



An Analysis on Domestic Tourism Development Prospective in Karnali Province, Nepal

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Abstract

The main thrust of this paper is to elucidate various aspects of domestic tourism in the specific context of Karnali Province in Nepal. To elucidate the complex interface between tourism and people, attempt have been made to provide an analysis covering various aspects related to domestic tourism policies, programs, prospects and problems. This research was conducted under Mixed Method research design because the study was described systematically the major problems and prospects of tourism development in the study area. The districts and places for domestic tourism importance have been purposively selected in order to collect valid and reliable data from the local level. Tourism is a complex process related to the work and life of people who live in the tourism potential areas. The tourism phenomenon has to make a perfect match in order to harness the benefits of tourism related activities. This research based article covers various facts of tourism development related phenomena and processes as social, cultural, religious, and natural aspects when come together make a complex form of an integrated rural network.

Keywords: Harness, culture, development, prospects, problems

Introduction

Tourism is the movement of people from one location to another, whether inside one's own country or in other countries (Goeldner et al., 2000). It could be for pleasure, business, pilgrimage, or another reason. Tourism has evolved progressively alongside human culture and civilization. The aim of this study is to explore and describe various dimensions of tourism development in Karnali Province of Nepal. There is now a great realization that tourism development covers multi-



dimensional phenomena. It also includes consideration of human factors the key actors and in the operative context of expansion and development of tourism related activities and actions (Dhakal, 2022). At present, in contemporary society, tourism industry is rapidly growing worldwide and its role is significant in the social, economic, and political sector of all countries. The Kuseni group (2024) Some of the most sought-after locations for preserving abundant natural and cultural tourism resources are wetlands parks. Wetland parks are becoming a popular destination for ecotourists looking to create unique travel experiences.

Some wetland parks are now drawing few eco-tourists, despite their potential to create unforgettable ecotourism experiences. This could be attributed to their inability to satisfy the expectations of their patrons (Kuseni et al., 2024). With a projected global economy of US\$1.54 trillion in 2020, tourism is one of the sectors with the quickest rate of growth The tourist industry has had tremendous expansion, which can be ascribed to the variety of tourism experiences available to cater to various tourism markets. These experiences include nature, adventure, culture, religion, sport, health, and ecotourism (Kuseni et al., 2024). Constantin et al. (2022) provide support for this viewpoint, pointing out that ecotourist profiling in protected areas is essential for marketers to gather detailed information about demand characteristics, categorize target markets, create compelling messaging, and package resources and products to satisfy specific needs.

As stated above, tourism is a dynamic and multifaceted industry that involves the movement of people from one place to another for leisure, business, or other purposes (Goeldner et al., 2000). It encompasses a wide range of activities, services, and experiences, making it a crucial component of the global economy. Tourism not only contributes significantly to a country's GDP but also fosters cultural exchange, promotes economic development, and creates employment opportunities. At its core, tourism involves the temporary movement of individuals or groups to destinations outside their usual places of residence. This movement can be driven by a variety of motives, including relaxation, adventure, cultural exploration, business engagements, or even health and wellness pursuits. Regardless of the purpose, tourism plays a pivotal role in connecting people across borders, fostering mutual understanding, and promoting the exchange of ideas and values.

Tourism is a highly diverse industry, encompassing various sectors such as hospitality, transportation, attractions, and travel services. The tourism industry is subject to constant evolution, influenced by factors such as technological advancements, changing consumer preferences, and global events. With the advent of the internet, social media, and online booking platforms, the way people plan, book, and experience travel has undergone significant transformations. It can have both positive and negative impacts on destinations. On the positive side, it can boost local economies, create jobs, and foster cultural exchange (Roman at al., 2020).

Karnali Province is known for its rich cultural heritage, stunning landscapes, and diverse range of activities, making it a popular destination for tourism and hospitality. Please note that there may



have been changes or developments since then. Trekkers and mountaineers from around the globe visit Karnali for iconic trekking routes such as Humla and Dolpa Trek, Limi Valley Trek. Besides trekking and mountaineering, Karnali offers a range of adventure activities such as white-water rafting, paragliding, and jungle safaris in national parks like Rara and She Foksundo. Karnali has a growing hospitality industry with a wide range of accommodations ranging from luxury hotels to ordinary guesthouses. Major tourist hubs like Kankre Bihar and PanchaKoshi Area. Tourists often seek authentic cultural experiences, and Karnali provides opportunities to engage with local communities, participate in festivals, and learn about traditional crafts and arts (Dhakal, 2022). Karnali is a melting pot of religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism. Pilgrims and tourists often visit sacred sites like Kankre Bihar and SheyGomba. Its diverse landscapes, including the Himalayas, hills, and plains, make it an attractive destination for nature lovers. The beauty of places like Mugu with its serene lakes and mountain views, attracts a significant number of tourists. It has been increasingly emphasizing sustainable tourism practices, promoting eco-friendly activities and responsible tourism to protect its environment and cultural heritage (Dhakal, 2022). Hill, rocky slopes, larger grazing land, and beautiful scene of Himalayan, natural caves, ponds, lakes, and springs are the major attraction of tourism. Rara National Park SheyPhoksundo National Park, mountain, plain land, forest, and snow-covered mountain, water, and wildlife have to be explored. Many tourists from different districts of Nepal can appeal to visit this area. Taking above mentioned realities into consideration, a need to carry out the research is greatly realized. This realization opens a vista to carry out this research work in the field of tourism development, prospects available to the Karnali, and also explore problems also encountered by people who are greatly engaged in tourism development related activities.

