage. Similarly, airline companies have increasingly employed electronic commerce (eCommerce) for strategic purposes, most notably in order to achieve

long-term competitive advantage and global competitiveness by enhancing customer satisfaction as well as marketing efficacy and managerial efficiency (Kim, H. et al., 2009, p. 266); the growth in digital channel adoption has allowed airports to gain competitive advantage through innovative offerings to passengers (Straker, K. & Wrigley, C., 2018, p. 82). Number of visitors is another reason to increase the profitability and competitive advantage of the destination. So, Taiwanese National Park Headquarters employ advanced information technologies to attract travellers, researchers, and other visitors (Tsai, W. et al., 2010, p. 936). The discourse in the digital age is directed to competitive advantage by which tourism and hospitality industry can sustain and attract increasing tourist flows.

Discussion & Conclusion

Since there is competition prevalent in the tourism industry as well, adapting the industry's offerings to best match the changing tourism patterns with new marketing strategies is at the central of gaining success in the marketplace (Khatri, 2018a, p. 15). In this regard, information and communication technologies (ICTs) play a significant role whether by fulfilling information need for planning and strategies or by creating value with business process management & redesign. Versichele, M. et al. (2014, p. 67) indicated that the rapid evolution of information and positioning technologies, and their increasing adoption in tourism management practices allows for new and challenging research avenues.

The post-modern world has witnessed a revolution in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) especially in the realm of smart tourism where it advocates talk eagerly of the internet of everything (Tribe, J. & Mkono, M., 2017, p. 105). MacKay, K. & Vogt, C. (2012, p. 1380) stated wireless access to Internet became more common and increasingly IT was brought or available on a trip and the decision of tourists to be off or on the Internet while vacationing became more pronounced. Similarly, the increased availability of smartphone and mobile gadgets has transformed the tourism industry and will continue to enhance the ways in which tourists access information while traveling (Jung, T., Chung, N. & Leue, M. C., 2015, p. 75). Social network sites (SNSs), instant messaging, online photo albums and personal blogs were the most popular media used (Lo, I. S. et al., 2011, p. 725).

The study showed that information technology (IT) is most commonly used for the fundamental purpose of information need and behavior & performance study. Limited study focused on promotion and marketing strategies with information technology. When studying the internal business process design, information technology is found highly used in operation management process and innovation process. Some studies focused on customer management process but very few addressed social and regulatory process of the industry. It is seen that the use of information technology in

value creation and competitive advantage is increasing. Since it is a new area of study for tourism and hospitality industry, the IT in this regard is yet to be studied further to exploit the full potential of technologies.

The review study has some limitations, such that it includes only seven journals in the area published between the period 2009 to 2018 (last 10 years); and only the English research articles are included. This study also focuses on the adoption and diffusion of information technologies in creating value and gaining competitive advantage. So, the future research study could be directed in the realm of value creation and competitive advantage with ICTs in tourism and hospitality industry.

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Dark Tourism: A Preliminary Study of Barpak and Langtang as Seismic Memorial Sites of Nepal

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'In the minds of many tourism forms of life, we are in death' (Seaton, 1999: 132; in Muzaini, Teo, & Yeoh, 2007, p. 28)

Abstract

Dark tourism is about more than a simple fascination with death, it is also a powerful lens that allows contemporary life and death to be witnessed and relationships with broader societies and culture recognized (Stone, 2013; Allman, 2017). Information about disasters and their effects to the human being draws attention to the people whoever interested to death and disaster and play very important role to attract and motivate the visitors to those places. So far, disaster tourism is also popular as dark tourism because historical and cultural identity is devastated and violent death of a large number of people occurs in the seismic memorial sites.

Individuals who are participating in disaster tour are very much curious to see the impact of disaster. This article focuses on Dark Tourism: A Preliminary Study of Barpak and Langtang as Seismic Memorial Site of Nepal. Barpak was the epicentre of earthquake 2015 which caused huge suffering in the western and middle part of Nepal. Langtang is also the place which was doubly devastated. The earthquake struck, landslides and avalanches that destroyed the settlements. Through three data sources: document review, interview and direct observation, this article assesses theoretical understanding of the dark tourism, the society and culture of the seismic memorial sites, the motivation of the visitors, changing trend of visitors in Barpak and Langtang over pre, during and post-Earthquake 2015 and prospects and challenges of dark tourism in Barpak and Langtang. The study finds that the motivation and benefit to visit Barpak and Langtang are; black spot, history & heritage, cultural values, heritage & identity, survivors' guilt, death and dying, disaster and identity, acts of memory, people's resiliency, empathy, remembrance, education, entertainment and edutainment which are very much important in promoting dark tourism in Barpak and Langtang.

Keywords: Dark tourism, seismic memorial sites, commercialization of grief, motivation, darventure

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, reason why the world tourism landscape has been changing in the last decades (Seabra, Abrantes, & Karstenholz, 2014; in Fonseca, Seabra, & Silva, 2016, p. 1). The concept of 'pleasant diversion in pleasant places' is changing and broadening into new market demanding, more complex and even unusual (Wight, 2006; in Fonseca et al., 2006).

The questions are how dark tourism studies got introduced in the academia? What is the significance of dark tourism and how does it defer from other types of tourism? How could it be promoted in the new places where dark tourism is viable? The pupose of this study is to advance knowledge and understand the phenomenon of dark tourism.

Seaton (1996, p. 237) refers to death-related tourist activity as 'thanatourism'/ 'thanatoptic tradition-contemplation of death,' by suggesting that dark tourism or thanatourism is essentially a behavioral phenomenon, defined by the tourist's motives as opposed to the particular characteristics of the attraction or destination, and thanatourism is not an absolute form ; there exists a 'continuum of intensity' dependent upon the motive(s) for visiting a site and the extent to which the interest

in death is general or person specific. Thus, visits to disaster sites such as Ground Zero are a 'purer' form of thanatourism (as long as the visitor was not related to a victim) than, say, visiting the grave of a dead relative.

Thanatourism (Seaton, 1996) or dark tourism (Lennon & Foley, 2000) will also include natural disaster tourism (Rucińska, 2016), disaster tourism (Fonseca, Seabra & Silva, 2015) and post-disaster tourism (Biran et al., 2014). Our appetite for consuming death is associated to much older fear to be killed. This, of course, raises interesting questions: Is thanatourism a cultural entertainment or a new type of repressed sadism? Why are people being captivated by the disaster and suffering of others represents one of the most striking aspects of dark tourism. Even though a countless studies have focused on mass death as a form of cultural entertainment for West in tourism and hospitality fields (Lennon & Foley, 2000; in O'Rourke, 1988; Seaton, 2000; in Korstanje, 2012, pp. 56-57).

'Dark Tourism' was first coined by Foley and Lennon (1996a, 1996b) in a special issue of the *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, their analysis relates primarily to '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). The initial focus was upon the identification of a new type of tourism destination and tourism product that was quite different from the assumed pleasure or enrichment conveyed by traditional tourism consumption. However, the work was not the first to draw attention to the phenomenon of 'darkness' in tourism. In 1989, Uzzell (1989) discussed hot interpretation of war and conflict sites (see Sharpley, 2009). In addition, Rojek (1993) discussed the emergence of 'black spots' which "refer to the commercial developments of grave sites and sites in which celebrities or large number of people have met with sudden and violent death" (p.136; in Raine, 2013, p. 249). Another early reflection on dark tourism includes Seaton's reference to 'thanatourism' (1996, p. 15) and Tunbridge & Asworth (1996, p. 114; in Raine, 2013, p. 243) and introducing the term 'horror tourism' (p. 129; in Raine, 2013) which they explored in terms of heritage management. In the mid-1990s, three new terms appeared in the academic tourism literature denoting dissonance at contested heritage sites, including places of atrocities, and the tourist's apparent fascination with death and tragedy: *dissonant heritage*, *thanatourism*, and *dark tourism* (Hartmann, 2018, p. 496). However, the focus on the relationship between sites associated with war, death and atrocity was included in heritage tourism context which explains 'dissonant heritage' (Tunbridge & Asworth, 1996) 'sensitive heritage' (Frew, 2012), 'contested heritage' (Naef & Ploner, 2016) and 'industrial heritage' and ghost town (Tang, 2018a).

So far as dissonance is concerned, Ashworth and Tunbridge (1996) argued that dissonance is intrinsic to all forms of heritage – whatever the scale, context, or locale. Dissonance is implicit in the commodification processes, in the creation

of place products, and in the content of messages which may in some cases lead to disinheritance. Furthermore, they discuss visitor motives and management strategies for atrocity sites, elaborating on how these motives and strategies differ between three groups: the *victims*, the *perpetrators*, and the (more or less uninvolved or innocent) *bystanders*. For their discussion they chose the example of the Nazi concentration camps in Central and Eastern Europe. In separate publications, Krakow-Kazimierz, the former Jewish neighbourhood in Krakow, which was featured in the 1993 movie *Schindler's List* (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996; in Hartmann, 2018, pp. 496-497).

As far as the meaning of dark tourism is concerned, many different scholars have defined dark tourism in different way. Early definitions of dark tourism, as mentioned by Light (2017b), defined the phenomenon as 'the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified death and disaster sites' (Foley & Lennon, 1996). Similarly, the related concept of thanatourism was defined as 'travel to a location wholly, or partially, motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death, particularly, but not exclusively, violent death' (Seaton, 1996). As many others have pointed out, these two concepts had different emphases: dark tourism was defined by a supply led perspective, while thanatourism adopted a demand-led approach (Seaton, 2009, p. 523). However, both definitions placed death -in particular, human death - squarely at the centre of this form of tourism. More recent conceptions of dark tourism (although not thanatourism), though, are rather broader. One influential definition states that dark tourism is 'the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre' (Stone, 2006, p.146). While reviewing about dark tourism, Light (2017) compiled altogether 15 definitions defined by different scholars who studied in between 1996 to 2017. Overall, Light (2017) categorized the whole definitions into five different categories: definitions based on practices (the act of visiting particular types of place), tourism at particular types of place, motivations, form of experience and heritage. Out of 15 definitions of dark tourism, 7 definitions incorporate 'disaster' (Foley & Lennon (1997, p.155; Preece & Price, 2005, p.192; Johnston, 2015, p.20; Foley & Lennon, 1996, p.198; Lennon & Foley, 1999, p. 46; Johnston & Mandelartz, 2016: v); Dann & Seaton, 2001, p.24; in Light, 2017, p.282) whereas the other eight definitions defined by Tarlow (2005, p. 48), Stone (2006, p. 146), Robb (2009, p. 51), Seaton (1996, p. 240), Best (2007, p. 38), Ashworth (2008, p. 234), Stone (2016, p. 23) have focused on other attractions of dark tourism.

Changing definitions of dark tourism and thanatourism based on disaster

Definitions based on practices (the act of visiting particular types of place)	
Dark tourism: "the visitation to any site associated with death, disaster and tragedy in the twentieth century for remembrance, education or entertainment"	Foley & Lennon (1997:155)

Dark tourism: “travel to sites associated with death, disaster, acts of violence, tragedy, scenes of death and crimes against humanity”	Preece & Price (2005:192)
Thanatourism: “a form of travel where tourists encounter places associated with death, disaster and the macabre”	Johnston (2015:20)
Definitions based on tourism at particular types of place	
Dark tourism: “the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified death and disaster sites”	Foley & Lennon (1996:198)
Dark tourism: “Tourism associated with sites of death, disaster, and depravity”	Lennon & Foley (1999: 46)
Thanatourism: “a form of tourism where tourists visit sites primarily associated with death and disaster”	Johnston & Mandelartz (2016: v)
Definitions based on heritage	
Thanatourism: “heritage staged around attractions and sites associated with death, acts of violence, scenes of disaster and crimes against humanity”	Dann & Seaton (2001:24)

Source: Light (2017, p.282)

Generally, there are two distinct bases for analysis is evident in the emergent work of dark tourism. On one hand, Seaton explores dark tourism or thanatourism as a behavioral phenomenon, pointing to the existence of ‘dark tourist’ or ‘thanatourist’. Thus, for Seaton, thanatourism is a form of tourism consumption. On the other hand, significant attention is paid to dark sites or attractions- the objects of dark tourism consumption- in general, and their definition, interpretation and management in particular. In either case, however, little attempt is made to delve beneath the surface of these issues, to explore differing approaches to and meanings of dark tourism’s demand and supply. Seaton and Lennon (2004; in Farmaki; 2013, p. 282) identified two main motives related to dark tourism:

- Schadenfreude (i.e. the pleasure of seeing others’ misfortune and;
- Thanatopsis (i.e. the contemplation of death). Originally, the term was coined by William Cullen Bryant (1948) to describe a nostalgia to see life through the eyes of death. It signalled the need to recycle life through death and vice versa. In other terms, we are not born to live, we are dying while growing. The neologism comes from the Greek word *thanatos*, which means death (Korstanje, 2017, p. 59).

