

Tourism Destination Marketing: A Case Study of Lumbini Nepal

Ishwar Khatri*

Abstract

The paper is essentially related with the study of marketing of a destination. A destination which includes every provision for the visitors attracts continuous flow of visitors. Being a foremost religious site of the Buddhism, the study of Lumbini is always been a subject of choice. In the context of tourism destination marketing, the author engages in a field survey with 184 visitors to gather information on attractiveness and positioning of destination Lumbini; and evaluates the effects with the use of different data analysis methods and statistical tools so as to come to the prospects, challenges and future policy suggestions.

Keywords: *tourism, destination, marketing, marketing mix, tourist.*

Introduction

The study in the Himalayan country Nepal where tourism counts 4.3% of direct contribution to GDP, 3.5% of total employment contribution, recorded in the report study of world travel and tourism council "Travel and Tourism economic impact 2015 Nepal". It is found to be an important foreign currency earning source for this beautiful travel destination. Many travel planners and visitors regard Nepal as one of the top destinations to visit every year. This study focused to the area of pilgrimage tourism in studying the world's heritage site- Lumbini Nepal.

Lumbini is situated in central Tarai plain of Nepal, about 300 km west of Kathmandu. Although its elevation is 105 meters above sea level, himalayan foothills are only 24 kms away and on clear days, Dhaulagiri peak (8,167m) is visible, 130 kms due North. Siddharthnagar is the nearest town with Gautam Buddha Airport. Highways connect this town with Kathmandu (east) via Chitawan, rich in wildlife and Pokhara (north), the destination for trekkers. It has a frost free dry winter and a hot wet summer. The average annual rainfall is more than 2500 mm. August (Srawan/Vadra) is the wettest month, usually with a minimum of 1000 mm. The temperature in April, May and June exceeds 40 degree centigrade and during January it declines up to 9 degree centigrade. The winter is dry and relatively cool; during the daytime, however, even

* Ishwar Khatri is studying international business and marketing at NTNU, Norway. Email: khatry69@gmail.com

in December and January, the temperature can go up to 25 degree centigrade or more (Nepal Tourism Board, 2000)

Lumbini is the birthplace of Lord Buddha and its religious value has been attracting pilgrims since the very early ages. The archaeological remains, which were excavated throughout the last century and which are now conserved at the site, provide testimony of these pilgrimages since the 3rd century BC. It is for these reasons, that Lumbini was inscribed in the World Heritage List in 1997 (Kanno, Koto, 2006).

Tourism destination branding is a general concept; destinations can be branded like products or people. In this case, the power of branding is in making people aware of the location and linking desirable associations (Damjanović, Kravic and Abdul Razek, (n.d.). Destinations are a large entity with sets of material and non-material elements (Florek, 2005). The attractiveness of a tourist destination encourages people to visit and spend time at the destination. Therefore the major value of destination attractiveness is the pulling effect it has on tourists. Without the attractiveness, tourism does not exist and there could be little or no need for tourist facilities and services. It is only when people are attracted to a destination that facilities and services follow (Ferrario, 1979a). Tourism marketing is an integrated effort to satisfy tourists by making the best possible services available to them. It is a device to transform the potential tourists into actual tourists. (Musa, Mohammad, 2013).

Tourism marketing in Nepal is not an old concept. The researcher thinks it begun as the 'word of mouth' marketing of Nepalese tourism aftermath of successful peak-kissing of Mount Everest in 1950s. It was the date Nepalese tourism gone international with the glory of Everest victory. In this way, tourism marketing is essentially related with the marketing of a destination. A destination which includes every provision for the visitors attracts continuous and high flow of visitors. Tourists are the indicators of foreign currency earnings and economic growth in and around the destination. So, the destination development, management and promotion are important marketing functions of tourism marketing.

Significance of the Study

Tourism is the major economic source of Nepal. Nepal is trying to develop its foreign currencies earning sector's status to compete in regional and global market. Lumbini being the birthplace of Lord Buddha, thousands of national and international Buddhist as well as non-Buddhists come to visit the cultural and religious place every year. It has direct and indirect effect in the socio economic development of this region. Effective and sustainable positioning of the destination in the regional and international level can be the source of increasing tourists flow in the place. This research will add value through the evaluation of current status, its marketing prospects and challenges and finally policy suggestions to concerned stakeholders.

The overall objective of this study is to find out the status of destination marketing of Lumbini Nepal and the potential marketing strategies to develop it as an international tourist destination.