All these above stated feature Karnali provides a rich ground to carry out domestic tourism related research activities and actions. The objective of the study is to find out the prospects and problems of tourism covering social, cultural, and natural prospective for the tourism sector development related activities and actions appropriately suited to local condition and context.

Methodology

This research was conducted under Mixed Method research design because the study was described systematically the major problems and prospects of tourism development in the study area. The whole Karnali Province has been taken for granted as the universe. The districts and places for domestic tourism importance have been purposively selected in order to collect valid and reliable data from the local level. This study has triangulated both qualitative and quantitative research approaches and strategies. The quantitative approach was adopted to collect quantitative data from the field. The quantitative data also collected for this study available at the provincial level. Qualitative study was triangulated on observation of events, key informant's interviews to carry out with the people who were connected with the tourism. Questionnaire sheet was developed and used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from the informants.

Result and Discussion

Basic introduction and issues

This result and discussion section have been divided into five parts. These include basic introduction, heritage tourism, cultural tourism, major eco-destination, problems and prospects. The study area is reflected through various aspects such as lakes, panoramic Himalayan views, unique mountains, landscapes, and traditional cultural ways and rituals of people in the area included in this study. The potentialities of ecotourism especially in Mugu, Humla, and Dolpa.

The rigid practice of plans developing from the center has now adopted a flexible approach in order to address the local people’s needs, skills, and experiences. The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation prepared a national strategy plan (2016-2025) for the balanced development of tourism sector in the country. The tourist destination areas located in remote districts; poor transportation facility and communication and absence of minimal amenities and facilities of life needed to the tourists. Many tourist spots of the study districts are need of conservation of monuments with high culture and archaeological value. Many monuments ruined in the study area and are in need of conservation.

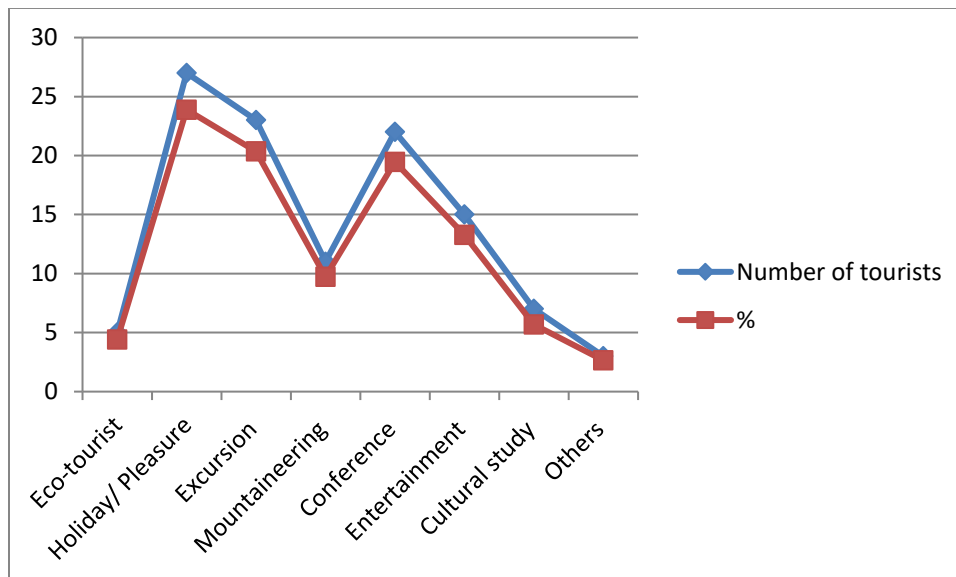


Figure:1 Distribution of tourist respondents by the purpose of visit

The large number of domestic tourist visit Karnali to spent holiday or pleasure, it covers 24 percent of the total visitors. The second largest number of visitors was excursion and conference 20-20 percent, like this, 13 percent visitors were belongs to entertainment. This data shows that Karnali is hob for pleasure, and entertainment most of the visitors who had aim for pleasure, excursion and conference interested to visit holy places. Every district has popular religious and historical places which are directly related to the pilgrims. Only 10 percent were Mountaineering, why this? May be raise the question? But till now High Mountain of Karnali are restricted to visit.

The primary purpose of transportation is to facilitate the efficient and effective movement of goods and people. Most of the tourist (especially domestic tourist) use bus as a means of transport. Some prefer jeep and car, young visitors can use bike. Most of the visitors realized that air transport is convenient and safe than the other means of transport regarding the issues of hill and mountain districts. Geographically, Karnali is rocky and mountainous region road transport is comparatively less comfortable than the aircraft.

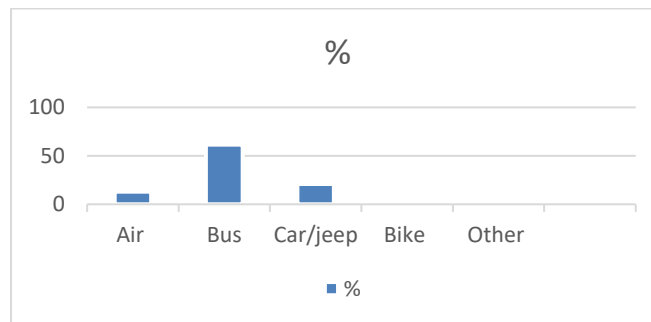


Figure: 2 Distribution of tourist respondents by means of transportation

The destination stay overnight involves various responsible factors that contribute to a positive and sustainable travel experience. Responsible tourism encourages ethical and mindful choices that benefit local communities, the environment, and the tourists themselves. Accommodation facilities, amenities and guest host relation can play the vital role to lengthen the duration of the tourist or visitors in the destination.

