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# **Historical Study on Village tourism for Sustainable Tourism development in Nepal**

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### **Abstract**

*Tourism is the world's one of the leading industries and of great importance for a diversified and underdeveloped country like Nepal where tourism is in flux. Village Tourism is a new concept in the world tourism industry. It is new to Nepal but growing very fast. The UN Sustainable Development Goals focus on sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The goal 12 focuses on sustainable consumption and production and specifically calls out a role for Travel & Tourism. From the Nepalese perspective, taking lessons from the 2008 global recession, the 2015 earthquake, and the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 and 2021, Nepal should prioritize village tourism for long-term sustainability.*

*The Nepal Tourism Policy 2009 prioritizes tourism as an important tool for the country's socioeconomic development. It focuses on quality improvement, foreign reserve collection and creating employment opportunities to improve the living standard of Nepalese people. For a long time, the Nepalese government has prioritized sustainable principles in the Nepalese tourism industry and attempted to implement its three major aspects in the industry, but the results have been unsatisfactory.*

*Village tourism is concentrated in village settlements for the purpose of generating employment and income for local people, preservation of the local environment and culture, and utilization of local natural resources. Village Tourism basically focuses on sustainability. For developing countries like Nepal Village tourism can play a vital role for sustainable economic development. The purpose of this paper is to investigate and analyze Village Tourism in order to ensure the long-term viability of the Nepalese tourism industry.*

**Keywords: Village- Tourists- Sustainable Tourism- Tourism Industry- Tourism Policy.**

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**Introduction:** Village Tourism occurs in non-urban settings, typically in the countryside, and provides an elixir to counter tension and urbanization syndrome to weary, stressed-out tourists from both within and outside of the country, allowing them to relax and rediscover their roots (Kapur, 2016). Nepal is well-known for its ethnic and cultural diversity. More than 86 percent of Nepali lives in rural areas. All economic activities and opportunities are concentrated in urban areas. As a result, it is expected that village tourism will benefit local

rural communities both socioeconomically and culturally. Village tourism and home stays can play an important role in improving the lives of village residents.

There are numerous model villages in Nepal that have pioneered the concept of village tourism. Homestays in these villages are managed, planned, organized, and operated by members of the local community. It is a community-based tourism model. The government, its authorities, and line agencies play minor roles in this model. Ghale Gaun , Sirubari and numerous village destinations are Nepal's most successful village tourism models, well-known throughout Asia.

**Statement of the Problem:** Nepal is known to be a little Himalayan country in the international arena, because of its homely environment, friendly people, natural beauty and national heritage. In the Nepalese tourism industry, village-tourism is of high value. Nepal is entitled to the village-tourism concept, which has high industrial potential. The Nepal Tourism Policy 2009 prioritizes tourism as an important tool for the country's socioeconomic development. It focuses on quality improvement, foreign reserve collection and creating employment opportunities to improve the living standard of Nepalese people. Vision 2020, a tourism strategy, focuses on sustainable tourism. For a long time, the Nepalese government has prioritized sustainable principles in the Nepalese tourism industry and attempted to implement its three major aspects in the industry.

The Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) recently released budget details, revealing a budget of Rs 807 million for the current fiscal year, compared to Rs 1.63 billion for the previous fiscal year. According to the NTB CEO, the budget's top priority is to recover the tourism industry and provide relief to tourism workers affected by the pandemic. According to him, NTB has released Rs 30 million in revenue from Trekkers' Information Management System (TIMS) card. NTB has also collaborated on job retention programs with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). NTB has received Rs 14 million as a result of this collaboration for its job retention program. Despite the pandemic, NTB anticipates receiving around 200,000 tourists in 2021 and collecting Rs. 206 million in tourist revenue. The current budget prioritizes tourism recovery and sustainability, research and database development, worker job security, domestic tourism promotion, and digital marketing (The Himalayan Times, August 2020). However, no funds were set aside in this budget for village tourism. NTB is still unsure about where to direct its attention. Nonetheless, village tourism is not prioritized as a primary vehicle for long-term tourism development. China had a great experience of village tourism that was sustained during the recession of 2008 in Europe. Tourism around the world suffered but China survived because of it.

Village tourism has been prioritized by the government as a key vehicle for sustainable tourism development, but implementation is lacking. For tourism sustainability, it has prioritized urban tourism, traditional tourism, promotional activities, and destination promotion, but not village tourism.

The purpose of this study is to look into the potential of village tourism for sustainable tourism development so that the root causes of sustainability as village tourism can be identified.

Some national and international articles attempted to address various aspects of village tourism and its practice, but they did not address the overall aspects of village tourism for its sustainability.

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

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

1. Why is village tourism such an important vehicle for sustainable tourism in Nepal's tourism industry?
2. What role does community-based village tourism play in long-term tourism development?

**Objective of the study:**

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

1. To recognize the significance of village-tourism in Nepalese tourism industry.
2. To explore the role of community- based village-tourism for sustainable tourism development in Nepal.