Dark tourism is widely used as a portmanteau expression to encompass the use of heritage sites with a controversial history and sites associated with death, disaster, and

the seemingly macabre (Lennon & Foley, 2000; in Tang, 2018, p.424). Tourism scholars have endeavored to define and describe death-related tourist activity as 'thanatourism' (Dann, 1994; Seaton, 1996), 'black-spot tourism' (Rokek, 1993), 'morbid tourism' (Blom, 2000), 'grief tourism' (Trotta, 2006) and 'atrocious tourism' (Ashworth, 2002), phoenix tourism (Causevic & Lynch, 2011), natural disaster tourism (Miller, 2008; in Ashworth & Isaac, 2015, p.3), disaster tourism (Antick, 2013), hot-spot tourism (Pelton, 2003; in Ashworth & Isaac, 2015, p.3), holocaust tourism (Buntman, 2008), prison tourism (Strange & Kempa, 2003; In Fonseca, Seabra & Silva, 2016), cemetery tourism (Abranja, 2012; in Fonseca, Seabra & Silva, 2016), ghost tourism (Davies, 2007; in Fonseca, Seabra & Silva, 2016), battlefield tourism (Henderson, 1997; in Seaton, 2012, p.522), conflict tourism (Ryan & Kohli, 2004) (involving visits to places which are under threat) and produce a typology comprising plantation tourism, suicide tourism and doomsday tourism (Trotta, 2006; in Simone-Charteris, Boyd & Burns, 2013, p.63). This study is based on two seismic sites of Nepal under the theme of dark tourism.

Moreover, increasing academic attention has been paid over the last two decades to the phenomenon of dark tourism in general (e.g. Johnston & Mandelartz 2015; Lennon & Foley 2000; Sharpley & Stone 2009; Stone 2013; in Sharpley & Wright, 2018, p. 337), including disasters (Coats and Ferguson 2013; Gould & Lewis 2007; in Sharpley & Wright, 2018, p. 337) and motives for participating in dark tourism in particular (e.g., Isaac & Çakmak 2014; Raine 2013; Seaton 1996; in Sharpley & Wright, 2018, p. 337). However, few attempts have been made to explore the role of the media, specially the news media, in dark tourism and, specially, tourism to places of disaster (Sharpley & Wright, 2018, p. 337).

There is a growth in number of visitors to dark tourism sites in recent years. For example, in 2010, nearly 8,00,000 tourists visited the Jewish Museum Berlin, a record since its opening in 2001 (Plocki & Plagemann, 2011; in Isaac & Çakmak, 2014, p.164), while the Anne Frank House and Alcatraz Prison (Rheenen, 2011; in Isaac & Çakmak, 2014) have received more than one million visitors annually. Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia has more than four million visitors, and perhaps the most iconic dark tourism site, the Auschwitz Concentration Camp reached another record number of visitors in 2011, with almost 1, 400,000 (Auschwitz- Birkenau Memorial and Museum, 2011; in Isaac & Çakmak, 2013, pp.164-165).

In developing a typology of dark tourism consumption, Sharpley (2005) draws upon Holt's (1995) earlier typology of consumption practice in which four 'metaphors' of consumption are proposed:

- Dark tourism as experience: may be consumed in order to give phenomenological meaning to tourist's own social existence by visiting

war cemeteries/memorials; paler fantasy; battlefields and other war related museums or attractions.

- Dark tourism as play: Representing 'paler' experiences, consumption as play focuses upon the shared, communal consumption of dark tourism sites or experiences. Death of an individual or group of people is initial driver for collective celebration, remembrance or mourning. Thus, dark tourism becomes pilgrimage, or journey followed by the experience of 'communitas'.
- Dark tourism as integration: Two shades of dark tourism as integration. On the one hand with evident links to the notion of consumption as fantasy, tourists may integrate themselves into the object of consumption, the fascination not being in death itself but in broader context within which death occurs. On the other hand, the darkest form is where tourists seek to integrate themselves with death, either through witnessing violent or untimely deaths (travelling, for example to the scene of disasters or murders) or, in the extreme perhaps, travelling in the knowledge or expectation of death.
- Dark tourism as classification: In the context of dark tourism, status may be sought through undertaking forms of travel that are dangerous for the tourist. This form of consumption falls towards the paler end of dark tourism continuum and demonstrates that fascination with death may often not be the principal factor driving such experiences. If, as Sharpley (2005) proposes, there exists a 'continuum of purpose' of supply of dark tourism attractions, varying from 'accidental' supply to supply that is directly intended to exploit, for profit or otherwise, people's 'thanatopsis'.

Four Shades of Dark Tourism: A Typological Model

Sharpley (2009) attempted to offer a more holistic view of dark tourism by incorporating supply and demand factors. Specifically, he establishes a link between the site's attributes and experience sought by tourists and proposed four shades of dark tourism:

- Black tourism, describing a pure dark experience;
- Pale tourism, referring to minimal interest in death;
- Grey tourism demand, describing visitation to dark sites motivated by fascination;
- Grey tourism supply, which refers to sites developed to exploit death by attracting tourists with little inherent interest in the sites.

Some prominent instances are Miles (2002), distinguishing between dark, darker and darkest sites, and Stone (2006) proposed spectrum, ranging from lightest to darkest sites. Yet this approach has been criticised as leading to an increasing dilution

and fuzziness of the notion of dark tourism as it arbitrarily combines markedly diverse visitor experiences (Sharpeley, 2009).

Seven Dark Suppliers

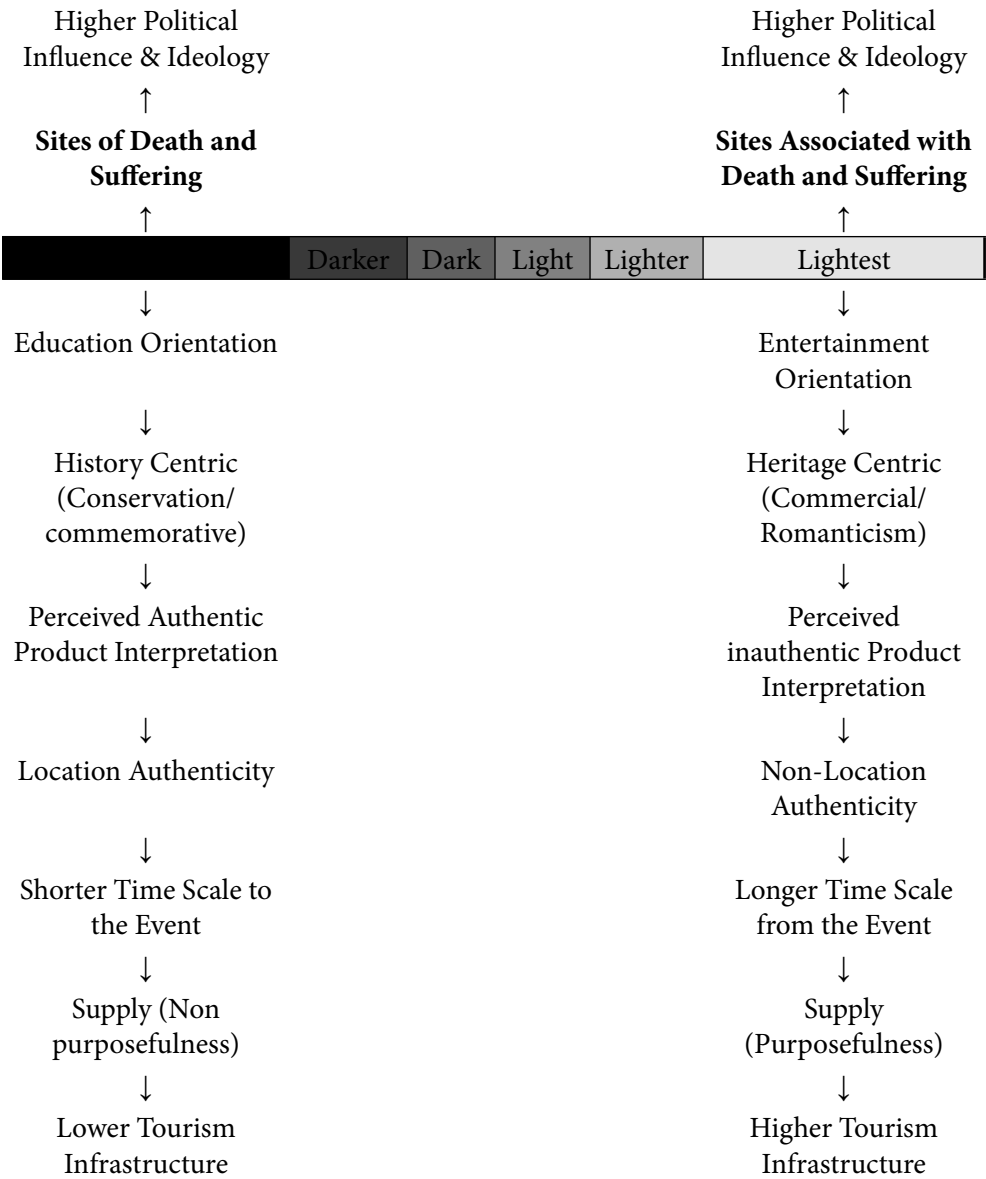
Stone's (2006) seven typological products enrooted in the curiosity of death which transmit a set of different messages to society: a) dark-fun factories (entertainment based on simulated suffering of others), b) dark exhibitions (learning opportunities), c) dark dungeons (penal codes and reinforcement of law), d) dark resting places (romantised sites of commemoration), e) dark shrines (secondary or peripheral sites of remembrance for victims), f) dark conflict sites (commoditization of battles and wars), g) dark camps of genocide (sites where genocide has been practiced). Every typology of dark sites encompasses a specific discourse transmitted once and once again to a wider range of tourists who manifest variety in their expectances.

According to Biran et al. (2011), dark tourism motivations could be grouped into four factors, namely: 1. "see it to believe it" (participants' interest in seeing the site out of a need to believe that such atrocities really happened); 2. "Learning and understanding" (participants interest in being educated about Second World War and the atrocities that took place in Auschwitz); 3. "famous death tourist attractions" (general interest in sites of death, willingness to see the real site, and feel empathy with the victims); 4. "emotional heritage experience" (the desire to connect to his/her heritage and have an emotional experience). Preece and Price (2001; in Ryan & Kohli, 2006,p.214) in a study of Port Arthur, proposed, based in interviews with visitors, three main themes of visitation, these beings a) learning ; b) historical interest and c) a fascination with the abnormal or bizarre.

Dark-light Spectrum Scale

The spectrum identifies different categories of visitors identified at the burial grounds, ranging from "darkest" to "lightest" tourists (Raine, 2013, p. 242).Stone (2006, p.146) points out that certain sites may be darker than others due to their characteristics, perceptions and product traits. Using his model each dark tourism product can be described and analyzed. According to darkest-lightest framework of supply (Stone), the continuum represents different levels of contact with the dark provided by dark tourism sites. On the left side of the image we can see the darkest tourism that concerns the site where death and suffering have actually occurred like Auschwitz (Poland) the world's most dark destination, symbolizing the genocide of thousands of Jews at this level the main goal to educate tourists about the place/event. On the right side of the color scale we are able to see the lightest tourism which is performed at sites merely associated with death, and therefore need to possess excellent touristic infrastructure created with the intention of being attractions and entertain the tourists, one example is the Dracula Park (Fonseca et al., 2016).

Figure: Dark-light spectrum scale



Source: Stone, 2006, p. 150

Based on Stone's spectrum scale, cemeteries lie on the darker end of the spectrum. They are sights of death, giving educational, history-centric information and interpretations of the past. Furthermore, they are unstaged, authentic sites with no

purposeful supply, providing low-level infrastructure. However, there is much more to cemeteries than darkness as many cemeteries around the world prove.