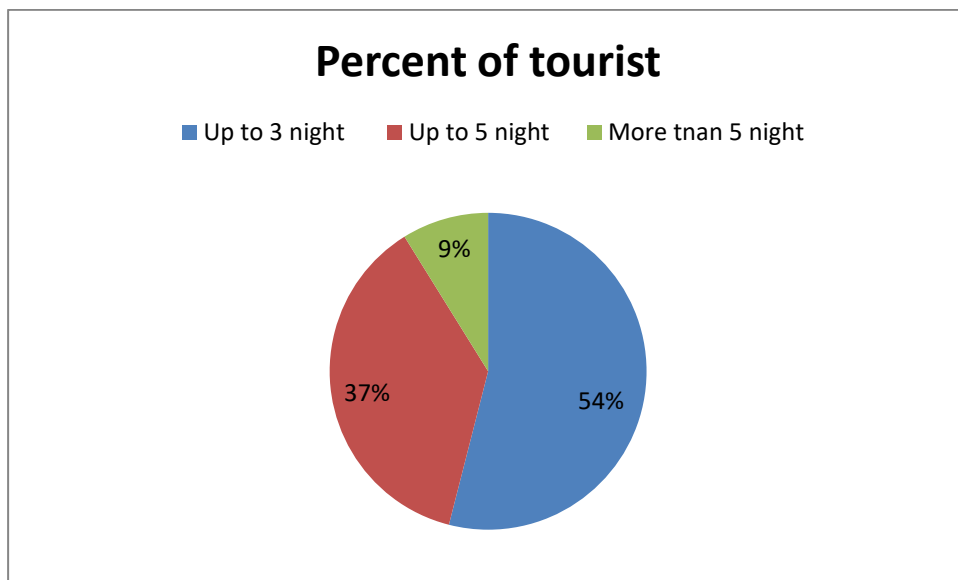


Figure: 3

Distribution of tourist respondents by Night stay

Figure shows that 9 percent of the tourists stay more than five night, 37 percent of the visitors stay up to five night and large number of tourists that was 54 percent stay up to three nights in their tour destination in Karnali.

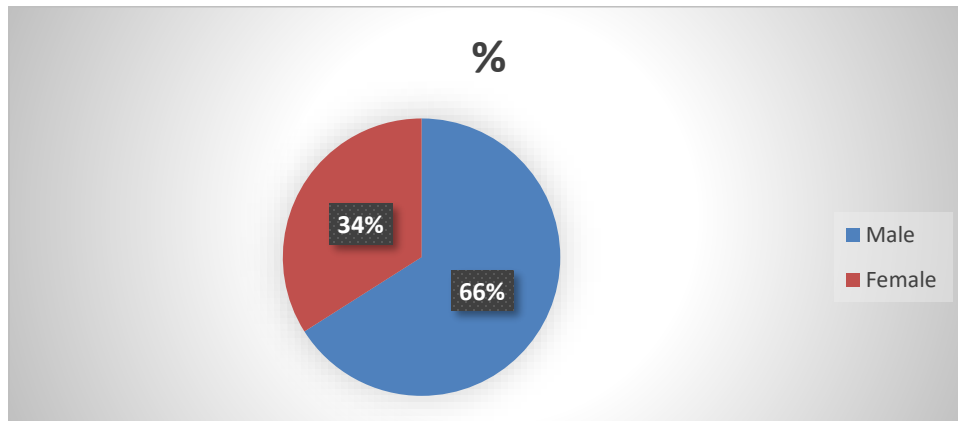


Figure 4 Distribution of respondents by Gender

The above figure shows that male tourists are near about two times larger number than the female. The key informants highly focused on the development of transportation facility, improvement of road quality, establishment of district level tourism office, provision of tourist guides, to improve the sanitation and the health facilities, conservation of natural resources, provision of security, and provision of tourism marketing promotional plan for the development of tourism in Karnali Province. All most all key informants gave their views to focus on the transportation, quality of road, tourism marketing plan, tourist guide, security, sanitation and tourism office. Regarding the development of transportation facility key respondents give their views on improvement of the road quality, they give their views on security, conservation of resources, cultural preservation. Key informants were stressed that the development of tourism sector in Karnali was essential to uplift the economic condition of the people.

Transportation is the pre requisite component of tourism; it is directly related to the access of the destination. It is important in social, cultural, economic, and destination development of tourism sector. It helps to the development of different industries which produce consumable goods and contributing to marketing. Transport helps to the maximum utilization of local resources and mobilizes the people. There are different types of transportation; road transportation, air transportation, rail transportation, water transportation, cable transportation etc. geographically and the present situation of development of the nation; there are road and air transport viability in Karnali Province. Access of air transport is directly related to the national level of transport whereas road transport is local and national level. Both air and road transportation have significant role to contribute the development of tourism in Karnali Province.