Research Questions

This paper attempts to study the marketing of Nepalese tourism industry with the case study of pilgrimage-based tourism in Lumbini, the birthplace of the Lord Buddha. It offers valuable recommendations to enhance the branding and/or promote the marketing of Lumbini as well as the overall Nepal as an international tourist destination. Specific research questions are:

1. How effective are the marketing activities in Lumbini?
2. What do the visitors think about the marketing mix factors of destination Lumbini?
3. What can be done to develop, manage and promote the destination -Lumbini branding and marketing- in regional and international level?

Methodology of the Study

This study is primarily based on primary data through researcher's own observation, interview and questionnaire survey. For the collection of data, field survey is performed in the real location of Lumbini. The researcher personally talked with the visitors and convinced them to fill out the questionnaire forms. Many of them refused to participate in the tourist survey because of time constraint and not having interest on it. However, researcher managed to survey around 186 domestic and international tourists in the duration of 7 days. Similarly, stakeholders involved in tourism marketing in Lumbini are contacted to provide their opinions about tourism marketing in Lumbini. Likert scale technique is used as a structured type questionnaire to measure the visitors' perspectives on various attributes of tourism destination marketing and open and closed questions are also used. Further, secondary data has been collected from different published and unpublished documents. While in this process different previous research works, books, journals, magazines and newspapers have been reviewed. In addition to these, a lot of tourism related websites have been surfed.

For the analysis, different statistical methods were employed in SPSS to get concrete results of destination marketing and ended up with some suggestions. Partial conformity factor analysis is performed to see the correlation between attributes. Similarly, significance test using ANOVA for the satisfaction perceived of marketing mix factors is conducted. Multiple regression models are applied to see the contribution of marketing mix factors to the satisfaction level of tourists.

Literature Review

In this part, previous literatures and research works in the area of tourism destination and Lumbini are reviewed to have the foundation, scope and gap in the area. The study follows the tourism destination, tourism in Nepal and review of research works in Lumbini.

Tourism Destination

A tourist destination is a place which is very often visited by many domestic and international tourists. It can be a city, town, historical place, sea-beach, mountain, an amusement park, museum or some kinds of religiously important place. A tourism destination may contain one or more tourist attractions and sometimes some tourist traps. For many reasons, a place can be very important to domestic and international tourists. These can be natural tourist attractions like forest, river, big waterfall, hill or lake. Again, people can make an ordinary place into an important tourist destination by their own effort like making amusement park, statue, big hotels or by making a new city or town. Tourists have different choices and that is why different tourists choose different kinds of tourist destinations. Like a simple place can be the most important and illusive place to someone who love sports if any big sports event is arranged in that place. (Yeoman, 2008, 4-13).

Destinations that fail to maintain the necessary infrastructure or build inappropriate infrastructure face significant risks. A destination's attractiveness can be diminished by violence, political instability, natural catastrophe, and adverse environmental factors and overcrowding. So destination marketing is an important part of developing and retaining a particular location's popularity. Tourism marketing is called service marketing. Services industry varies greatly and service marketing has some specific criteria than others commercial product marketing. Government offer service through employment services, hospitals, police and fire departments. Many non- profit organizations also offer services through social work, healthcare, charity etc. Business organizations offer services by different organizations like airlines, banks, hotels, insurance companies and others (Kotler & Armstrong, 2002).

Today, every country, city, and region on earth must compete with every other for its share of the world's commercial, political, social, and cultural transactions, in what is virtually a single tourist market. Brand image becomes critical: nobody has time to experience the differences, people fall back on their fundamental beliefs and prejudices about destination to help them make their decisions. Just as in the commercial marketplace destination "brand image" provides a short cut to an informed buying decision. Branding acts like a calling card that opens doors, creates trust and respect, and raises the expectation of quality, competence and integrity (Anholt, 2009).

Tourism in Nepal

Nepal has huge possibilities in the tourism sector. The Himalaya nation is famous for its natural beauty: the world's highest peaks, national parks rich in flora and fauna, snow-fed rivers, exceptional trekking routes, wonderful lakes and welcoming people. Nepal is rich in its cultural and religious diversity as well. Possessing eight of the 10 highest mountains in the world, Nepal is a tremendously attractive location for mountaineers, rock climbers and adventure seekers. Apart from being an attractive destination for adventure, Nepal's pleasant climate and ever welcoming nature of Nepalese show there is a tremendous prospect of tourism ahead in Nepal. Tourism as an emerging global phenomenon enhances the world travelers to explore the wonders of the world. Nepal is also being an integral part of a global system of tourism cannot escape benefiting from this emerging field. Nepal as a Himalayan nation has enormous tourism prospects. If many unexplored regions of Nepal are identified along with popular tourist destinations the Himalayan state can make remarkable progress in the field of tourism (Himalayanglacier, 2015).

