

Village Tourism: A New Approach in Nepalese Tourism Industry

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Abstract:-Tourism is the world's one of the leading industry that has a great impact on the economy. Village Tourism is a new concept in world Tourism industry. It is new to Nepal but growing very fast. Village tourism is concentrated in village settlements for the purpose of generating employment and income to local people, preservation of the local environment and culture, utilization of local natural resources. Village Tourism basically focuses on sustainability. For the developing country like Nepal Village Tourism can play a vital role for the sustainable economic development. This paper intends to explore the conceptual analysis of Village Tourism and discuss the development and its practice in Nepalese Tourism industry.

Keywords:-Village, Tourists, Home Stay, Tourism Development.

I. INTRODUCTION

Atithi Devo Bhavah is a popular slogan in Nepalese tourism industry. Visitors are considered as Gods and are treated as family member in Nepali society. Nepali people are considered as the amazing host in hospitality business. Nepali villages are socio-culturally unique. They vary from one to another but are interconnected in terms of tradition and culture.

Rural/village Tourism takes place in non-urban settings usually in countryside, offering an elixir to counter tension and urbanization syndrome to the weary, stressed out tourists from both within as well as foreign countries to help them relax and rediscover their roots (Kapur, 2016.P.40).

Nepal is famous for its cultural and ethnic diversity. Above 86% of the Nepali people lives in rural areas. All the economic activities and opportunities are centralized in urban settlements. Thus, it is expected, local rural communities will be benefited socio-economically as well as culturally through village tourism. Village tourism and home stay can play a vital role to uplift the life of village people.

There are so many model villages that have introduced the concept of village tourism in Nepal. In these village homestays are managed, planned, organized and operated by local community members. It is community based tourism model. Government, its authority and line agencies don't play major role in this model. Ghalegaun and Sirubari village destination is the most successful village tourism model of Nepal, famous in Asia.

➤ *Statement of the Problem*

Nepal, a small Himalayan country is famous for its homely environment, friendly people, natural beauty, national heritages, flora and fauna in the international arena. Village-tourism has a high value in Nepalese tourism industry. Nepal can be benefited from the concept of village-tourism which has high potentiality in the industry.

1. Village-tourism is the popular concept in Nepalese tourism industry
2. Community based village-tourism model is the successful model in the Nepalese tourism

Some national and international articles tried to address on different aspects of village/rural tourism and its practice but they don't cover the overall aspects of village-tourism.

This article intends to identify some unidentified problems of village-tourism in Nepal.

➤ *Research Question*

So many such problems have been raised by so many researchers listed in review of literature. There are some areas which are not addressed that are being focused by this research. The research tries to answer following questions,

1. Why Village-tourism is the popular concept in Nepalese tourism industry?
2. How Community based village-tourism model is successful in the Nepalese tourism?

➤ *Objective of the study*

In order to present the study two main objectives were selected:

1. To identify the concept of village-tourism in Nepalese tourism industry.
2. To explore the success of village-tourism practice in Nepal.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Kunwar (2012) defined “village tourism as a kind of micro model tourism where tourists stay in traditional villages in remote areas, and learns the villager’s way of life”.

ICIMOD (1995) highlighted “mountain tourism as the composition of recreational, cultural and eco-tourism”.

Wight (1994) defines that “There seem to be two prevailing views of ecotourism: one envisages that public interest in the environment may be used to market a product the other sees that this same interest may be used to conserve the resources upon which this product is based. These views need not be mutually exclusive”.

Martha Honey (1998) explains that “Ecotourism is travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strives to be low impact and (often) small scale. It helps educate the traveller; provides funds for conservation; directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities; and fosters respect for different cultures and human rights.”

Ceballos-Lascurain (1990) provided most comprehensive definition. He said, “We may define ecotourism as that segment of tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objectives of admiring, studying and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals as well as any existing cultural features found in these areas.”

These literatures are helpful to identify research problems and to generate the ideas. It gives an idea on research and support to analyze the present situation of research on village/rural tourism. It is also helpful to find the research gap and generate research tools for further study.