Heritage tourism in Karnali Province

Heritage tourism involves travel to places that hold cultural, historical, and natural significance. These destinations include historic sites, museums, monuments, archaeological sites, and landscapes, attracting visitors interested in experiencing and learning about the past (Hall, 2002). Cultural heritage focuses on the preservation and promotion of cultural assets such as traditions, customs, arts, and historical sites. Heritage tourism aims to showcase the richness and uniqueness of a community's cultural identity (Park, 2014). Historical heritage involves visiting places with historical importance, such as battlefields, castles, ancient ruins, and heritage towns. These destinations provide insights into the history of a region, offering a tangible connection to the past (Ashworth & Goodall, 1990).

Natural heritage includes the exploration of natural sites with ecological significance. Heritage tourism is educational in nature, providing opportunities for visitors to learn about the history, customs, and traditions of a particular place. Museums, guided tours, and interpretive programs contribute to the educational aspect (Poria et al., 2003). Peterson (1994:123) stressed that heritage tourism serves as a significant economic driver for local communities. The influx of tourists contributes to revenue generation through ticket sales, accommodations, dining, and the purchase of local crafts and souvenirs (Poria et al. 2003). In this regard heritage tourism emphasizes responsible travel and conservation practices. This includes efforts to minimize the environmental impact, preserve cultural integrity, and ensure the long-term viability of the destination (Park, 2014). It can promote cultural diplomacy by fostering international understanding and cooperation. Sharing cultural and historical narratives can contribute to positive cross-cultural relations and a sense of global interconnectedness (Hall, 2002).

Successful heritage tourism often involves local communities in the preservation and management of cultural assets. Inclusion of local perspectives and traditions enhances the authenticity of the visitor experience (Poria et al. 2003). Heritage tourism faces challenges such as over-tourism, inadequate infrastructure, and the need for careful management to balance tourism benefits with the preservation of cultural and natural resources (Park, 2014). Understanding and managing heritage tourism require a holistic approach that values both the preservation of heritage assets and the positive socio-economic impacts on local communities (Hall, 2002). Sustainable practices, community engagement, and a balanced approach to development are essential for the long-term success of heritage tourism. Heritage tourism focuses on identifying visitor categories and revealing personal preferences that impact decisions about urban historical tourism locations. Comprehending visitors' actions and reasons for selecting a destination allows for segmentation based on common features such as individual preferences concerning location (Bravi & Gasca, 2014; Neuts & Vanneste, 2020), visitors' behavior (Andruliene et al., 2018; Katsikari et al., 2020), and personal characteristics (Dane et al., 2020).



Karnali province is the place of old civilization of Nepal. The archaeological sites found in Jumla, Dailekh, and Surkhet indicate that the area were major part of Khasa Kingdom, which was established during the 11th century. The capital of Khasa Kingdom was Sinja of Jumla district. The Kingdom was expended to a great extent in 13th and 14th century. It was expended to Garthwar in the west, Mansarovar and Guge Regions of Tibet in the north, GorkhaNuwakot Region in the east, like this Kapilvastu with large area of terai in the south. After late 14th century The Khasa Empire was collapsed and divided into 22 Principalities (BaiseRajya), (Adhikari, 2061).

Nagraj was the first emperor, who come from Tibet and established a sovereign state of Khasa in Karnali region. the lords of this state were Nagraj, Krachalla, Ashok Challa, GitariMalla, RipuMalla, Aditya Malla, PunneMalla and PrithiviMalla etc. After collapsed the Khasa state, it had divided into 22 Principalities (BaiseRajya), like Bajhang, Doti, Jajarkot, Salyan, Gurlvakot, Rukumetc born in the western part of Nepal. At present the most backward area was the dominate state of the medieval state.

The main and scientific contribution of the western Khasa state is the contribution of Nepali language. The Origen of the present Nepali language is from the KhasaMalla State, so this language is also called Khasakura or Sinjali language. The KhasaMalla Kings made this a national language by using in Royal works. And because of this the language continued to grow, modified and developed regularly. This language was widely used in 22 states and 24 states, which stood after the dissolution of KhasMalla state. This language got a place of the Royal language in all the 22 and 24 states and after the reunification of greater Nepal it became the national language of Nepal.

Karnali Province is marked with multi-religious society. The major religion in Karnali Province is Hinduism, and the DeutiBajai Temple, Shivamandir, Kankarbihar Temple, Chandanath Temple, Tripurasundari, PanchaKoshi area are the main Hindu religious sites of Karnali Province, attracts many pilgrims and other types of tourists. Other Hindu pilgrimage sites include the temple Belaspur in Dailekh; ChhayaNath in Mugu, Kanaka Sundari and ChandanNath in Jumla, Khairabhang in Salyan, and SheyGumba and Bala Tripura Sundari Mai in Dolpa.

Sinja Valley of Jumla district and Dullu in Dailekh district were the capital city of Khas Dynasty are very rich in terms of cultural heritage. There are PanchaKoshi, KirtiKhamba, Pillors, PatharNauli (water tap), Devals, Jwala Devi (ever burning flam), Shiddha Pau (foot print of god Shiva), in Dullu. Like this Pandav Cave, Kanaka Sundari and remains of Khas dynasty buildings in Sinja Valley, Kankrebihar area, Siddha Paila in Surkhet. MangalGadhi, Gothi Kanda Gadhi, RanimattaGadhi, DailekhGadhi, DulluGadhi are the fortress.