Motivation

Curiosity is an important push travel motivation for thanatourism. According to Crompton (1979), curiosity is a synonym of novelty, and a search for new experience, which results from actually seeing something rather than simply vicariously knowing about it. A sense of “ought to see” initiates the selection of a destination. Likewise, curiosity about the hidden features of punishment and extraordinary disasters pushes people to travel and pulls the curious from around the world to dark sites (Strange & Kempa, 2003). Blom (2000) suggests four similar motivations to visit dark sites:

- tourists seek to experience something different than happens in their everyday lives;
- there is competitive demand in the tourism market to create new and unique attractions;
- tourists are searching for “catharsis” (p. 34), which can be achieved by confronting unpleasant events to which we have no personal or individual connection; and
- the media exposes us to new places and people we would not be aware of under other circumstances, thus generating interest in visiting such sites (Raine, 2013,p. 243).

Authenticity

In the study of dark tourism, Sharpley and Stone (2009) follow MacCannell's concept and they write ... the tourist as pilgrim seeking to challenge the discontinuity of modernity is fundamental to understanding the need for an emotive, affective or authentic component in dark heritage interpretation. The consumption of dark tourism sites or attractions may be driven by the need not only to remember or commemorate the death/ suffering of others, but also to confront and contextualize it within the individual tourist's own social world. Thus, Sharpley and Stone emphasis to show the link between the consumption of experience of the site and its subsequent contribution to identity creation. As considered elsewhere, the consumption of goods and services in general, and of tourism experiences in particular, is related to their social significance (Munt, 1994; in Sharpley& Stone, 2009, p. 117).

Interpretation

‘Interpretation is an essential component of visitor experiences at attractions’ (Moscardo & Ballantyne, 2008, p. 237; in Sharpley & Stone, 2009, p. 113). It provides the link between an attraction and its visitors it is the process by which a place,

an event, history, a building, a collection of items or more generally what may be referred to as heritage is accorded meaning which is then communicated by one means or another to the visitor. Interpretation plays a key role in this process, acting as a 'filter' to emotional responses to a dark site or attraction. On the one hand, appropriate interpretation may enhance the visitor experience and fulfil the need for understanding and meaning. On the other hand, interpretation that misleads, trivializes, commercializes the experiences may act as a barrier.

Emotion

Emotion can be defined as felt short-lived responses to external stimuli (Reeve, 2008; in Asworth & Isaac, 2015, p. 4). Emotions are ubiquitous in tourism (Aho, 2001; in Prayag, Hosany, Muskat, & Chiappa, 2015, p. 1), play a central role in defining memorable experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011), and are the most relevant component of affect to the travel industry (Mitas et al., 2012; in Prayag et al., 2015, p. 1). According to Tarlow (2005), there are four basic emotions which interact on a dark tourist psychological state: insecurity, gratitude, humility and superiority.

Ethical Dilemma of Dark Tourism

Significant debate surrounds on whether is it ethical to develop, promote or offer the dark sites for touristic consumption or not i.e. viewing platform at Ground Zero, enabling voyeuristic visitors to stand alongside those mourning the loss of loved ones (Lisle, 2004). The rights of those whose death is commoditized through dark tourism represent an important ethical dimension deserving consideration. Dark tourism in some cases, result in the transformation of violence into one more attraction, wedged in between more typical tourist activities. When atrocity becomes a recreational attraction, visitors are themselves inflicting further violence as they search out unique and authentic experiences. Ethically one must question whether tours undertaken in the name of social justice or global awareness are actually experienced as such or whether they might instead work to mask the recreational, voyeuristic allure of violence. At times dark tourism can produce "recreational grief" (West, 2004, p.11; in Robb, 2009, p.55) a form of grief in which mourning the deaths or afflictions of others becomes an enjoyable past time. In terms of supply- there has been increasing number of people keen to promote or profit from 'dark' events as tourist attractions. At the same time, there is evidence of greater willingness on the part of tourist to visit dark attractions.

Criticism of Dark Tourism

Writing about "Reconceptualization dark tourism, Biran and Poria (2012) point out that the "dark" adjective need not necessarily directly equate with death. Dark tourism can be and umbrella term. It can link to the viewing of suffering, to dark play, to schadenfreude, and to mediation upon mortality- often through the sublime (Skinner, 2018, p.141).

Although dark tourism research prompts important discussions about the intersections of touring and death, Sharpley (2005: 216) rightly notes that 'dark tourism literature remains eclectic and theoretically fragile, raising more questions than its answers'. Likewise, Keil (2005: 481; in Bowman & Pezzullo, 2009, p. 188) argues that '[the dark tourism] phenomenon has so far been inadequately described, and lacks a theoretical relationship to wider studies of violence and by-standing'. Even so, many who have questioned the term thus far have exacerbated the problem by trying to identify different 'shades' of or umbrella terms for 'darkness' without challenging the term itself (e.g. Miles, 2002; Strange & Kempa, 2003; Sharpley, 2005: 224–26; Stone, 2006; Bowman & Pezzullo, 2009, p. 188). Lennon & Foley (2000: 11) offer no explanation for their choice of terms and state that they 'do not wish to enter into any philosophical debates' over its use. However, the negative valence of the term is unmistakable in western cultures: 'dark' is understood as a place devoid of light.

Disaster Tourism

In course of studying disaster tourism, first and foremost one should understand the meaning of disaster. According to Oliver-Smith and Hoffman (2002, p.4), "A disaster is process/ event combining a potentially destructive agent/force from the natural, modified, or built environment and a population in a socially and economically produced condition of vulnerability resulting in a perceived disruption of the customary relative satisfactions of individual and social needs for physical survival, social order and meaning".

Information about disasters and their effects draws human attention and also play an important informative and education role. Individuals who participate in this type of tours are typically curious to see the results of the disasters and often travel as part of an organized group (Fonseca et al., 2016, p.2). One of the oldest disaster tourism sites are Pompeii and Herculaneum, where tourist can learn about the history and aspects of the Vesuvius' volcanic activity and experience the unique attraction of seeing casts of human remains preserved in volcanic ash (Ruchinska & Lechowicz, 2014; in Fonseca et al., 2016, p. 2).

Although disaster tourism may be considered as a particular form of dark tourism, it is 'analytically distinct' (Rojek 1997, p. 63; in Sharpley & Wright, 2018,339) from it in a number of ways. First, disaster tourism sites are typically temporary; they attract 'disaster tourists' who come to witness the consequence of the event only for as long as those consequences are in evidence. Once that evidence has been removed, a site can no longer be conceptualized as a disaster tourism destination (Sharpley & Wright, 2018, 339).

'Disaster tourism' is becoming an increasingly pervasive feature within the contemporary dark touristic consumption (Antick 2013; Faulkner and Vikulov 2001;

Chew & Jahari, 2014). However, consumption of dark tourism attraction related to seismic memorials is highly controversial; and the continuing popularity of and fascination with such sites remains a subject of dark touristic debate within social, cultural, historical, and political contexts (Lennon & Foley 2000; Sharpley & Stone 2009; in Tang, 2018, p.423). Yet, less discourse has been given to the critical issue of dark sites related to seismic hazards, a subset of the totality of dark tourist attractions. In recent years many memorial sites regarding seismic hazards including earthquake, tsunami, and volcanic eruption have been established, and at least the epicenter of major earthquake have been marked, such as San Francisco Fire Dept. Museum in America, after the Great San Francisco Earthquake of 1906; Hokudan Earthquake Memorial Park on the west coast of Awaji Island in Japan, following the Kobe Earthquake of 1995; Wenchuan Earthquake Memorial Museum in China, following its 2008 earthquake; and Baan Nam Khem Memorial Park, Thailand, after the Sumatra-Andaman Earthquake and Tsunami of 2004. Visits to such memorials and museums represent a distinct type of contemporary tourism (Hartmann, 2014; in Tang, 2018, p.424). Tang's (2018) study highlights "a series of conceptual themes and debates that have emerged from the literature. This includes an appraisal of the following aspects: creation of seismic memorial sites as a contested phenomenon; consumption of seismic legacy as an ethical dilemma; perception of travel risks mediated with destination image; multi-dimensional experiences interpreted from the visit to seismic attractions. It concludes by discussing the future research and thematic directions of dark tourism to such sites within social, cultural, historical, and political contexts" (p. 424).

The natural disaster tourism can be classified as the dark tourism. Places visited are directly related to the natural events and their consequences. A part of them can also be classified as the thanatourism because of historical and cultural issues and as the blackspot-because of the violent death of a large number of people (the tsunami in 2004 and the earthquake in Haiti 300,000 people died in each case). For this, Rucińska (2016, p.1459) applied the term 'dark tourism' due to the fact that visiting these places is closely related to the location of extreme natural phenomena, not human activity (as was in the case of: the Ground Zero in New York in 2001, the JFK trail Dallas in 1964, Tunnel of the Pont de l'Alma and Memorial in Paris where the Princess of Wales, Diana died in 1997 and others as Robben Island prison, where the leader Nelson Mandela incarcerated, Auschwitz-Birkenau, located in Poland, Roman and British gladiatorial games).

They are Biran et al. (2014) who studied on the post-disaster scenario of earthquake of Sichuan, 2008 focusing on disaster, destination recovery, dark tourism, motivation and intention. There is another study on 1996 Mount Everest climbing disaster which was carried out by Kayes (2015) focusing disaster sense-making,

errors and accidents, organizational and experiential learning and teams and groups. This study is based on organizational structure and accidents rather than focusing on the ethos of dark tourism. It is Miller (2008), who studied on hurricane Katrina in United States of America in which the author analysed on landscaping, natural disasters, regeneration and tourism. Methodologically this study has been carried out through her own auto-ethnographic journey. Rucińska's (2016) study on natural disaster tourism sheds light on very important theoretical models which not only talks about natural disaster tourism but also theoretical analysed on dark tourism in relation with different natural hazards. This study is a source of following various analytical tools for understanding disaster induced tourism. Thanatourism has become the key concept in this study. Pottorff and Neal (1994) have also studied on post-disaster tourism in Miami, San Francisco one of the famous tourist destinations, which was badly affected by hurricanes and earthquakes. The authors' research was not only based on destination's impacts on tourism but also they showed that if the industry prepares well, some aspect of the industry will be economic winners following a disaster.

Seismic Event

Seismology (from Ancient Greek σεισμός (seismós) meaning "earthquake" and (-logía) meaning "study of") is the scientific study of earthquakes and the propagation of elastic waves through the Earth or through other planet-like bodies. The field also includes studies of earthquake environmental effects, such as tsunamis as well as diverse seismic sources such as volcanic, tectonic, oceanic, atmospheric, and artificial processes (such as explosions). Of the various types of natural dangers, earthquakes are one of the most serious and unpreventable (Vare-Jones, 1995; in Tsai & Chen, 2010, p.470). Earthquakes are caused when faults rupture or break across a fault plane, a 3D surface that can lie completely beneath the ground, or can cut across the Earth's surface. The place where the rupture starts at depth is known as focus, from where seismic waves spread across the fault surface at speeds of approximately three kilometers per second (Bolt, 2004; in Orchiston, 2012, p.64). The point vertically above the focus on the surface is known as epicenter. Damage is caused by ground shaking and surface rupture, with indirect effects including landslides, lateral spread and liquefaction (Orchiston, 2012, p.64). An earthquake is a sudden and unpredictable movement of the Earth's crust caused by the release of strain that has accumulated over a long time. An earthquake belongs to the most devastating natural disasters. Earthquakes may cause many deaths, injuries and extensive property damage. Earthquakes often trigger avalanches, rock falls and tsunamis (Park & Reisinger, 2010, p.6). The occurrence of earthquakes in Christchurch, 2010; Sichuan, 2008; La' Aquila, 2009; Kobe, 1995; Taiwan, 1999; Turkey, 1999; Chile, 2010; Haiti, 2010; Mexico, 1985; Yogyakarta, 2006; El Salvador, 2001). They clearly demonstrate the catastrophic impact of earthquakes

on tourism. Following the occurrence of a disastrous earthquake, tourist related organizations and destinations are placed in a particularly difficult position, faced with the challenges of declining numbers of visitors and falling revenues.