Some national and international articles, books and reports tried to address the different aspects of village/rural tourism but they don’t cover the overall aspects of village tourism. These literatures don’t support the raised research questions but it is partially helpful to fulfill theoretical aspects of village tourism. This article intends to identify some unidentified problems on concept and practice of village-tourism in Nepal. Hence, I have reviewed the available literature to explore the research problem.

III. METHODOLOGY

This article is based upon a qualitative analysis. Descriptive, analytical as well as informative method has been used in this research. Focus group discussions (FGD) were done to collect the first hand information on the topic. Three separate focused group discussion have been organized with tourism entrepreneurs, tourism experts and tourism organization leaders. For FGD mainly the discussion method was used. Both formal and informal discussion was held with the concern stake holders. For the

purpose of FGD, resource persons were selected as respondents from TAAN, TGAN and VITOF- the professional organizations in tourism industry.

This research consists of present context data but some historical references are cited in the appropriate places. Basic source of information for this research is secondary information. Relevant books, websites, journal articles and government publications have been used properly. All the information collected has been classified, summarized, analyzed and some reflection will be made for this research.

This study is limited to historical study on the concept and practise of village-tourism. It emphasizes the activities in Nepal in general. This study doesn’t cover the social, political, economic and other aspects of village-tourism.

IV. DISCUSSION

UNWTO reports that number of international visitors dropped by 65% during the first half of 2020 compared to the same period of 2019 (UNWTO Report, 15 Sep. 2020). Because of COVID-19 and the lockdowns introduced by different countries in 2020 has had a massive drop in international tourism which losses 440 million international arrivals and about US\$ 460 billion revenues from international tourism (UNWTO Report, 15 Sep. 2020). Future of tourism depends on the availability of a vaccine or treatment and confidence of the traveller. (UNWTO Report, 15 Sep. 2020). So this is right time to promote domestic tourism for its sustainability. Village tourism, part of domestic tourism, can only preserve tourism industry, national economy and employment of the people who are engaged in this industry in this crucial situation.

➤ *Village tourism- theoretical approach*

Spanish scholar Gilbert and Tung argue that “rural tourism is a form of tourism in which farmers provide accommodation and other conditions for tourists to engage in various recreational activities in typical rural environments such as farms and pastures”. Arie Reichel and Oded Lowengart from Israel and Ady Milman from the United States concisely said: "Rural tourism is tourism located in rural areas." These two kinds of argument represent the narrow and broad sense of rural tourism connotation (Lu, 2017.P. 448). Rural tourism is also known as village tourism thus theoretical concept can be generalized in this context.

Village tourism deals with following things-

- To minimize the impact in environment and culture
- To play favorable ground for conservation and preservation
- To generate economy and employment and empower the local community (Ojha, 2018. P.183)

➤ *Village Tourism in Nepal*

Concept of Village tourism is to balance the nature and uplift the lifestyle of the poor people providing them economic opportunity through tourism. Village tourism is new to Nepal. In Nepal conventional tourism is limited

topopular areas like Kathmandu Valley, Pokhara Valley, Chitwan etc. Many virgin destinations have not been explored yet. Those virgin places are in remote villages with high potentiality. For the overall development of the country's tourism conventional tourism is not enough thus village tourism should be promoted for the overall development of the industry.

Home stays in Nepal's popular trekking routes in hilly area and buffer zone of National Parks in the Terai region are the most successful examples of village tourism on Asia based on the traditional accommodation and simple meals. These villages have become key component of Nepal's village tourism. Nepali village tourism model is empowering local villagers to become socio-culturally, environmentally and economically sustainable (Ojha, 2008.P.78).

It is believed that when the importance and necessity of ecotourism was realized in 1973 and established various national parks and reserves for conservation, from that very day village tourism was started in the name of home stays in Nepalese tourism industry (Ojha, 2018.P.132).

Nepal is a home land of 101 ethnic groups and spoken 92 languages in Nepal. Over 86% of Nepal's populations live in rural areas. Farming is the main occupation and non-farming opportunities are very rare so the emigration is inevitable in rural Nepal (Upadhyay, 2005.P.27). To tackle this situation, the concept of village tourism was introduced in Syanja district as new model of village tourism. Now there are many popular model villages are actively performing their activities. Home stays are much more popular these days than facilitated hotels especially in trekking routes of Nepal. Home stays are the backbone of village tourism.