DeautiBajai is a Hindu temple situated in Birendranagar of Surkhet district. The history of the temple is close relation with the Raji people. Historically, Raji people are the main priest of the DeutiBajai; only the people belonging to the Raji society used to adoring in this temple as the main



priest. Nowadays, people from Surkhet and neighboring districts come every day to pray in this temple.

Kankrebihar is situated on top of small hillock in the middle part of the Surkhet valley is a ruin of a 12th-century stone temple, which shows that the people of the region practiced Hinduism along with Buddhism. The carved stones statues reflect the images related to the god Buddha and many Hindu gods and goddess like Saraswati, Shiva and Ganesh. This temple is the symbol of religious harmony among the Buddhist and Hindus. Shideshwar Mahadev Temple is one of the famous religious affairs of the Province. This place is located at Dungeshor, between the bank of Karnali River and Lohore River of Dullu Municipality ward no. 1, Dailekh district. There are two temples; ShideshworMahadev and Dungal Temple in lower Dungeshwor. According to Ancient holy flame myth and fable-tell of the locality of Dailekh district, this area is considered to be a holy place in the center of five famous Panchkoshi area of Dailekh district. ShideshworMahadev is the only temple in Karnali Province where the priest is child boy less than 17 years old.

Navisthan is a holy place and center point of attraction not only for Hindu pilgrimage but also the all people who have interested to the natural flaming and devotion of the Hindu people. There are five temples in the Navisthan area. It is belief till now, Navisthan is the place where the departure body of Goddess Sati Devis' stomach was flown and stay as the power of Shiva Shakti, and then the flame of fire started regularly. Dvottee had made temple and started to worship the God Shiva. There are two temples where we can see the fires flaming continuously burn there. Shristhan is also another holy place and center of attraction pilgrimage. Departure body of Goddess Sati Devis' head was flown and stay as the divine power of Shiva Shakti, and then the flame of fire started regularly. The foot prints of tolerant sagacious are also seen to be decked there. These foot prints are called as Siddha Pau.

Padukasthan is a holy place and center of attraction for pilgrims and heritage tourist. It lies in the Dullu municipality ward no.9 of Dailekh district. Padukasthan is the place where the departure body of Goddess Sati Devis' feet was flown and stay as the divine power of Shiva. According the mythology, there is believed that the feet of Sati Devi had fallen down there and the holy place was called Paduka. The richness of heritages in Dailekh can be reflected by the presence of various religiously and historically significant places available there. The temple of 'Dhuleshwor' lies in Dullu municipality ward no. 9 of Dailekh district. Dhuleshwor is peacefully situated in an elevated hill of Dailekh. Dhuleshwor temple is a temple of Lord Shiva; temple has four doors like Pasupatinath temple.

Chandanath Temple is one of the famous temples of Karnali Province, lies in the center of Jumla Bazaar near by the Tila Karnali River. The name of the temple is associated with the ChandanNath Yogi, the first Mahanta, who established the temple and started to worship Dattatray (the great daity of Hindu). According to the priest of the temple Ramesh Neupane; adorer worship in the



temple early in the morning, it takes two hours from 4.00 am to 6.00 am and evening also takes two hours for adoring from 6.00 pm to 8.00 pm.

Bala Tripura temple is the famous holy place of Hindu people, located at Tripurakot on hillock surrounded by ThuliBheri, Sundari Ganga and Tamrabadhi. It is in Tripura Sundari Municipality Ward No 3 of Dolpa district. Chairman of the temple preservation committee, Laxmi Kant Neupane informed that the temple was established in 1114 BS and regular worshipping till now. Bala Tripura SundariBhagawati temple is dedicated to the powerful goddess Durga, there are four white stone images represent the Bala, Tripura, Sundari and Bhagawati. This temple is considered the great holy place for Hindu people. Great devotee Shankaracharya of Kanchikamakoti from India came to pray in Tripura Sundari. Like this Khaptad Baba had got Yog Siddhi. All above mentioned historical, cultural, religious and social dimensions embedded in Karnali Province provided a great potential of tourism development in Nepal.

Cultural tourism in Karnali Province

Cultural tourism involves travel with the primary purpose of experiencing the culture, heritage, arts, and lifestyle of a destination (Park, 2014). This form of tourism emphasizes the cultural aspects of a location, encouraging visitors to engage with and appreciate the local traditions, history, and way of life. Cultural tourism focuses on the preservation and promotion of a destination's cultural heritage. This includes historical sites, monuments, museums, traditional art forms, rituals, and other aspects that reflect the identity of a community.

Travelers engage in immersive experiences that allow them to interact with locals, participate in cultural activities, attend festivals, and gain a deeper understanding of the community's customs and traditions. Culinary experiences are an integral part of cultural tourism (McKercher & Du Cros, 2002). Travelers often explore local markets, try traditional dishes, and participate in cooking classes to learn about the culinary heritage of a destination. Cultural tourism involves an appreciation of local art and craftsmanship (Park, 2014). Visitors may explore art galleries, attend craft workshops, and purchase handmade souvenirs to support local artisans.

Visiting historical landmarks, archaeological sites, and monuments is a central component of cultural tourism (McKercher & Du Cros, 2002). These sites provide insights into the history and evolution of a destination. Cultural tourism often coincides with local festivals and events. Travelers have the opportunity to witness and participate in celebrations, parades, and traditional performances, gaining firsthand experience of the local culture (McKercher & Du Cros, 2002). Some cultural tourism initiatives focus on designated routes or trails that guide visitors through significant cultural and historical sites. These may include pilgrimage routes, heritage trails, or cultural circuits.