Nepal's Gorkha Earthquake 2015

Nepal experienced a disastrous earthquake (7.8 magnitude) on 25 April, 2015 which severely hampered the tourism industry (see in detail Kunwar, 2015; Kunwar & Limbu, 2015; in Kunwar, 2016, p.13). Nepal Gorkha earthquake was triggered on 25th April 2015 at 11:56 am local time, on 7.8 Richter Scale has been found to be one of the fatal disasters in Nepal (The US Geological Survey, 2015). Following the classification of the size of the earthquake by Nepal's Department of Mining and Geology, the Gorkha earthquake is a strong earthquake. The epicenter was in Bardiya district of Nepal – about 80km north-west of Kathmandu valley. The quake lasted approximately 50 seconds affecting 32 districts out of which 14 districts being heavily affected. According to Nepal's Department of Mining and Geology, a total of 447 earthquakes having 4 or more Richter Scales occurred in between April 25, 2015, and April 22, 2016. After this the initial strong earthquake, hundreds of aftershocks occurred in Kathmandu valley and surrounding hills and mountains areas. There were 4 strong aftershocks (6-6.9 Richter Scale), 51 moderate aftershocks (5-5.9 Richter Scale) and 391 light aftershocks (4-4.9 Richter Scale). Around 773,093 private houses were completely damaged and 298,998 houses were partially damaged (Subedi, 2018). The earthquake triggered avalanches on Mount Everest and in the Langtang valley. Tens of thousands of other structures, including schools, health facilities and public government buildings, were also impacted. Several important historical sites collapsed including monuments that comprised the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) cultural heritage site. According to World Bank assessment, it tentatively listed total economic damage solely in Nepal at USD5.1 billion and valued additional economic losses (including business interruption and specific sector losses) at nearly USD1.9 billion. This value is equivalent to more than one-third of Nepal's entire Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The disaster triggered major humanitarian response from the Government of Nepal and non-government organizations. In June of 2015 seven weeks after the earthquake, the international community pledged \$US 4.1 billion dollars in reconstruction assistance to Nepal at a major donor conference held in Kathmandu. The majority of this aid was for the housing sector, and delivered in a centralized fashion through the newly created National Reconstruction Authority (NRA). The NRA, with technical assistance from international donors, devised what has been referred to as a plan for "owner-driven" reconstruction whereby households deemed eligible through a house-by-house damage assessment would receive \$2,000 in several tranches (Soden & Lord, 2018).

Earthquake in Barpak and Langtang

Earthquake and ensuing aftershocks, avalanches and landslides triggered in the aftermath killed over 9,000 people and over 1 million rendered homeless. However, the disaster preparation was only centralized in the capital city Kathmandu. The situation was largely a rural disaster (Soden & Lord, 2018), Nepal earthquake devastated many rural villages and triggered avalanches and landslides around the country. The difficult topography in the hills and mountains further complicated the access to the disaster response efforts of government and non-government organizations. Search and rescue operations were derailed.

The sites that are studied in this paper are the rural seismic sites. The epicenter Barpak in Gorkha district of Nepal – about 80km north-west of Kathmandu valley and the Langtang Valley in the Rasuwa district of Nepal is a region in the Himalayas in central Nepal which is located about 60km to the north of the Kathmandu valley are both rural seismic sites severely impacted by the Nepal earthquake 2015.

Barpak is a village situated in the northern part of the Gorkha district of Nepal, in the Sulikot Rural Municipality ward number one and two. It is inhabited by Gurungs, Ghailes and Dalits. There is a graveled road from Abu Khaireney running on the bank of Daraudi River to Barpak which extended to Laprak, Gumda and upto the Manasalu base camp. The village was badly affected by an earthquake on 25 April 2015. The lifestyle is agricultural. However, a remarkable proportion of the total population is employed outside the farm/home, mostly in public services and the army (namely the British, Indian and Nepalese regiments). Remittances sent by these servicemen help significantly in the local economy of Barpak. There are many locally operated businesses such as provisions shops, pharmacies, lodges, cafes and taverns. Barpak is 45 km north of the District headquarters, 187 km west of Kathmandu, the capital city, and 139 km north-east of Pokhara, the other major city of Nepal. Barpak is at an altitude of 1,900 m above sea level on the way to Manasalu Conservation Area (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013). Barpak is in ward no 1 and 2 of Sulikot Rural Municipality.

Being close to the epicenter and lodged on a steep hillside, the village was extremely hard hit by the April 2015 Nepal earthquake. Less than 10 of 1,200 homes remain standing (Kaphle, 2015). The devastation of the earthquake caused the huge suffering in Barpak as a result it is becoming the new place to be researched and the place to visit by the people whoever related to the disaster. There were 72 casualties and hundreds of injuries. There is the process of reconstruction after the earthquake so far but the debate is still there that whether the rebuilding would be on the sloppy shaped with clustered stone roof or other so the main traditional clustered roofs are being

eliminated by the modern type of houses. Gorkha tourism requires a strategy that will help manage crises and rapid recovery from the damages and losses (Ghimire, 2016).

Barpak came to the world's notice in April 2015 when it was one of the three villages close to the epicenter of the calamitous earthquake in Nepal when hundreds of people died and 1,400 of its 1,450 houses were razed to the ground leaving most of its 11,000 residents homeless (Gordon, 2018).

Langtang was doubly devastated. Gorkha earthquake triggered landslides and avalanche came down throughout the valley. A massive co-seismic avalanche that began on the southern slopes of Langtang Lirung (7,234 m) destroyed the entire village of Langtang and released half the force of the Hiroshima atomic bomb, caused the single most concentrated loss of life anywhere in Nepal (Kargel et al., 2016). More than half the community's population of 400 were killed. 2015 (Lord & Galen, 2017). As in many villages in Nepal, settlements in Langtang Valley suffered substantial to catastrophic damage. The blast destroyed the settlements. The tremendous force of the avalanche and earthquake broke free a large deposit of debris, rock and ice about 1000 m above Langtang Village, which landed on top of the village. Enormous avalanche and the air-snow blast badly damaged houses and blew some rooftops to the other side of the valley. The settlements Singdum and Mundu were affected by similar blasts and debris. The shaking also dislodged five different snow fields and hanging glaciers sitting two thousand meters above the village. A resulting landslide swept down the steep mountainside, picking up rock, ice, and snow along the way, until, fatefully, it took out the main settlement. At the main settlement, the massive debris field lies as a marker to the destruction and loss. A memorial has been placed where the village used to sit—a ring of white prayers symbolizing death, loss, and memory. Facing a need for total reconstruction on land that bears little resemblance to its former state, community members retreated to the east of the landslide and started working to rebuild homes, teahouses, and shops.

Impact of Earthquake in Tourism

The negative repercussions of the disaster are likely to be translated into a reduced number of tourist arrivals over the next few years, reduction in tourist spending per day from US\$43 to US\$35 (as per industry sources), which would significantly affect revenues. Other nations that have experienced similar disasters have generally taken several years to recover fully with regard to tourist arrivals. It is estimated that the overall impact of the earthquakes on the Nepali tourism industry would be a reduction of about 40 percent on average over the next 12 months, and a 20 percent reduction in the next 12 to 24 months (NPC, 2015b).

Summary of Damages and Losses in Tourism Sector

Subsector	Disaster Effects (NPR Million)			Share of Disaster Effects	
	Damages	Losses	Total	Private	Public
Hotels and others	16,295	-	16,295	16,295	-
Homestays	1,720	495	1,720	1,720	-
Eco-lodges	415	-	415	415	-
Trekking trails	426	5,711	6,137	-	6,137
Your operators	7	4,924	6,137	-	-
Tourism revenues	-	47,013	47,013	47,013	-
Air transport revenues	-	4,720	4,720	4,720	-
Restaurant revenues	-	11	11	11	-
Total	18,863	62,379	81,242	75,105	6,137

Source: NPC, 2015b

Review of Literature

Though the term dark denotes devoid of light, dark tourism as a new tourism product tends to provide awareness, education and entertainment on several cases of history and heritage, tourism and tragedies. Overall the prime focus of dark tourism is grief after death caused by fatality of 'Others' (Seaton, 2009). Therefore, scholars of various disciplines, in course of studying dark tourism brought many different concepts such as "sensation sites" (Rojek, 1997), "repressed sadism" (Korstanje, 2017), "sadist spectacle" (Blom, 2000), "darktainment" (Roberts, 2018), "deathscapes" (Maddrell & Sidaway, 2012; in Yan et al., 2016, p. 110) "memorialscape" (Fridrich, Stone, & Ruksha, 2018), "blackpackers" (Podoshen, 2013), "recreational grief" (West, 2004; in Robb, 2009, p.54), "mortality mediation" (Stone & Sharpley 2012; Walter, 2009), "thanacapitalism" (Korstanje, 2017), "everyday dark" (Hepburn, 2017). Multidisciplinary and Postdisciplinary approaches have become major methodological concern in dark tourism studies. Until 2016, Light (2017) has shown that 58 out of 139 studies followed qualitative research methodology in the study of dark tourism. Much of the literatures on dark tourism invariably defines the phenomenon in the context of post-modernism.

So far as dark tourism in the context of Nepal is concerned, the area which remained untouched for so long despite of the immense possibility. The discourse of dark tourism only started after 2015 earthquake although Hepburn (2012) had

already published article on dark tourism in the context of Nepal. The paper entitled “Shades of darkness: Silence, risks, and fear among tourists and Nepalese during Nepal’s civil war” published in *Writing the Dark Side of Travel* edited by J. Skinner.

The work of Hepburn’s chapter published in Hooper and Lennon’s edited book entitled *Dark Tourism: Practice and Interpretation* (2017). Her chapter, “Everyday darkness and catastrophic events: Riding Nepal’s buses through peace, war, and an earthquake” highlights the concept of “everyday darkness in Nepal” and mentions that although there are better and worse deaths, everyone dies. And although we all experience different kinds and degrees of suffering, no one dies without their share of it. This is everyday darkness. The very idea of dark tourism is premised on selective attention to instances of events that are, in fact, ubiquitous.

Besides having all above-mentioned definitions and dark products introduced by different scholars based on dark tourism research all over the world, Nepal remains a unique dark tourism’s potential supplier which has been indicated by Hepburn (2012, 2017). While reviewing Hepburn’s study which she carried out in 2012 is based on Nepal which has been reviewed by Light (2017). According to him, the conceptualisation draws on the notion of “tourism in darkness (Hepburn, 2012, p. 122) in which she argued that places of “sociopolitical danger” represent dark (or forbidden destinations) so that visits to such places constitute a form of dark tourism (Buda & McIntosh, 2013, p. 217). Where we understand that how Nepal is important from the view point of dark tourism consumption. Hepburn’s study suggests that Nepal’s landscape itself is an attraction for dark tourists even though all above mentioned different products cannot be ignored. Hepburn’s chapter tends to be a stepping stone to popularize the scope of dark tourism in Nepal and promote Nepal as a dark tourism destination. This study also shows that the tourists travelling Nepal are not only the dark tourists but also, they are adventurers who enjoy harsh realities i.e. infrastructural challenges. Nepal is that destination where the tourists will get extraordinary experiences. Recently, Rana and Bhandari (2018) published one article on Guerilla Trail from Baglung to Rolpa which deals with various aspects of darker side of travel. In course of reviewing the literatures related to dark tourism, the reviewers came across the study carried out by Robb (2009), in which she has discussed on “favela tourism” citing Scheper-Hughes’s “everyday violence” (1992:ch.6), although this concept doesn’t fully support the concept of “everyday darkness in Nepal” highlighted in the study of Hepburn (2017) it surely helped the reviewers to gain perspectives on dark tourism in a better way. At a cursory reading of this chapter, the bibliophiles might confuse this reading as a discouragement to those who are interested in travelling to Nepal, but if someone goes into the literal theme of this chapter, the realistic scenario of Nepal can be understood and a new horizon to the prospect of dark tourism in Nepal is identified. Although the text

seems descriptive, it is a great source of theoretical knowledge for academics and practical implications for visitors.

It is Kunwar (2015, 2016) who published two articles on disaster related tourism in the post-earthquake context of Nepal where he proposed to develop dark tourism as an alternative product in Langtang of Nepal, through his article entitled “tourism and earthquake: a case study of Nepal and Turkey” (Kunwar & Limbu, 2015) and “tourism and natural disaster: a study of Nepal’s earthquake-2015” (2016).

It is Kužnik (2015) who proposed Nepal as a disaster tourism destination along with other different dark tourism destinations in his article “typology of dark tourism heritage with its implications on Slovenian future dark tourism products”.