Nepal is well known in the map of global tourism as one of the best destination because of its unique natural beauty, immensely rich bio-diversity, multi-ethnicity, variety of languages and religion, social heterogeneity and historical as well as cultural heritages. Day and night advancement in the field of science, technology and communication had converted the entire world in one village, in this present context Nepal needs to advertise its national heritages in front of the world to enhance the capability to obtain maximum benefit by attracting global tourism market. As tourism industry in itself as a major basis of national economic development, it has become essential to enhance the livelihood and employment opportunities of general population and improve their standard of living by diversification and expansion of their business. For this purpose, while on the one hand it is imperative to aptly protect and preserve these heritages of Nepal, on the other hand it is necessary to have quantities as well as qualitative growth of tourism service industry by developing all kinds of infrastructures related to tourism service industry including international airport services (MOTCA, 2009).

The tourist sites and activities in Nepal as mentioned in the official website of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal Government (MOFA, 2015) includes:

1. *Wilderness tourism*: Nepal's major tourist activities include wilderness and adventure activities such as mountain biking, bungee jumping, rock climbing and mountain climbing, trekking, hiking, bird watching, mountain flights, ultra-flight aircraft flights, paragliding and hot air ballooning over the mountains of the Himalaya, hiking and mountain biking, exploring the waterways by raft, kayak or canoe and jungle safaris especially in the Terai region.

2. *Religious sites:* Nepal is a multi-religious society. The major religion in Nepal is Hinduism, and the Pashupatinath Temple, which is the world's one of the main Hindu religious sites is located in Kathmandu, attracts many pilgrims and tourists. Other Hindu pilgrimage sites include the temple complex in Swargadwari located in the Pyuthan district, Lake Gosainkunda near Dhunche, the temples at Devghat, Manakamana temple in the Gorkha District, and Pathibhara near Phungling, Mahamrityunjaya Shivasan Nepal in Palpa District where biggest metallic idol of Lord Shiva is located. Buddhism is another main religion. The World Heritage site Lumbini, which is the birthplace of Gautama Buddha, is an important pilgrimage site. Another prominent Buddhist site is Swayambhunath, the Monkey Temple, in Kathmandu. Dang valley is also a sacred place for Hindus as well as other religions. Kalika and Malika Devi in Chhillikot hill, Ambekeshawori temple, Krishna temple, Dharapani temple etc. are sacred place in Dang district. Chillikot hill is also a good place for sightseeing and also an ancient palace of a king. Muktinath is a sacred place for Hindus as well as Buddhists. The site is located in Muktinath Valley, Mustang district. According to Central Bureau of Statistics report 2000, pilgrimage lies in the third main purpose of visiting Nepal and first and foremost in case of Lumbini.
3. *Culture and Heritage Sites:* Kathmandu the capital city of Nepal is the city of temple and very rich in cultural heritage. Within 7 km radius there are 7 world heritage sites (Pashupatinath Temple, Baudhanath Stupa, Swayambhunath Stupa, Changunarayan Temple, Kathmandu Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square and Bhaktapur Durbar Square) which cannot be found anywhere. Museums in Kathmandu have rich collections of archaeological, historical and artistic importance and galleries display art work of the past and present. Full of art, architecture and culture, the Kathmandu Valley is the prime destination for the tourists. As Nepal is a land of festivities and celebrations, visitors can experience how a culturally diverse and rich society of Nepal grows in harmony.

Review of Research Works in Lumbini

Kunwar and Ghimire (2012) in their study "Lumbini as International Pilgrimage Destination: Authenticity and Significance" focused for the need of development of Lumbini region as well as for the successful completion of Visit Lumbini year 2012 at that time. They think Tourism is the dynamic industries which contribute significantly in the national economy needs always new things, ideas, activities and attractions. Visit Lumbini 2012 could be the appropriate platform to publicize Lumbini and Nepal in the international market as well as create awareness among the domestic tourists. It is the slogan to develop Lumbini and attract more pilgrims and tourists from the international market and bring the momentum of tourism industry