Cultural tourism promotes exchanges between visitors and local communities. This can take the form of homestays, community-based tourism initiatives, and cultural exchange programs, fostering mutual understanding (McKercher & Du Cross, 2002). Cultural tourism often emphasizes



sustainability and responsible travel practices. This includes minimizing the environmental impact, respecting local customs, and supporting community-based initiatives that benefit the local population. Cultural tourism provides educational opportunities through interpretive centers, guided tours, and informational materials (Park, 2014). These resources help visitors understand the significance of cultural sites and traditions. Efforts are made to document and preserve cultural assets through activities like cultural mapping. This helps in maintaining the authenticity of cultural elements and ensures their continued relevance.

Karnali Province is relatively homogeneous in terms of social and ethnic diversity. Khas Nepali is the dominant language of the province. According to the census of 2021, 95 percent of the total population speaks Khas Nepali language as the mother tongue. This may be credited to the origins of the Khas Language in Sinja Valley of Jumla district. During the early medieval period the Khasa used to live in a big territory known as Khasadesa- the Khasa Kingdom. The Karnali Region of Nepal is predominantly inhabited by Khasa people for many centuries. Karnali Province is inhabited by Khasa people. The term Khasa covers a broad caste groups which include Brahman, Chhetri, and Thakuri followed with many Dalit groups of Nepal. Khasa culture is the major sources of Karnali civilization. The famous Dullu pillar inscription, which is known as Victory pillar (Kirtistamba) was installed by PrithviMalla in the Sake year of 1279 (1357 AD) (Adhikari, 2061). Many inscriptions of this time are found in the Karnali Province and they are related to the history of Khas Kingdom. PrithviMalla was engaged in religious and cultural development activities (Pokhrel, 2075). Khasa culture was developed in the period of Khas Kingdom in Karnali region because Khas rural attained cultural and material prosperity. During this period commercial and cultural activities connects with India and Tibet. The main caravan route, connecting India and Tibet passed through Surkhet, Dullu, Sinja and Taklakhari (Adhikari, 2069).

Cultural aspects of the human civilization were developed and flourished in Khasa dynasty period at Karnali Region. Sinja and Dullu were the prosperous cities in the Khas density especially during the period of PrithviMalla. Two administrative capitals were established in that period Sinja and Dullu. Sinja was the Summer Capital and Dullu was the winter Capital, thus most of the archeological sites are found in these places. These archeological sites reflect the ancient Khasa culture and are now become centre of the tourists' attraction. Apart from this Tharu, Gurung, Magar, Raji, Majhi, Raute, Bhote, and Bote culture are important aspects of cultural tourism in Karnali.

Khasa people have built several traditions that they still execute these days. Some of these traditions include: not sleeping in the bed positioning pillow in the north direction. Those who have lost their father should not eat facing north. Khasa people postpone going somewhere if there is a sneeze. People are never asking someone where they are going if they are planning to go somewhere. People believe that if there is a hiccup, then someone is remembering the person. Khasa people argue that taking picture reduces life-span, and requirement of proper disposal of hair after



combing the head (Pokhrel, 2075). These folk traditions are still continued in the rural parts of Karnali Province of Nepal.

The majority of Bhote people in Dolpa practice Tibetan Buddhism, and their way of life is deeply influenced by Buddhist rituals, festivals, and traditions. Monasteries and stupas are integral to their religious practices. Traditional clothing for Bhote people includes garments like the chuba (a robe-like dress), aprons, and various headdresses. These garments are often made of wool or other locally sourced materials. Traditional Bhote music and dance play an important role in their cultural expressions. Instruments like the flute, drum, and cymbals are commonly used during religious ceremonies and festivals. Bhote society is often organized into extended families and communities. Respect for elders, communal harmony, and cooperation in daily life are emphasized. Ceremonial events like weddings and funerals are significant occasions in Bhote culture. These events involve specific rituals, religious ceremonies, and communal feasting. The Bhote people of Dolpa have a rich cultural heritage that reflects their connection to Tibetan traditions and the unique challenges and opportunities presented by their mountainous environment.

Magar refers to a large ethnic group scattered in most of the hilly region of Nepal. The Magar is one of the oldest ethnic groups they have own culture and language. They believe to be of Tibetan descent (Adhikari, 2061). Raji as an ethnic group is been look down upon the dominated other higher caste people, even though they have own culture and language. Linguists say that the language of the Rajis belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family. There is the opinion that the Rajis speak three languages incomprehensible to one another. Purbiya, Doteli and Bundel are said to be the three languages of the Rajis. They speak own language but they don't have own script. However, there is no uniformity of Raji language among their community in different parts (Devkota, 2007).

Gurungs people are indigenous group having their own traditional culture and language. They have practice both Hindu and Buddhist religion. Traditionally Gurung people are keen on enjoyment and merry making. They're well-known for his or her humor, singing and dancing. A sorathi dance could be a typical Gurung dance, which may be a re-enactment of an ancient legend a couple of king who had 7 wives and no children. Maruni dance is one amongst the standard dances of Gurungs performed within the month of Shrawan (July-August) and lasts up to month of Poush (December-January) (Gurung, 2035). Marriages among the Gurungs are of two types: arranged marriage and marriage by elopement (Donald, 1976). Gurung people in Karnali Province flow Buddha and Hindu religion. Eventhough there is in practice Bon Religion. Mostly, Gurung people feel proud to say Buddhist to them.