In the late 2015, Lord and Murton (2017) worked together with the people of Langtang locally known as Langtangpas and foreign volunteers on a collaborative effort called the Langtang Memory Project in the post-disaster phase. The project aimed to create a ‘living archive’ of Langtangpa culture and heritage and supported Langtangpas to tell their tales before and after the avalanche. The projects as part of a larger commitment to polyvocality in the wake of disaster—providing space for at-risk communities to describe their own conditions of vulnerability and narrate their own process of recovery (Schuller 2014; Liboiron 2015; Gergan 2016; in Lord & Murton, 2017, p.96). Although the paper does not specify dark tourism, it discusses several components of anthropology of disaster that coincides with dark tourism.

Soden and Lord (2018) presented the gaps in post-disaster scenario as *silences* created by misalignments between the narrative of loss produced by the technology supporting the government damage assessment and the lived experience and expressed ideas of the Langtang community. Building on Harley’s concept of ‘cartographic silencing’ (Harley & Laxton, 2002; in Soden & Lord, 2018, p.161) they highlighted the silences related to 1) ongoing landslide danger; 2) every day and collective practices of repair; 3) trauma suffered by the earthquake survivors, and; 4) the rapidly changing vision of ‘the good life’ underway in the Valley (Soden & Lord, 2018, p.161). This paper helped the researchers to get an overview of post-disaster seismic sites and several situations that arise in the post-disaster context including the questions on disaster preparedness, resilience of community, acts of memory and post-disaster tourism which has become important source of interpreting the prospects of dark tourism in the seismic sites.

Frontier experiences are often linked with winning over death. Hence, mountaineering, expeditions and all the adventure narratives in the adventure destination like Nepal should be analyzed through the lens of dark tourism i.e. death seeking behavior, tourism and tragedies, reliving death before actually dying, myths and legends of death, history and heritage, memory, remembrance, mediating between

life and death, authenticity, emotion and experience. Frontier travel experiences are described by exponents as 'quests' in almost Arthurian language, or as odysseys, evoking the heroic journey and a desire for transformation through trials, in places 'outside one's own common realm of experience' (Zurick, 1995, p. 137; in Laing & Crouch, 2009, p. 133), also it is often linked with mythical constructs. Butler (1996, p. 216; in Laing & Crouch, 2009, p. 133), for example, notes that the 'myth of the frontier has been a powerful one', and argues that it may therefore 'be an important part of its appeal as a potential tourist destination'. The highest peak of the world has chilling landmarks on the myth and morbid history that highlights the components of niche or special interest tourism called dark tourism. People die trying to reach the top of Mt. Everest. While about 5,000 people have gotten to the top and came back down to tell the tale, 300 have not and 200 bodies remain on Mt. Everest as final resting place. Recent glacial melting, caused by climate change, has made many of the bodies previously hidden by ice and snow visible again. While many bodies are quite visible and well known, others are renowned for being lost for decades (Hendricks, 2019).

Myth and legend surrounding the deaths of climbers Mallory and Irvine on Mount Everest in the 1920s was a key motivation behind the more recent expedition undertaken by David Roberts and Conrad Anker to recover their bodies. Roberts labels this a 'quest' to 'rediscover Mallory himself, the visionary lost explorer whose body Conrad Anker found, and whose fate we may at last begin to divine' (Anker & Roberts, 1999, p. 16; in Laing & Crouch, 2009, p. 133). Mallory's body takes on the guise of the Holy Grail, and even Roberts concedes that Mallory and Irvine's disappearance has been elevated, 'to the realm of the mythic' (Anker and Roberts, 1999, p. 139) due to historical conjecture as to whether they reached the summit before they died. Another climber, Thom Pollard, who discovered Mallory's body during that expedition, also expresses deep respect to a fallen 'hero' (Anker & Roberts, 1999, p. 139; in Laing & Crouch, 2009, p. 128).

Most climbers like to be left on the mountains if they died. So, it would be deemed disrespectful to just remove them unless they need to be moved from the climbing route or their families want them. George Mallory's body took 75 years to find and was given an Anglican burial in 1999. It costs a lot of money to go get a body on the highest mountain in the world, up to \$80,000 to be precise and there is the problem of actually doing it, since some attempts to retrieve bodies are forced by difficult conditions to abandon their efforts (Hendricks, 2019).

Research Methodology

This research is based on qualitative research methods. Denzin & Lincoln (2002; in Causevic & Lynch, 2011, p. 788) argue that qualitative research has evolved and asks

for more self-reflexivity which enhances trustworthiness of the research process, thus a field workers personal reflections and introspections are recognized as an important part of critical constructionism (Hosking & McNamee, 2007; in Causevic & Lynch, 2011, p. 788). Scarles (2010; in Causevic & Lynch, 2011, p. 788) also argue that the connection between the researcher and the respondent is achieved through intersubjective negotiation. The researchers conducted field work in Barpak and Langtang in the month of December 2018 to January 2019. Basically the subject of inquiry was based on the impact of earthquake, current status of tourism and prospects of dark tourism in the post-disaster scenario. The researchers followed unstructured and semi-structured interviews which were taken to both domestic and international tourists visiting the seismic sites. Besides asking questions to those respondents, the further questions were asked to the hoteliers, non-hoteliers, local leaders, religious leaders, tourism stakeholders of the sites and park authorities and in the case of Langtang. Both emic and etic approaches were adopted by the researchers to judge the data through pros and cons method. Besides following several methodological techniques, the third researcher followed overt participant observation including non-participant observation in the field. Both the researchers have adopted diachronic and synchronic approaches to authenticate the study. Photography has been taken as an important methodological tool. Thus, the information which has been collected by the researchers is based on descriptive in its nature.

Rationale of the Study

This research tries to justify that there is a flow of tourists in post-disaster destinations where they try to satisfy their curiosity in relationship to the natural disaster that took place there (Biran et al., 2014). This research provides a bridge in the current knowledge gap that exists related to consumer behavior and dark tourism.

This study envisions to explore how disaster/dark tourism serves as a vehicle for self-reflection in respect to how the disaster tour affects the tourists and to understand the cultural adaptation taken place in the post-disaster scenario to which Miller (2008) proposed as 'opportunity', 'signs of hope' and 'rebirth' (Miller, 2008, p. 115). It also tries to understand the contribution of tourism industry in economic revitalization of devastated area. What is the potentiality of dark tourism in Nepal? Could seismic sites of Nepal be developed as dark tourism site?

Tourism in Barpak and Langtang

Acharya and Halpenny (2013) revealed the essence of Nepalese tourism lies in naturally beautiful rural hills and mountains and its indigenous communities with their mystical lifestyle and culture. These natural and cultural attributes can be showcased best through homestays which is prevalent in the community of Barpak. Ghimire (2016) stated that Barpak is one of the stopover village routes of trekking

around Manaslu. There are so many possibilities of developing different type of tourism in Barpak as it has so much to offer to its guests. Its rich culture, warm and friendly people, breadth taking scenes of Himalaya watching Barpak, overlooking valleys of Darauti river and Treks to Dharkey Danda, Narad Pokhari or just a chill out tour around the village and many interesting festivals. So far, the data that show the actual visitors in Barpak before and after the earthquake is not found but still Barpak is the secondary route for the Manaslu trekking. The data of the visitors at the Manaslu trekking would be the little evident to analyse the international visitors at Barpak.

Langtang is located about 174km (from Kathmandu to Syasrubesi-130km; from Syasrubesi to Langtang-24km; and from Langtang to Kyanzin Gumba-7km) to the north of the Kathmandu and bordering Tibet. Located in Rasuwa District, it is a high-Himalayan valley, home to a community of culturally-Tibetan pastoralists that is also considered a popular trekking destination (Lim 2008). The craftsmanship, dress, traditionally-built stone houses, and the beautifully carved wooden porches reflect their rich Himalayan heritage. Prior to the earthquake, the Langtang Valley was home to around 600 people and an important site for Tibetan Buddhism. The area became a popular trekking destination and transformed to a tourism-based economy from a pastoral yak-herding community. It is a narrow valley running east to west, wedged between dramatic 6,000 to 7,000m snow-capped peaks, the highest of which is 7,227m Langtang Lirung, to the south are the Chimse Danda (ridge), crossed by the Ganja La pass (5,122 m), and Jugal Himal, culminating in Dorje Lhakpa (6,989 m). Langtang has over 70 glaciers of varying sizes, the Langtang and Ganesh Himal mountain ranges, and high-altitude lakes including Gosainkunda, Parvatikunda, Bhairavkunda, and Dudhkunda.

Findings and Discussions

This preliminary study is influenced by Tang's (2018) article entitled "Dark Tourism to Seismic Memorial Sites" where he mentions that the treatment to the sites of earthquake has varied substantially from case to case and place to place, as evidenced by the fact that the sites have been sanctified, designated, rectified, and in some paradoxical cases—obliterated throughout the history (Foote 2003; in Tang, 2018, p.425). In some case of Haiti earthquake of 2010, where the past is too painful to carry on, the desire to forget is the initial impulse (Balaji 2011; in Tang, 2018, p. 425). In contrast, people may wish to preserve a certain discourse when a natural response to the grief of community loss occurs. Aceh Tsunami Museum in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, and Khao Lak- Lam Ru National Park in Thailand and Pacific Tsunami Museum in Chile were designed as symbolic reminders of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami disaster, as well as an educational center and an emergency disaster shelter in case the area is ever hit by a tsunami again (Steckley & Doberstein, 2011; Birkland et al., 2006; Calgaro &

Lloyd, 2008; in Tang, 2018, p. 425-426). Foote (2003; in Tang, p. 426) states that commemorative landscapes express not only power and heroism, but martyrdom, shame, and catharsis. As site of devastating earthquake, the memorial site should be equipped to deal with remembrance, with consigning the pain to the past and drawing lessons. Primary sites as Barpak and Langtang are the so-called actual sites of disasters whereas secondary sites or created sites are the memorials or the museums that are set up in other locations and they have a clear connection to a death experience or a disaster (Lennon & Foley, 2000; Wight, 2006; Wight & Lennon, 2007). There is the continuing popularity of and fascination with death and suffering that gradually change the site itself or related memorial into tourist attraction. Barpak and Langtang is no exception. As touristic packaging of death has long been a theme of the 'morbid gaze' (Blom, 2000; in Tang, 2018), many recent seismic memorial sites are becoming increasingly pervasive features within the contemporary dark touristic landscapes. The severe casualties and large magnitude result in sanctification whilst arousing extensive interests of tourist (Tang, 2018). The researchers have discussed on various dynamics of the Barpak and Langtang as a seismic memorial site in subsection that follows:

Case of Barpak

So far, the data that show the actual visitors in Barpak before and after the earthquake is not found but still Barpak is the secondary route for the Manasalu trekking. The data of the visitors at the Manasalu trekking would be the little evident to analyse the international visitors at Barpak.

No. of Tourists Visited in MCAP area

Fiscal Year	2069/70	2070/71	2071/72	2072/73	2073/74	2074/75	2075/76
No. of Tourists	4286	5331	5658	2288	5745	7203	5138
Percentage	37.68	24.38	6.13	-59.56	151.09	25.38	-28.67

Source: MCAP, Gorkha, 2019

According to the respondents it has been revealed around 20 percent of the tourists visited in MCAP come through Barpak. The flow of international tourist has been decreased just after the earthquake but domestic tourists has been increased rapidly.

Though Barpak is also the secondary route for the MCAP trekking, if the dark tourism in Barpak is promoted in the good way the tourist whoever visit MCAP, they will make a night hold in Barpak.

Chairperson of the Homestay of Barpak revealed:

three sisters home stay has been started before but after the EQ, the existence of the homestay is being challenged because of the establishment of the hotels in many numbers. Before EQ there were only six hotels in Barpak but after the disaster there are more than 35 hotels which reflects the visiting Barpak after the Earth quake has been increased.

Respondents further revealed that general capacity of the hotel in Barpak is 20-25 persons. If the whole hotels are pack in the season 700-800 tourists visit in Barpak per day which is the positive aspect of tourism of Barpak and also the excessive flow of visitors in Barpak is after the Earthquake 2015. The records in the homestay tourism in Barpak shows that in 2071 there were only 1760 tourists reached in Barpak but after EQ there are numerous increments in the visitors at Barpak that in the days of season there are more than 800 tourists visit Barpak. The season for the visitors in Barpak is Kartik to Mangshir and Falgun to Baisakh.