➤ *Village Tourism Practice in Nepal*

Ghalegaon Village Tourism model was established in 1992, is located at Lamjung district in the north of central Nepal, famous for Gorkha soldiers- the Gurungs. Unique ethnic culture and Gurung life style is the central of attraction of Ghalegaon (<https://www.vitofnepal.org>). Ghalegaon is promoting tourism as well as preserving ethnic culture, local natural environment and generating employment for the villagers through responsible tourism.

Sirubari Village tourism model Sirubari is located at Syanja district of western Nepal, familiar for ethnic culture and lifestyle of Gurung ethnic community (<https://www.vitofnepal.org>). Domestic tourists especially visit Sirubari to get the lessons of village development whereas international tourists visit to see the Nepalese rural way of life, experience its culture in natural settings along with some other activities (Thapa, 2010.P.47). Sirubari is trying to promote it through the concept of sustainability focusing on to high quality-low number of tourists rather than low quality-high numbers. Distinct but prosperous culture and tradition of this tribe blended with their rich hospitality makes Sirubari village an unforgettable experience (<https://www.vitofnepal.org>).

Ghalegaon and Sirubari Village tourism model are the most successful village tourism model of Nepal. After the successful story of these two models now other model villages are also established to achieve the goal of sustainable tourism development. Other most popular village tourism model are-

1. Tanahun Village tourism model of Tanahun
2. Salang Village tourism model of Dhading
3. Barpak Village tourism model of Gorkha
4. Kakani Village tourism model of Kathmandu
5. Chepang Village tourism model of Dhading and Chitwan
6. Chitlang Village tourism model of Makawanpur
7. Balthali Village tourism model of Kavre
8. Panchpokhari Village tourism model of Sindhupalchok and so on ([https:// www.vitofnepal.org](https://www.vitofnepal.org))

Besides, hundreds of home stays are offering local food, shelter and cultural exchange to promote village tourism. Now home stays are being more popular than the facilitated hotel for those who seek organic experience.

➤ *Challenges of Village tourism*

The challenge faced by the village tourism is educating the rural people and bringing favorable attitudinal changes towards the tourist coming to their village and also towards the very concept of rural tourism as an economic enterprise for the economic development of the village folk (Kapur, 2016.P.40).

There are so many virgin tourist destinations as well as many unaddressed problems in Nepalese tourism industry especially in village tourism perspective. Without solving such problems, village tourism cannot be promoted as we expect. The major challenges associated with village tourism are as follows:

1. Connectivity and transport facilities
2. Affordable and facilitated accommodation
3. Means of Communication
4. Health Service Center
5. Electricity
6. Skilled Human Resources
7. Promotional activities
8. Co-ordination between the stake holders
9. Recreational Facilities
10. Information Centre
11. Banking Facilities
12. Awareness and so on.

V. CONCLUSION

Political stability has always been the major concern in the development of tourism in Nepal. Nepal became politically stable after the promulgation of new constitution on 2015 but the disaster caused by earthquake of 2015 and crisis caused by COVID-19 again back tracked the tourism growth. According to UNWTO it takes at least 2 ½ to 4 years for the revival of the international tourism. In this very situation, for the sustainable development of tourism, village tourism only can play a vital role in the country like Nepal.

Conventional tourism demands government involvement in planning, promotion and infrastructure development but Village Tourisms neither demand government planning nor its involvement. In this model local stakeholders are the sole authority who plan, promote, monitor and execute themselves. It is the self-sustained tourism practice which can provide a lesson to the concerned authority how to develop tourism locally empowering local community providing opportunity.

Nepal is predominantly a village base country. Majority of its population lives in rural area. For the development of the country villages should be developed. For the development of the villages' government and other stakeholders especially the local government should create favorable environment. To uplift the life of village people and entire development of the villages, village tourism will be a key vehicle in Nepal.

In Nepalese perspective, in one hand tourism is gradually heading towards mass tourism and in other hand there are so many virgin places with high potentiality which were not explored yet. Loss caused by COVID-19 in international tourism cannot recover immediately. In this very situation village tourism can be the ultimate solution to save the tourism industry. Thus concerned stakeholders should talk on village tourism and discuss its potentiality for the sustainability of Nepalese tourism industry.

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