The Majhi community is one such indigenous group that has their own distinct language, custom, culture, and religion. They have been traditionally living on the banks of the river and its tributaries. They speak own language but they have no written language they can speak Nepali



language fluently. The main occupation of the Majhi people is fishing. Majhi people celebrate many festivals throughout the year. They worship nature, and sacrificial offerings of animals' and birds along with homemade drinks.

Yogi NarhariNath (1955) found out about the Raute people in the forest and explained about them. Linguists found that the Raute speak a Tibeto-Burman language and their language is linguistically unique as they had been isolated from other ethnic groups for a long time (Reinhard 1974). Raute people have distinct feature than the other people; some of the notable features that are mentioned by Bista (1991), United Nations Development Program (2011) and Main BahadurShai (head of the Raute community) are as follow; Raute people are nomadic till now. They believe that Mukhiya (head of the Raute people) as the King of forest. Till now Raute people do not involve in agricultural production and animal husbandry, Woodcraft is their main source of livelihood. They have interested to hunting Languor Monkey but male people are involved in hunting and use net and sticks to kill the monkey.They have neither formal education nor literate, all of them are illiterate.

People of each community have been blank tide with their own culture and rituals. These culture and rituals provides identity to people who maintain these culture and rituals. Rituals provide a strong potential to the promotion and development of tourism destination in the various places of Karnali province in Nepal. Hence, rituals have been considered important part of tourism development in the areas. Cultural tourism not only enriches the travel experience for individuals but also contributes to the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity globally. Sustainable and responsible practices are essential to ensure that cultural tourism benefits both visitors and the host communities.

Tourism is the activities of the travelers visiting particular place or destination to seek the experience, pleasure and learn about the particular culture. Mac Cannell (1976) suggested that tourism is the ideal arena in which to investigate the nature of cultural production, and endless opportunities to learn about the society and tradition. Thus, social and cultural places have to protect for tourism development. Some of the important social and cultural places to attract tourist of the Karnali Province are: Kankrebihar, Bulbule, Deutibajai, Kotila, Shristhan, Dungeshor, Dhulesor, Paduka, Navisthan, Mahabu, Bhurti, She Gumba, Bala Tripura, ChandanNath, Kanaka Sundari, Chhayanath, DhoTarap, PanchaDeval, Dullu, Sinja. These places are historically and archeologically important and also the potential tourism products.

Karnali Province is rich regarding the issues of cultural feast and festivals, agricultural practices, and also fond of dance and music. Kandel (2007), in his book 'Musical Instrument of Nepal' described the various types of Nepali folk musical instrument. People of Karnali used various musical instruments on the basis of the cultural events, some of the popular musical instruments are; panchaibaja, Bansuri,Damphu ,Dholak,Dhimay , Jhyali , Madal ,Sarangee and Shankha



Deuda song is a popular song of the western Nepal. It is dancing, singing with riming utter in the circle of people. There is not the fix number of the people, it can be done within men, within women, or two group of man and women. Mangal song is sing in any prosperity activities and happiness; it is popular in Dailekh and Kalikot. Mangal song is sing in birth of son, Chhathi (six day of birth), marriage ceremony, starting new business, starting day of the construction of house, propose of marriage, worship god and goddess and so on. The song is different according to the situation of happiness and prosperity.

This is evident that Karnali Province is the home of different religion, culture, and cultural festivals. All of the residences of the province are settle with mutual cooperation and us feeling. The composition of the diverse culture and religion can play the crucial role to attract the foreign as well as domestic tourist at a high virtue. Indigenous dress provides the decisive meaning for the people who wear it and see it.it reflect the social reflection rooted in the past that is worn by an identifiable group of people. It is associated with a geographical area especially in the rural lifestyle and indicate the social and religious status of the people.

Major eco-destinations in Karnali Province

According to Duruibe & Van der Merwe (2022), ecotourism has the ability to advance both socioeconomic development and sustainable environmental protection. In addition to wanting to engage in sustainable development, ecotourists travel for other reasons (Eshun & Tichaawa, 2020). Karnali Province is located in the northwestern region of Nepal and is known for its stunning landscapes, diverse cultures, and unique attractions. Rara Lake, located in Rara National Park, is the largest lake in Nepal. It is surrounded by beautiful alpine meadows and snow-capped peaks, making it a popular trekking destination. SheyPhoksundo National Park is known for the mesmerizing Phoksundo Lake, which is the deepest lake in Nepal. The park is rich in biodiversity and offers opportunities for trekking and wildlife viewing. Simikot is the district headquarters of Humla and serves as the starting point for the trek to Mount Kailash in Tibet. The region is culturally rich, with monasteries and traditional villages. Mountain part of the Province can also be accessed in the Karnali region. The circuit offers stunning views of Mount Manaslu, the eighth highest mountain in the world. Dolpo is a remote and culturally rich region in Karnali Province, known for its unique traditions and ancient monasteries. The SheyGompa and the Phoksundo Lake are major attractions in the Dolpo region.