There are many tourist attractions which are connected directly or indirectly with death. After a natural disaster not only the close relatives of victims but also outsiders travel to the area. What kinds of factors motivate tourists to visit such places are the major concern in Barpak. If it is analysed in term of the earthquake epicenter site of Barpak as the most visited sites of the century is Tangshan Earthquake Memorial Park in Hebei, China, which was dedicated to over 240,000 victims who perished in the Tangshan Earthquake of 1976 (Tang, 2018). Only being the epicenter is not enough to promote the dark tourism in Barpak, only the people whoever interested in the earthquake and the people visited for the reconstruction is not enough. Whether the promotion of dark tourism in Barpak will count all these aspects and the models which were raised by Tang are the major concern which may give the better opportunity to develop tourism site in Barpak and to make the visitor's motivation compatible to the Barpak's attraction of dark tourism which may be beneficial to the Barpakis and the visitors as well. As Rojek (1993) coined a term black spots affiliated with the concept of dark tourism, black spots, refers to the "commercial developments of grave sites and sites in which celebrities or large numbers of peoples have met with sudden and violent deaths". Also, in Barpak 72 people died because of the earthquake 2015.

History and Heritage plays the major role Barpak is also one of the historically important places where the indigenous Ghale ethnicity resides where the houses of different specification with archaeologically importance lies and how those important habitats have been devastated by the earthquake is the major motives of visitors to visit the dark sites of disaster. Visitors motivation to visit Barpak is not only to see earthquake but also to see the uniqueness of the Barpak village.

Munt (1994) focused on post-modernist concept on tourism that society has seen a continuous move away from traditional mass tourism and package holidays to as post-modern tourism, dark tourism in Barpak is also the new phenomenon which could be promoted in such way so that the visitors could make the plan in short to visit the seismic site. Dark tourism in Barpak can provides the context for a post-modern experience.

One of the respondents noted:

instead of going to Newroad and Ason better to come to Barpak because the nature of the village is unique in Barpak and how the EQ 2072 made the devastation here and how the reconstruction has been made is the major attraction for the tourists.

Foote, 1997 focused on Cultural Values and Orientation that to grasp tourist motivation at sites of dark tourism, it is essential to understand the memorialization process of such sites. Not all sites of death, disaster, and destruction are memorialized, nor do all sites evolve into tourist destinations. Much of this commemoration is shaped by cultural values (Foote, 1997).

According to the Lama of Bouddha Gumba at Barpak:

Mortality leads to paradise while accidental deaths such as: hanging, poison will not go to paradise. According to their culture for mortality they burry the body and make *mhane* (a small Buddhist stupa) while in fatality death they burn not make burial. In case of the funeral of the deaths at the time of earthquake2015, Barpak suffered much that they are not in the condition to help each other. The family member themselves did the funeral not by making burial but by burning the dead body as they regarded the death in earthquake as accidental and they didn't made cemeteries.

In case of Barpak, because of the earthquake many rituals and the ceremonies were also omitted.

Dark tourism destinations can themselves pull visitors to their facilities, with the most common explanations being education and remembrance. Sites of death and disaster do pull people in order to learn and to remember. Some individuals might be attracted to disaster sites to see remnants of the disaster loss. Most of the respondents revealed the fact that most of the tourists come from the school and college tours which shows interest of education and remembrance of the visitors.

Survivors' Guilt as Todd (2001) describes some experience guilt because they believe they have not done enough to help out those who suffer". One of the survivors who lost four members of the family Man Bahadur Gurung- 37 who lost his Mother-

70, Neice-7, Sister in law-26 and Daughter-14 expressed the guilt that he had suffered to console to his family members now a days too. Some of the survivors are feeling guilt that at the mean time even we have lost the humanity that no houses were standing and all are suffering so they only thought of their own.

Tang (2018a) argues that the memorial site of Wenchuan Earthquake of 2008, the visits lead to a successful interpretation of both cognitive and affective experiences on site. Seismic memorial sites at Barpak will be studied in this regard that would be the good bridge between the physical as well as the cognitive meditative aspect. People's curiosity about death and disaster is insatiable; they are motivated by empathy, excitement and other psychological stimuli of varying moral worth (Uzzell, 1989).

Death and dying are natural occurrences; however, the concepts themselves are socially constructed.

...variances in cultural attitudes towards death and dying can be observed today. For many Western Christians, heaven, or the end of death, is the ultimate goal. Yet for Eastern Buddhists and Hindus, ... the arch-ordeal envisioned is not death but rather the pain of having to undergo another rebirth. It is the end of rebirths that is their goal... (Kearl, 2003, p. 3).

In Barpak the death caused by disaster are to be burnt while their actual funeral proceeding is to burry and make cemetery. The Barpakis (the inhabitants of Barpak) plan to make the memorial park where all the death of earthquake 2015 will be commemorated and memorialized. At the time of earthquake, they were not involved in the 3 days funeral ceremony but just in one days and they did in their own way that only family members engaged because they all had been suffered at that time which need to be evoked out where suffering and sentiment of the locals may affect and attract the visitors. Today, individuals continue to travel for knowledge, understanding and educational opportunities, and dark tourism sites continue to promote their educational mission. Major themes of education are: much of the understanding need travel, education seeks to prevent similar events from occurring, some sites of death and disaster draw attention from other sources much as media exposure, which may not be the authentic one as of seeing. Remembrance is vital human activity that connects to our past and our future, and the ways we remember define us in the present (Young, 1993). "As individuals and societies, we need the past to construct and anchor our identities and to nurture a vision of the future" (Young, 1993).

Respondents in Barpak said:

we all have lost the memory of the earthquake of 1990 BS in Nepal so the same may happen to earthquake 2015 too to the coming

generation. There must be the effective initiative to make the live experience of earthquake 2015 having epicenter at Barpak so that the coming generation would be aware. If such memorial work could be done in Barpak Dark Tourism will automatically promoted and the coming generation will be intended to visit the seismic site at Barpak. that remembrance connects from generation to generation.

The respondents also said that people are not interested in the meetings and the other works as the NGO/INGO provide allowance in their meeting training and seminars. The international society also played role to influence in the EQ affected area that the investment by NGO/INGO was more but only invested in the administrative work so not so productive and seen worthless except some as for example JICA did better in comparison to other. Distributing buckets, goats, train to wash hand only are not fruitful according to them, immediate relief was good but gradually it has not been effective as expected. Believers group came for the advertisement of the Christianity which shows the challenging sides of the affected or the victims right in Barpak. The observation revealed that the motivation to visit the Barpak shows that people visit the place for different reasons. To promote the tourism in Barpak after earthquake by familiarizing as the epicenter of earthquake there are many more things need to change and make. Respondents revealed that NGO and INGO are not effective except some as of JICA. Culture and tradition have not been preserved while building houses, making in their own by leaving the traditional houses and weaknesses of the technicians as they are not advocating of the fact that the old houses also be made earthquake resistance.

The direct observation further shows that to promote tourism, village specific and the space specific the certain culture and tradition must be preserved while rebuilding so that the visitors will be interested to visit Barpak. Most importantly the direct observation revealed the fact that the hope is the major motivator for the visitors at Barpak. Out of the more than 1300 houses, only 10 houses remain standing. In this horrible situation the people in Barpak are standing still with the hope of reconstruction and rehabilitation. They started to live normal life as if they are not suffered much by the earthquake. They have plan to make the memorial park and have enthusiasm to make Barpak one of the most beautiful village revived from the disastrous earthquake.

Case of Langtang

Langtang is one of the popular adventure tourism destination in Nepal. It is also considered Nepal's third main trekking region after the Khumbu (Everest) region and the Annapurnas (Horell, 2017). It is off the beaten path that goes through traditional ethnic villages and untouched forests on the way to the peaks of Langtang-Lirung.

The establishment of Cheese factory—the first of its kind in Nepal, built in the 1970s by a Swiss NGO around the time that Langtang National Park was created—serves as a kind of ‘boundary object’ that marks the transition between traditional pastoral livelihoods based on yak herding and the emergence of a tourism economy (Austin, 2017).

Foreign Visitors Statistics in Langtang

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

Source: Langtang National Park, 2019 ; in Lamsal, 2019, p.28.

There was the drastic decrement in the visitor’s visit to Langtang in the post-disaster scenario. Langtang is still struggling to revive the tourism industry and increase the number of the visitors. Every household has turning into hotels has created unhealthy competition. A German visitor analyzing the pre-disaster and post-disaster tourism behavior in Langtang shares:

I have been here before but I noticed changing hospitality patterns and behaviour of people. Authentic mountain hospitality is lost. This place has become more commercialized. The price on the menu are so high- With Hot water 3\$ per thermus there is loss of warmth in people. I think earthquake created dependency, expectation for more and more.

There is also an increment in contact and recommendation system in this route. Both the suppliers and demanders are victims of it. And the dysfunctional tourism committee has escalated several problems like monopoly price, unhealthy bargaining, negotiation of the price, hindered freedom of choice, equality in the deliverance etc. Highlighting on the contact system.

A local hotelier shared her experience on demanding visitors and their paradoxical demands of natural versus materialistic interests as:

They say that like small houses and demand for attached bathrooms and heaters and many things that are not possible to manage on this topography. Foreigners are so demanding these days. We can’t fulfil all their demands. The price of the goods transported by porters and mules gets doubled till they arrive our place and we still have to face price negotiation with the visitors.

An Italian visitor shared his experience with a hotelier as:

You must come and stay here on your way back! -A hotelier really pressurized me that way, I responded back rude- I am not here to follow whatever you say.

The locals are pretty assured that there will be a boost in the tourism along with the stable reconstruction activities. Visitors are increasing every year. The major locations like Lama Hotel, Langtang Village and Kyanzin Gumba can accommodate at least 500 visitors per night. When asked about the tourism trends before and after earthquake. The service providers responded in this way:

I was quite hopeless about the chance of tourism revival after the earthquake, we were about to be relocated somewhere near Chitwan.

Now, I am running my own hotel at my own place-It feels great to back.

The avalanche and the force of the blast it created has turned the centuries-old village of Langtang into a monotone landscape. The disaster somewhat faded away effervescence of Langtang as a tourism site for a while and there was a phase of identity crisis and delusion within the Langtangpa community about the revival of tourism in their place and going back to normal. Langtang Valley was long considered a *beyul* (sacred hidden valley within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition), it had only recently become a tourist Shangri-La. Lost and found artifacts of life before the disaster excavated and repurposed, possessions that outlived their owners, materials laden with sorrow and hope. These objects index the contours of culture and catastrophe in Langtang.

we lost our families, we lost our property, we lost everything we had, and with the relocation idea that surfaced in the post-disaster scenario had us worry that we would lost our identity as Langtangpa. If there is no Langtang, we will lose our identity.

Many of the local residents of Langtang mentioned about the voyeuristic attitude of visitors that checked their patience at times. Although they have been involved in tourism industry for two decades, they explained they need some space and privacy which are often infringed by visitors who would cross their limits by either asking too personal questions, clicking pictures every time. They are our guests, they are paying us for the services we deliver, we have to respect them...but that doesn't mean we need to bear all their irrational actions. Some respondents believed that tourists come to Langtang not to gaze upon the mountains but to gaze upon the destruction with, perhaps, an element of *schadenfreude*.

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

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

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

Most of the respondent connected Langtang’s tourism industry based upon the leisure tourism model and thinking that’s the only alternative or way that pleases the tourists. Many local respondents ranked Langtang’s natural beauty on the top rank on the answer to the visitor’s motivation to Langtang and then the Tibetan heritage, beyul, National Park etc. Nevertheless, there was a different narrative from few respondents who realized that disaster marketed their place in the world like never before and also discussed on the prospects of tourism flourishing in post-disaster setting. There are variety of insights and retorts in regards to disaster tourism. From intolerance to voyeuristic gaze upon the misery to feeding the curiosity of the visitors on a right way in order to prevent misinterpretation of their place and experience. Langtnappa’s resilience and evolvement over the time in relation to disaster tourism discourse is recognized after the field research.

To support this statement, few locals showed immense positivity on dark tourism possibility as noted:

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

People are engaged in the cultural, psychological, and political work that helped them to move forward by accepting the uncertainty of life. Explaining the post-disaster cultural engagement work a local respondent said:

We are the mountain people. We worship Langtang Lirung as God, but it had been a few years that we missed a special ritual that was dedicated to Langtang Lirung. I along with my community members think that the massive avalanche and the destruction is the consequence of it. We have been extensively working together to fulfill all the religious and cultural affairs ever since.

Another local respondent when asked about the myths and legends about the earthquake responded that:

If Langtang Lirung gods were angry, there wouldn’t be impact on several areas of Nepal. It’s a natural disaster that happened naturally. Having said that we are guided by certain beliefs, rituals, customs that is linked with our identity and we have to continue doing it.