**Review of Literature:** According to (Miller & Ward 2005), (WCED, 1987), sustainable development is essentially a western innovation and a result of the US conservation movement.

Sustainable tourism, according to Horochowski and Moisey (2008), is described as current benefits combined with the preservation of potential opportunities for people. According to Kandari and Chandra (2004 ) sustainable tourism development meets the needs of current tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing future opportunities. It is envisioned that it will lead to the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be met while preserving cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems. Village tourism is "a form of micro model tourism in which tourists stay in traditional villages in remote areas and learn about the villager's way of life," according to Kunwar (2012).

“There seem to be two dominant views of ecotourism,” writes Wight (1994), “one envisions public interest in the environment being used to advertise a commodity, the other envisions this same interest being used to protect the resources upon which this product is based.”

“Ecotourism is travel to delicate, pristine, and typically protected areas that aims to be low impact and (often) small scale,” according to Martha Honey (1998). It aids in traveler

education, provides funds for conservation, directly supports local communities' economic growth and political empowerment, and fosters respect for diverse cultures and human rights.”

Ceballos-Lascurain (1990) gave the most thorough description. “We may describe ecotourism as that segment of tourism that involves traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the clear objectives of admiring, learning, and enjoying the scenery, as well as any established cultural features found in these areas,” he said. These literatures are helpful for identifying research problems and sparking ideas. It provides research ideas and assistance in analyzing the current state of research on village tourism as well as sustainable tourism principles. It is also useful for identifying research gaps and developing research tools for future research.

Some national and international articles, books, and reports attempted to address various aspects of sustainable tourism, but they did not address village tourism as one of the component of sustainable tourism. These literatures do not provide answers to the research questions, but it does help to fill theoretical gaps in sustainable tourism. The purpose of this article is to identify some unidentified issues with the concept and practice of sustainable tourism referring village tourism in Nepal. As a result, in order to investigate the research problem, I reviewed the available literature.

**Methodology:** This article is based on a qualitative investigation. In this study, descriptive and informative methods were used. Focus group discussions (FGD) were held in order to gather firsthand information on the subject. Three separate focused group discussions with tourism entrepreneurs, tourism experts, and tourism organization leaders have been planned. The discussion method was primarily used for the FGD. With the relevant stakeholders, both formal and informal discussions were held. For the purpose of the FGD, respondents were chosen from TAAN (Ram Khadka), TGAN (Bishnu Aryal), and VITOF (Ram Mani Rijal)—professional organizations in the tourism industry.

This study is based on current data, but historical references are included where appropriate. The primary and secondary sources of information for this study are relevant books, websites, journal articles, and government publications, were appropriately cited. All of the information gathered has been classified, summarized, and analyzed, and some consideration will be given to this research.

This research is limited to a historical examination of the concept of sustainable tourism. It focuses on activities in Nepal in general. The social, political, economic, and other aspects of sustainable referring village tourism are not covered in this study.

**Village tourism- theoretical approach:** According to the Spanish academics Gilbert and Tung, "rural tourism is a type 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." "Rural tourism is tourism in rural areas," said Arie Reichel and Oded Lowengart from Israel, and Ady Milman from the United States succinctly. These two types of arguments represent the narrow and broad meanings of rural

tourism connotation, respectively (Lu, 2017.P. 448). Because rural tourism is also known as village tourism, the theoretical concept can be applied in this context.

Village tourism deals with following aspects-

- To have the least possible impact on the environment and culture
- To create favorable conditions for conservation and preservation
- To stimulate the economy and create jobs, as well as to empower the local community (Ojha, 2018. P.183)

“There are several important tourism development theories that analyse the evolution of the tourism, which is based on the travel life cycle (Butler, 1980; Butler, Miossec, 1993). These theories describe the development of tourism in a cyclical pattern. According to these theories, the changes in the tourism market are happening not due to the economic, social, or physical reasons, but because of the changing nature of the tourism market and the changing tourist motivation” ( Streimikiene and Bilan, 2015).

Thus, rural tourism development can be viewed as a process, according to evolutionary theories of tourism development. As a result, tourism development should be defined as a natural change process. A proper understanding of this process allows for a better understanding of the dynamism of rural tourism development and allows for the identification of the main factors that influence changes in rural tourism as well as the selection of appropriate methods for their identification and assessment.

**Discussion:** The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which were agreed upon by 193 countries in September 2015, chart a course for global sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth. The 17 goals and 169 targets will guide the decisions that countries make in the years leading up to 2030 in order to help them achieve strong economic foundations and a better future. Goal 12 focuses on sustainable consumption and production (and specifically calls out a role for Travel & Tourism), Climate Change, Green Energy, Governance, Risk & Compliance, Supply Chain, Waste Generation and Diversion, Water, and Workforce are the eight critical issues for Travel & Tourism (<https://www.wttc.org>, 2017) which are the focuses of Village tourism.