Rara Lake, also known as Rara Tal, is the largest lake in Nepal and is situated in the remote and pristine northwestern region of the country. Rara Lake is located in the Mugu District of Karnali Province in northwestern Nepal. It lies within the Rara National Park, which was established to protect the unique biodiversity and natural beauty of the area. Rara Lake is a high-altitude freshwater lake situated at an altitude of about 2,990 meters (9,810 feet) above sea level. It covers an area of approximately 10.8 square kilometers (4.2 square miles). The lake is surrounded by hills and bordered by coniferous forests (Sharma, 2013). Duruibe & Van der Merwe (2022) assert that



ecotourism has the potential to promote sustainable environmental protection and socioeconomic development.

The lake is renowned for its stunning beauty, characterized by crystal-clear waters reflecting the surrounding hills and snow-capped peaks. The serene environment, coupled with the surrounding greenery, makes Rara Lake a picturesque destination. The Rara National Park, which encompasses the lake and its surroundings, is rich in biodiversity. The park is home to various species of flora and fauna (DNPWLC, 2021). Visitors may encounter wildlife such as musk deer, red pandas, Himalayan black bears, and a variety of bird species. The region around Rara Lake is inhabited by the indigenous Thakuri people and other ethnic communities. The local culture and lifestyle add a unique dimension to the experience of visiting Rara. Visitors may have the opportunity to engage with the local communities and experience their traditional customs.

Rara Lake and its surrounding areas are protected by the Rara National Park to preserve the unique ecosystems and maintain the ecological balance of the region. Visiting Rara Lake is not only a journey into nature's tranquility but also an exploration of the cultural and ecological richness that characterizes this remote part of Nepal (DNPWLC, 2021).

SheyPhoksundo National Park is a protected area located in the Dolpa District of northwestern Nepal. It is named after the crystal-clear Phoksundo Lake, the deepest lake in Nepal, which is a prominent feature within the park. SheyPhoksundo National Park is situated in the trans-Himalayan region of Nepal, covering parts of Dolpa and Mugu districts. The park extends from the Tibetan Plateau in the north to the Dhaulagiri mountain range in the south (DNPWLC 2021). Phoksundo Lake is the centerpiece of the national park and is renowned for its pristine beauty. The lake is surrounded by steep cliffs and snow-capped peaks. Its unique turquoise color and clarity make it a major attraction. The park is part of the larger Dolpa region, which is characterized by high plateaus, deep gorges, and traditional Tibetan-influenced culture. The combination of natural beauty, cultural richness, and adventure, making it a sought-after destination for trekkers and nature enthusiasts in search of a unique Himalayan experience.

Problems and prospects

Remain rich potentialities for the tourism in the Karnali province of Nepal; also face problems encountered have been identified. The awareness of local people regarding tourism and its benefits can be crucial for the sustainable development of a destination. Lack of awareness can lead to various problems like; increased tourism might lead to the dilution or loss of local traditions and customs as locals adapt to cater to tourist preferences. Tourists might engage in activities that are disrespectful or appropriative of the local culture, causing discomfort among the locals. Tourism revenue may not always benefit the entire community. Certain individuals or businesses may profit more, leading to economic disparities. Jobs in the tourism sector are often seasonal, leaving locals unemployed during off-peak periods.



Local attractions may become overly commercialized to cater to tourist preferences, losing their authenticity and charm. The influx of tourism can drive up property prices, leading to the displacement of local residents and the gentrification of neighborhoods. Lack of awareness about the positive aspects of tourism may hinder the community's ability to actively participate in and benefit from the industry. Tourists may hold stereotypical views about the local population, leading to misunderstandings and negative interactions. Differences in behavior and expectations between tourists and locals can lead to conflicts, affecting the overall tourism experience.

Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach involving local communities, government bodies, and the tourism industry to ensure that tourism development is sustainable, culturally sensitive, and beneficial for all stakeholders. Education and community involvement are essential components of fostering positive awareness and mitigating potential problems.

Poor implementation of tourism policy, weak infrastructure, and low level of awareness represent the challenges in the tourism sector development in the province. The pitiable investment atmosphere in the tourism sector cannot encourage the tourism entrepreneur. Problem of regular transportation facility, low coverage of communication network, and information centers are seen in the Karnali. Local food items are substituted by imported mass-produced food items and goods, it cannot help to local production and utilization of agricultural land and resources. Despite these problems as encountered by people and state Karnali Province provides high potentialities of development of domestic tourism related strategies, policies, and activities in Nepal.

Concluding remarks

Tourism activities are growing very slowly and contributing to employment generation and economic growth at the local level but there is a need for contemporary enhancement for tourism sector development in the Karnali Province. Poor physical infrastructure, robbery of heritage, illegal hunting and encroachment, shortage of lodge and inn, absence of tourism information center and tourist guide, tourism marketing, poor attention from the authorized administration, security and sanitation at the destination sites etc. are the existing prominent problems regarding the development of tourism in the Karnali Province. The unique features that are tourism products not found other than the Karnali Province of Nepal are; the biggest Lake of Nepal (Rara Tall), the longest River of Nepal (Karnali River), the Sinja Civilization, the origin of the Nepali Language, the culture of shifting community settlement, the culture of rice plantation, the ever-burning flame in the temple etc. Karnali provides cultural diversities, scenic beauties, architectural sites, Karnali civilization, religious centers, and the evolution of the history of the Nepali language, fairs, festivals, and a peaceful environment. All these tourism products play the significant role for the development of tourism in the Province. The Province represents a complex cross-section of linguistic, cultural, ethnic, biological, and geographical diversity. These qualities made a unique place giving high potential for the development of tourism industry in this Province.



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