Combined funerary rites were organized at Yellow Gumba in Soyambu, Kathmandu on 49th day, where the Langtangpa survivors stayed for several months in post-disaster scenario. Community members and lamas conduct a *ghewa* ceremony, the final stage in the larger process of 'ritual poesis' that facilitates the "transmutation of life" in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition (Desjarlais. 2016; in Austin, 2017). Formal ceremony was organized in Langtang village to mark the one-year anniversary of the earthquake. Langtanpa's along with the families of foreigners who lost their lives in Langtang, supporters from around the world, tourists gathered in the monotone avalanche zone to perform religious rites (*puja*) led by a group of local lamas. Diverse acts of commemoration were conducted including reading aloud the names of the deceased, unveiling memorial wall with the inscription names of people who lost their lives in the disaster, instilling white prayer flags in avalanche spot as a symbol of peace. Acts of memories and death rituals signifies the cultural coping mechanism that people of post-disaster scene engage themselves in order to recover from the suffering and despair.

On visiting the post-disaster Langtang, subtle emotions mixed with trauma, hope, frustration, could be identified in relation to the entire process of sustainable recovery, bouncing back and resettlement. The resilience and determination of Langtangpa community to lead the reconstruction phase all by themselves 'not merely as victims of disaster or idealized 'others' living in a remote Himalayan community, but as complicated people facing uncertainty, doing the best they can'(Austin, 2017).

Explaining their resilience in the post-disaster situation the present local leader explained:

The disaster created a state of dilemma among all of us. There was rampant dishonesty in relief and rescue works led by outsiders. We could identify few fraudulent practices happening around us. Hence, we formed Langtang Reconstruction Committee for community led reconstruction works. 116 household united, appointed core team. We unified to act for our own wellbeing.

Langtang reconstruction committee was formed as a symbol of local unity in times of hardship, one person from each household was member of the committee that made 116 members and Seven executive members in the Committee. The unanimous voice was represented in several forums to plan for reconstruction. Open discussion, participation, ideas of each village member was ensured in the committee. Financial transparency was the key for committee's success. Explaining about the progress of the community and motivation of the people to build back better and stronger. The representative of Langtang reconstruction committee explained:

We had to take permission from CDO office to visit our own village. We stayed as an outsider in our own country. State didn't properly address

our concerns when we were suffering from such a harsh phase. We weren't stable but determined that we have to reconstruct our village by ourselves. Other people won't understand our concern and we will end up being dependent our entire life. We have to continue on what we were doing before earthquake and we knew our skills which was based on mountain lifestyle.

Culture is joining each and every quintessence that furnishes the human flavors with the capacity to be a piece of a general public (Albense & Boedeker, 2003; in Pliakas, 2017). The disaster hindered the cultural landscape of Langtang. The present Langtang valley resembles very little to what it was before the disaster. Despite an interest of rebuilding in a culturally sensitive way. In the hustle of rebuilding faster, the cultural identity of the Tibetan Buddhist community could not be promoted as the way people wanted. Traditional houses are replaced by concrete buildings with minimalistic cultural designs. Explaining the cultural catastrophe, the religious leader of the community explained:

There is very little cultural replication in the structures now. All the skilful people died. No experts to construct the old designs, it is also very expensive and consumes more resources and time. One house could be built with the cost of windows. We live in a national park area which has already endured so much of ecological devastation in post-earthquake scenario. Hence, it won't be wise to initiate the wooden heritage revival as of now.

On discussing about the preservation of the cultural heritage in Langtang valley, the local leader of the valley mentioned their effort as Mundu resident in protecting the undamaged traditional houses in Mundu and planning to change it as a museum. He said:

Old houses are encouraged to be preserved in Mundu and few in Langtang. We are planning to provide monthly allowance for households who remain stagnant with the old structures. Transforming it into museums in near future, promoting cultural and heritage tourism, collecting revenue and helping the community ticketing system etc, we can only motivate the household owners for this community initiative, we cannot restrict people from there way and plan to use their property.

Museums have been described as key institutions through which we understand our past and present identities. They are considered to "trustworthy houses of authenticity" and history and, as such, they are among the most prominent institutions for education about and preservation of the past (Sodaro, 2011, p.79;

in Frew, 2018, p.693). The dark tourism discourse has started in Langtang as a part of disaster education and museum discourse. Since the people have rebuilt their household without maintaining the authenticity. They have now realized that there needs to be an effort to preserve the settlements which were not devastated by disaster and convert them to museums. Few notables in the valley have been discussing about setting up a museum as a way to introduce new product in Langtang's tourism and an initiative to protect the authenticity related to their identity.

For Ashworth and Hartmann (2005), empathy relies upon the capacity of heritage consumers to identify with individual victims of the atrocity in question. Subsequently, Miles (2002, p.1176) regards this enabling of empathy 'between the site seer and the past victim over and above the evocation of historical knowledge' as essential to the success of dark tourism interpretation. Yet genuine empathy (defined as 'the ability to understand and share the feelings of another') with those whose lives and deaths are represented by in-situ sites of atrocity may be impossible to achieve. So many visitors visit the site of Langtang disaster, interact with locals and tell them. They could empathize on how it must feel to lose an immediate family member. But the intensity of pain is different in the case of natural death and unnatural death. The real difference of Fatality and Mortality.

A huge influx of professional outsiders was found in post-disaster setting of Langtang. In course of reconstructing the devastated village, in the very beginning many donors who arrived in Langtang were in great dilemma on how to support the community. Media is a crucial element in the consumption and supply of dark tourism experiences. Through global communication technology that transmits events almost as they happen into people's homes around the world (Sharpley, 2005) but in the case of Langtang, media hindered the destination image of the touristic place. Explaining this situation, a local activist said:

Outsiders didn't know that Langtang village and Langtang Valley are different. Media visited Langtang village only and popularized that nothing is left in Langtang. But the avalanche and earthquake affected several other villages within Langtang Valley that starts from Rimche-LamaHotel-Ghodatabela-Thanshyap-Gumbadada-Langtang-Mundu-Sindhun-Kyanzin. Previously it was named as single Langtang Village Development Committee but now under the federal system the entire valley falls under ward no. 4 of Gosainkunda Village Council.

This scenario could be correlated with the statement of Barsalou (2014). As he writes "while it is apparent that professional outsiders can indeed plan and implement memorial projects, especially if they have a qualified skill set not readily

available in survivor communities, it should always be ascertained whether they assist in bringing disparate together without creating unrealistic expectations or generating additional hostility' (Barsalou, 2014; in Freidrich, Stone, & Ruksha, 2018, p. 266). Adding up to the media led dilemma a local tourism entrepreneur said:

Even reputed media agency like BBC hired helicopter to cover the news of Langtang earthquake, only visited Langtang village, took picture and videos and published reported with the title "Langtang Gone" without visiting other villages within Langtang valley. The world got a wrong message of the impact of disaster in Langtang. We are still facing its drawbacks because backbone of Langtang is tourism industry and still people fear to visit Langtang. We complained several media agency for their misinterpretation and they realized their mistake. But is really tough to correct place image interpretation.

Realizing an urgency to the participation of locals in disaster interpretation and signifying their effort of coming together during in the post-disaster scenario local tourism entrepreneurs mentioned:

Interpretation of the disaster experience will be entirely changed if there are no local people to voice their experience.

Disaster gave us spirit to bounce back better than before. Gone are gone but we have to work for what is present now. Sleepless nights, work stress, multiple works and appointments. One day 20 meeting, same matter repeated, it was hard but we didn't stop.

To avoid the conflict and solve the dilemma in post-disaster period in Langtang, the insiders (the survivors) of the community played a very important role of coming together and decided to form a reconstruction committee on their own. The committee eased the reconstruction work, most importantly by setting up a joint bank account for the entire community where the donated amount from every donor was distributed equally to 116 household. Even bringing and coming together demonstrated few conflicting expectations, priorities, memories, and realities which were shared by the then reconstruction committee members and the community people during the interview.

The reconstruction realities were narrated and interpreted by the committee members in different way by prioritizing their present ameliorations (political, social, personal, economical). Referring to a foreigner who was clicking the pictures of a lady eating porridge in her relative's courtyard and recalling the dissatisfaction in reconstruction period an old lady said:

They click pictures of poor people like us and when in need they select their own people.

Contrasting to her statement one of the executive members said:

There was equality in relief process. Minimum requirement was fulfilled. Each household has four room. Every community has rich and poor but we assured minimum demand of people. Committee really helped as catalyst to revival

This could be linked with the concept of dissonant heritage. As Asworth and Hartmann (2005:253) define, dissonant heritage is a “lack of congruence at a particular time or place between people and the heritage with which they identify”, characterized by (re) presenting painful pasts. Therefore, it is crucial for the researcher of this study to ‘identify, determine, and attempt to alleviate narrative tensions within the interpretation of dark tourism sites’ (Freidrich et al., 2018, p. 266).

What were the main reasons for you to visit Langtang valley? When the researcher asked this question to the visitors, the majority of the respondents stated that the main reason for visiting Langtang was because of its adventure and tourism features i.e. beautiful landscapes and mountains, scope off-beat travel and adventure, wildlife, wilderness, remoteness, comradery. The third most popular trekking route of Nepal has been benefited through the word of mouth marketing principle and preferred by beginners, short-term travellers and cultural enthusiasts. This covers the context of the pre-disaster scenario and disaster unknown tourist perception of Langtang. This is how the visitors explained their primary motivation to the place:

I came here during extreme cold because I can bear cold but can't tolerate hordes of tourists. I like it peaceful. Off- beat trails, ethnicity and culture.- Visitor from France

It can be completed within 1 week; it matched my schedule. Hence, this is my second visit to Langtang in year 2018 only.- Visitor from Thailand

I heard that Langtang is best for off-beat travel and adventure, beautiful mountains. It was recommended by a friend. – Visitor from England

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

Despite this one of the reasons that frequently emerged as the first answer to the question there were several more motivations that the researcher was able to

discuss with the respondents was the disaster induced tourist motivations. Langtang valley became popularized in tourism market with the magnitude of the avalanche it suffered in the aftermath that swiped of the entire Langtang village situated at the altitude of 3430m which is the prominent landmark and stopover to every visitor passing to Kyanzin Gomba, 3,850m the last settlement of the valley. The visit to the avalanche site appears to be 'a must' when visiting Langtang valley because it falls on the main trail. The spot of the disaster is so confronting that every adventure tourist who visited Langtang for adventure purpose will incidentally turn into dark tourist because of the curiosity that arises in them when they see the intensity of the damage. The monotone area spread almost 1 km where former Langtang village was situated resembles nothing to its former state is filled with rubbles, big rocks, debris of older settlement, white prayer flags, small pond, a five storied building in the corner that survived avalanche. The walk through the disaster site triggers a lot of questions in the visitors and despite the curiosity they will have to be limited with the information provided by their guides and their conversation with their hotel owner. The researcher has accumulated few statements of the visitors who passed the disaster site:

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

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

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

I was so curious about the entire incident, asked a few questions to the locals but was very reluctant to dig into their person life.- Irish Visitor

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

We skipped our college trip to Mardi and choose Langtang, because we like off-beat trail like these." We heard about the intensity of the damage that this place went through and wanted to explore that along with the beautiful Himalayan valley.- Group of Nepali Students

Wow, this is huge - the stones, rubbles, glacier bridge, sandy road, prayer flags, mules passing by, mane, yak...I was capturing all of it ...I was walking alone through the devastated site. I only knew the story when my guide briefed me afterwards. I could sympathize only. -Thai Tourist

Avalanche spot is very triggering- questions can't be avoided. It definitely generates curiosity in every visitor that pass by. The curiosity of the visitors must be treated well in an official way. – Swish Visitors

Everyone has to pass the Avalanche site...that's unavoidable and so is the curiosity.

Educative module of the disaster needs to be launched.- Hongkong

We want to know a lot of things about the disaster and it's damage but afraid to pinch or trigger the locals.- Japanese Visitor.