According to the UNWTO, the number of international visitors fell by 65 percent in the first half of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019 (UNWTO Report, 15 Sep. 2020). Because of COVID-19 and the lockdowns implemented by various countries in 2020, there has been a massive drop in international tourism, which has resulted in the loss of 440 million international arrivals and approximately US \$460 billion in revenue from international tourism (UNWTO Report, 15 Sep. 2020). The future of tourism is dependent on the availability of a vaccine or treatment, as well as the traveller's confidence (UNWTO Report, 15 September 2020). Now international tourism is in red zone. Nepali tourism faced a lot of ups and down during 2008-2021 i.e. international economic recession of 2008, earthquake of 2015 and now Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, now is the time to promote domestic/village tourism in order to ensure its long-term viability. Village tourism, as part of domestic tourism, can only save the tourism industry, the national economy, and the jobs of those who work in this industry in this critical situation.

**Village tourism in terms of Sustainable Tourism in Nepal:** Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive or corrective measures whenever necessary. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.

With an aim of poverty alleviation through sustainable tourism, the Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (TRPAP) is an initiative of the Nepal Government toward village-tourism in Nepal with technical and financial support from various international development agencies and non-government organizations. It is believed to contribute to the poverty alleviation objective of the government through sustainable tourism development that is pro-poor, pro-environment, pro-rural communities and pro-women, making the benefits of tourism reach grass-roots level in the specific programme sites.

**Village Tourism in Nepal:** The concept of village tourism is to balance nature and improve the poor people's lifestyles by providing them with economic opportunities through tourism, which is new to Nepal. Conventional tourism in Nepal is limited to popular areas such as Kathmandu Valley, Pokhara Valley, Chitwan, and so on. Many virgin destinations have yet to be discovered. Those virgin areas can be found in remote villages with a lot of potential. Conventional tourism is insufficient for the overall development of the country's tourism. As a result, village tourism should be promoted for the industry's overall development.

Home stays along Nepal's popular trekking routes in the hilly region, as well as the buffer zone of National Parks in the Terai region, are the most successful examples of village tourism in Asia, based on traditional accommodations and simple meals. These villages have become an important part of Nepalese village tourism. The Nepali village tourism model enables local villagers to become socio-culturally, environmentally, and economically sustainable (Ojha, 2008). It is believed that when the importance and necessity of village-tourism was recognized, village tourism in the form of home stays began in the Nepalese tourism industry on that very day (Ojha, 2018).

Nepal is home to 101 ethnic groups and 123 languages are spoken there. More than 86 percent of Nepalese people live in rural areas. Farming is the most common occupation, and non-farming opportunities are scarce, so emigration is unavoidable in rural Nepal (Upadhayay, 2005). To address this situation, the concept of village tourism was introduced as a new model in Syanja district. Many popular model villages are now actively carrying out their activities. Home stays are much more popular these days than facilitated hotels, particularly along Nepal's trekking routes. Now village tourism proved it as the back bone of the industry.

**Challenges of Village tourism for sustainability:** The challenge that village tourism faces is educating the rural people and bringing about favorable attitudes toward tourists visiting

their village, as well as the concept of village tourism as an economic enterprise for the economic development of the village folk (Kapur, 2016).

The following are the major challenges associated with village tourism in Nepal:

1. Connectivity and transportation options
2. Affordably priced and easily accessible lodging
3. Communication Methods
4. Health Service Center
5. Electricity
6. Knowledgeable Human Resources
7. Promotional efforts
8. Collaboration among stakeholders
9. Recreational Resources
10. Information Center
11. Banking Services
12. Consciousness and so on.

**Conclusion:** Political stability has always been a major concern in Nepal's tourism development. Nepal became politically stable following the adoption of a new constitution in 2015, but the 2015 earthquake disaster and the COVID-19 crisis slowed tourism growth. According to the UNWTO, the revival of international tourism will take at least two and a half to four years. In this situation, village tourism can only play a vital role in the sustainable development of tourism in a country like Nepal.

Traditional tourism necessitates government involvement in planning, promotion, and infrastructure development, whereas village tourism necessitates neither planning nor involvement from the government. Local stakeholders are the sole authority in this model, and they plan, promote, monitor, and execute themselves. It is the self-sustaining tourism practice that can teach the concerned authorities how to develop tourism locally while empowering the local community and providing opportunities.

Nepal is predominantly a village-based country. The majority of its people live in rural areas. Villages should be developed for the development of the country. The government and other stakeholders, particularly the local government, should create a favorable environment for the development of the villages. Village tourism will be a key vehicle in Nepal to improve the lives of village people and the overall development of villages.

From a Nepalese perspective, tourism is gradually moving toward mass tourism, while on the other hand, there are many virgin areas with high potential that have not been explored. Losses caused by Covid-19 pandemic in international tourism will take time to recover. In this situation, village tourism may be the only way to save the tourism industry. As a result, concerned stakeholders should discuss village tourism and its potential for the long-term viability of the Nepalese tourism industry.

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