We felt like coming to a new place... this settlement seems new to me...I had wonderful stay, was inspired by the warmth of people back in 2009. We hope we could help this community in certain way. I knew a lot of people, feels sad to know about their death, it is distressing to witness this reality. The old Langtang is still in our memory. -The former visitors

To sum up, adventure tourism in Langtang is already commodified earlier before earthquake but after disaster a new possibility of dark tourism has been identified with the patterns of visitors thinking about disaster, dead and suffering. This will be consumed by the tourists on one side and getting adventurous activities on the other. Langtang visitors will experience with repressed sadism (disaster, death and suffering) which compels them to memorialize with invisible debris of dead buried under the avalanche site. Until before earthquake the tourists used to get only one benefit now in the post-disaster the prospective tourists would get multiple benefits with features of darkness and adventure respectively. This could be called as “darventure” (dark+adventure=darventure) as a new form of dark tourism as coined by Kunwar, R. R., 2019 in his lecture series.

Dark tourism projections based on Barpak and Langtang.

While analyzing the sites through dark tourism lens, the researchers figured out that Barpak and Langtang as a seismic memorial site has few similarities and differences based on dark tourism theme. Noting that there are diverse motivations in visiting the seismic memorial sites as Robinson (2015) examines dark tourism motivations as mind boggling and multi-layered. It is recognized as subjective experience which will fluctuate starting with one individual then onto the next

including their relationship to the site (Robb, 2009). Researchers of this study have attempted to conscript the common possibilities of dark tourism in Barpak and Langtang in following headings:

Adventure Tourism

Adventure is presented as multidimensional fields of experience and investigation. Adventure is commonly viewed as form of what Lyng (1990, 2005; in Priest & Bunting, 1993, pp.265-266) calls “edge work” and attempt to negotiate that razor’s edge between life and death, order and chaos, control and uncertainty, as such offers a consumption experience that is extraordinary and redolent with rich symbolic resources. Six dimensions of adventurous activity and experience are introduced: territoriality; duration; transcendence; risk; coping; and routinization (Vester, 1987, p.12). By contrast, commercial adventure tourism has been described as ‘manufactured adventure’ (Holyfield, 1999) and presents a paradox” as described by Holyfield, Jonas & Zojicek (2005, p.114). The adventurer, according to Jansson, seeks new experiences in new experiences in new environments (without serious risk) primarily for the sake of personal challenge and arousal, and this may lead to a total rejection or total adoption of technology in order to put him or herself ‘on the line’ (Jansson, 2006; in Burns & Novelli 2008, p. 153).

Mountains provide a broad range of adventure, challenges from soft ecotourism hikes, to moderate exertion trekking, to highly skilled technical climbing Lew & Han (2015, p. 38). Mountains, frontier travel experiences and adventure tourism have many components that matches the dark tourism discourse. Although there are several tourism scholars who are in favor of introducing, promoting and developing dark tourism in the frontiers there has not been specific studies that highlights this chronicle.

Many international tourists go to Manasalu, Larkepass and Chum Valley via Barpak. This might create an opportunity to promote Barpak as the adventure tourism destination. Also, Manasalu Conservation Area Preservation route will be diverted to the primary route via Barpak as the route will be replaced by the Budhi Gandaki Hydro Power so Naradpokhari and Morchakharka base camp will be the main route. This will benefit Barpak. So far as Langtang is concerned, it is third-most popular adventure tourism destination after Khumbu and Annapurna region. The region transformed into a tourism-based economy through mountain attractions wedged between 6,000 to 7,000m, rich flora and fauna, situated in Langtang national park the place hosts many adventure activities. In course of undertaking adventures activities in Barpak and Langtang, the tourists will be at risk which is one of the chief features of adventure tourism to which scholars use the term as risk recreation. Risk recreation can be defined as recreational activities containing elements of risk

or danger that are experienced in a natural environment, in which the actions and abilities of the participant play roles in the final outcome of the experience (Ewert, 1989; in Ewert, 1994, p.4).

Museum

Sheng and Chen (2012; in Korstanje, 2012, p.57), paid attention over the five key factors that may very well determine the museum attractiveness : a) easiness and fun, b) cultural entertainment, c) personal identification, d) historical reminiscence and e) escapism. Museums allow combining emotional and spiritual factors to create the tourist experience (Sheng & Chen, 2012; in Korstanje, 2012, p.57). In case of Barpak the existing Victoria Cross museum is one of attractive sites but after the earthquake those unique architectural patterns has been changed which is one of the center of observation and also it has been proposed the museum for all the architectural remnant of Barpak. In case of Langtang, the proposal of museum establishment project in Mundu village of Langtang highlights the component of historical reminiscence and cultural entertainment (Sheng & Chen 2012; in Korstanje, 2012, p.57).

Remembrance through memorialization projects

Remembrance entails a commemoration of those whose suffering and death one may not have personally witnessed, but is not yet history. When memory is not first hand, it turns into remembrance or history, genealogy, or ancestry ...and doubtless other possibilities too (Walter, 2009, p. 47). If there is no formal way to care for the dead, all that is left is to remember them. If a shrine is where the dead are cared for, prayed to and where guidance is sought from them, a memorial is more simply place of memory. Memories may be internal to the individual visitor, or shared within the group, but a memorial is not designed to be a place of interaction between the living and the dead-or at least, not officially. Post-disaster memory projects are initiated in Barpak and Langtang in different way. Barpakis have allocated the 216 ropani (Nepali measurement of land) of land to build the Memorial park which depict the memory of all the deaths all over the country in earthquake. Within the Memorial park, 14 pillars for the Earthquake highly affected districts, statue of all the deaths of Earthquake 2072 (9000 deaths) in the memorial park, clock showing 11:56 am in one pillar and every Baisakh 12 celebrate Earthquake Memorial Day were proposed. In Langtang, the inception of Langtang memorial project aimed to create a 'living archive' of Langtangpa culture and heritage and supported Langtangpa to tell their tales before and after the avalanche. The projects as part of a larger commitment to polyvocality in the wake of disaster—providing space for at-risk communities to describe their own conditions of vulnerability and narrate their own process of recovery (Schuller, 2014; Liboiron, 2015; Gergan 2016; in Lord & Murton, 2017, p. 96).

Edutainment

For Cohen, dark tourism epitomizes an instrument which very well can be used for educative purposes (Korstanje, 2017, p. 61). The dead may be encountered for educational purposes. Dark tourism sites represent unique opportunities for learning not only about the historical facts of atrocity and disaster, but also human experiences of and responses to them, including our owns (Roberts, 2018, p.628). The dead, like much else from the past, are used to educate and entertain today's massed- as they were too in 18th-century public executions (Walter, 2009, p. 48). To which Roberts (2018; Dale & Robinson, 2011) called 'dertainment', which identifies both dark attractions that attempt to entertain (Robinson & Dale, 2009 b; in Dale & Robinson, 2011, p. 213).

Barpak and Langtang could be also developed as educational sites. As educational visits to the dead, whether in the classroom through books or at heritage sites through educational tourism, are the basis of the teaching of history. Sometimes the dead are physically present, as in exhibitions of mummies and bog bodies. The exhibition, like all popular yet purportedly serious exhibitions, museums and heritage sites, and indeed like comparable television documentaries, is edutainment (Walter, 2009, p.48).

Dark Tourism: opportunity in Barpak and complimentary in Langtang

Citing Dunkley's (2005) recommendations on various inspirations that may hasten visits to dark tourism destinations. Researchers realized that the case of Barpak coincides with the components of dark tourism authenticity (Dunkley, 2005) and the need to recognize the truth of a place's or individual's presence. Barpak being the epicenter of Nepal earthquake 2015 and observing the trends of tourism that increased drastically after earthquake. Hence, dark tourism comes as an opportunity in the case of Barpak. So far as Langtang is concerned, the popular adventure tourism destination was severely impacted by the earthquake. There was drastic decrement of visitors in post-disaster scenario. The tourist flow is increasing over the years but not yet reached the statistics before 2015. The major motivation of people visiting Langtang is because of it's popularity as adventure tourism destination. Hence, the case of Langtang coincides with the components of dark tourism convenience (Dunkley, 2005; in Dale & Robinson, 2011, pp. 205-217) when a fascination is situated in a renowned trekking destination. Dark tourism can be considered as a complimentary phenomenon in the case of Langtang.

Conclusion

There is a considerable amount of theoretical research available on dark tourism, but there are very few academic studies that provide any empirical research on visiting a seismic site as post-disaster destination for dark tourists. This study follows the dark tourism definitions which highlight disaster situations as a part of

dark tourism experience which is qualified by “the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified death and disaster sites” (Foley & Lennon, 1996, p.198). This research can be considered a preliminary investigation into Dark tourism experiences in Barpak and Langtang, the mountainous seismic memorial sites of Nepal.

There are diverse motivations in visiting the seismic memorial sites. Robinson (2015) recognized dark tourism as subjective experience which will fluctuate starting with one individual then onto the next including their relationship to the site (Robb, 2009). There are many types of dark tourism and the motives of the visitors are all different (Chang, 2014; in Pliakas, 2017). The flow of the internal and international tourists and their motivations and benefits show the prospects of dark tourism in Barpak and Langtang. Barpak as an epicenter and Langtang as a doubly devastated seismic site can be promoted as memorial site in order to educate people of the disaster and intensity of damage which may arouse extensive interests of tourist. The individuals or groups whoever interested to visit the seismic memorial sites of earthquake 2015 will be benefited and well-motivated in the different aspects as of: culture & tradition, environmental, heritage identity, suffering, commemoration, economic, security, ecological, psychological, remembrance, educational, ethical, memorial, humanitarian aspect and more importantly edutainment. This is what Roberts (2018) called dartinment. To fulfill all these motivations and make more beneficial through the dark tourism in Barpak and Langtang, it is necessary to promote the dark tourism by accessibility, attraction, interpretation, accommodation and reconstruction. As Cohen (2018) emphasizes that dark tourism should be globalized because tourism itself is a globalized.

The commoditization of sites related to seismic hazards is highly contested (Tang, 2018). And, it is even delusional in countries like Nepal where even the Post-Disaster Recovery Framework (2016-2020) doesn't address the scope of disaster tourism/dark tourism. Many people are not aware of the concept of dark tourism often confuse dark tourism with the deterioration or the negative consequences of tourism industry which is not true. Therefore, the researchers of this study suggest for not taking it as negative deviance as many countries have already developed the concept of dark tourism and benefited from it. This study shows that Nepal has a lot of scopes of dark tourism (Kunwar & Karki, 2019). Besides Barpak and Langtang, there are various dark tourism themed sites of Nepal which could be developed as dark tourism sites in Nepal such as: Mortality gaze: Pashupatinath (Kathmandu); Memory and Remembrance: Rani Mahal (Palpa), Rani Pokhari (Kathmandu); Battlefield: Jomsom (Mustang); Tourism and Tragedies: Mt. Everest (Solukhumbu); Accident: Kakani (Kathmandu); History and Heritage: Royal Museums (Kathmandu), Timal (Kavre); Natural Disaster: Jure (Sindupalchowk), Barpak, Langtang, Dolakha; Major conflict

sites (various places of Nepal), Guerilla Trek (from Baglung to Rolpa) could be the major attractions of dark tourism in Nepal.

This study is a product of dark/disaster tourism induced by earthquake 2015 that killed 8,790 people and more than 22,300 people were injured. Out of 31 districts affected from the earthquake, 14 districts had severe impact. This could be the darkest event in the history of Nepal with a lot of dark/disaster tourism research opportunities, as Raine (2013, p. 242) and Stone (2006) stated that dark tourism spectrum identifies different categories of visitors identified at the burial grounds, ranging from “darkest” to “lightest” tourists (Raine, 2013, p. 242). Several sites could be commoditized as Nepal’s dark tourism product. The researchers hope that this study could be a milestone for prospective researchers in the field of dark tourism.

Adventure tourism in both Barpak and Langtang is already commodified earlier before earthquake. After disaster both destinations reflect a new product of dark tourism and popular adventure tourism destinations. The prospective tourists visiting Barpak and Langtang may not know about the disastrous events. When they reach at the proposed destinations, they will come to know regarding the tragedies that might instantly change their mind thinking about disaster, death and suffering. Ultimately this will be consumed by the tourists on one side and getting peak experience from their adventurous activities on the other. Thus, the tourists might realize, consume and enjoy from nature and culture. Though the trekking seems to be most important activities in these seismic memorial sites, Barpak visitors will experience with authenticity as an epicenter and Langtang visitors will experience with repressed sadism (disaster, death and suffering) which compels them to memorialize with invisible debris of dead buried under the avalanche site. Until before earthquake the tourists used to get only one benefit i.e. peak experience. In the post-disaster the prospective tourists visiting both sites would get multiple benefits with features of darkness and adventure respectively. This could be called as “darventure” as a new form of dark tourism in future.

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