of Nepal. Lumbini holds almost similar position with Mecca. Millions of pilgrims and tourists visit Mecca; however, less than 100 thousands international tourists/pilgrims visit Lumbini every year. The government of Saudi Arab has given high priority to develop Mecca and every year Mecca is expanding its territory with wide roads, hotels, restaurants and other basic facilities needed for visitors. They have a plan, budget, enthusiasm and commitment to develop it and get benefited. It seems they are celebrating 'Visit Mecca' every year. On the other hand, nearly 35 per cent works have been completed in 35 years time of Lumbini Master Plan. How many years will it take to complete is unknown? Though Lumbini has been attended to a great extent, much still remains to be done in Lumbini itself. The Greater Lumbini Development is a broader concept to develop the historical sites in Lumbini, Kapilvastu and Nawalparasi associated with Buddha's life, from childhood to his younger days, in an integrated approach. The successful completion of this mega event (Visit Lumbini 2012) could add up the other dynamic programmes in the days to come to build up the Nepalese tourism as a whole.

Neupane (2009), in the study "Heritage Complexity and Tourism: The Case of Lumbini Nepal" provided some recommendations to make the site attractive for both visitors and local communities. One of the ways of getting support for conservation and development of the site from local communities in this case is providing economic benefits through tourism. However, despite the importance of spiritual and academic interests in Lumbini, its potential for attracting international visitors and a growing trend in arrivals, the area has not benefited well from tourism. Through the Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (TRPAP), the government is trying to diversify the tourism product so that tourists will spend more money at the site and in surrounding villages. However, the diversification of tourism products by TRPAP without much tourism insight may not be appropriate. Rather, it is recommended to increase the length of stay of tourists through the development and promotion of other Buddhist sites around the area, including Kapilvastu and Devdaha. Certified guided tours and interpretive programs can also help employ locals and increase the length of stay. Lumbini is also suffering from a seasonal pattern of tourists as the site experiences very low visitation rates during summer months of April to July. Although monsoons are a big factor in seasonality shifts, their impact on heritage tourism should be much less than other types of tourism, such as nature-based tourism because it is easier to control the climatic factors in the built environment such as temples and museums. The monsoon can be a real constraint for a small portion of the tourists visiting Lumbini who also visit other mountain destinations. But for Asian pilgrims, it should not be a significant factor. This warrants awareness and information dissemination, which should be incorporated in the tourism plan for Lumbini.

Ghimire, (2006) in his research “Lumbini: A touristic overview” concluded Lumbini is a World Heritage Site, a destination for pilgrimage and faith tourism and belongs to all in the world. Lumbini not only provides an ultimate pilgrimage and nirvana for the Buddhists, it is also an important destination for non-Buddhists. It not only belongs to Nepal and the Nepalese people, but a sense of ownership is essential for the faster and smoother development of the complex and the region. The most important recommendation is that the Lumbini and Lumbini Development Trust (LDT) management should be free from political and ideological allegiance. The teachings of Buddha and his message of compassion and devotion to the service of humanity, universal brotherhood, world peace, meditation, progress and welfare of mankind should be foremost in the minds of those managing the site. The proper and phase wise implementation and completion of the Lumbini Master Plan can solve the current short fallings, and with good governance Lumbini has the potential to become a world class tourist destination for all.

All of the literatures and previous studies such as research activities, survey articles, and related online literatures, studied tourism in Lumbini by its historical perspective, socio-economic impacts, overall Lumbini development perspective and problems point of view in Lumbini. No studies are found to deal with destination marketing of Lumbini such as marketing mix factors analyses. So, the researcher finds the scope in doing research in that area of tourism in Lumbini. However, this study somehow followed those studies to add value to the gap.

Analysis of Findings

The study showed that the top nationals visited Lumbini includes Nepalese, Indian, Chinese, Srilanka. Similarly, the researcher performed data collection with the nationals from Australia, England, France, Germany, Japan, Finland, Italy, Myanmar, Netherlands, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Thailand and Vietnam. 60.9% of the respondents were male and 39.1% were female. Visitors below the age 25 years found to be a higher percentage i.e. 45.7%. That means, younger people counted almost half of the visitors sampled. It could be because of higher number of Students visiting the site every day. 32.6% of them were students; however 41.3% of the respondents were Jobholders/Employees professionally.

When studying the source of information about Lumbini, 30.4% responded “Friends/Family” to be the major source, 26.1% responded to “Internet/Television” to be the major source. Most of the people i.e.41.3% responded to “Others” sources. The researcher supposes that other sources could include books, schools/colleges and so on. The study showed that more than half of the respondents i.e. 56.5% organized their travel to Lumbini themselves. Few of them i.e. 19.6% had their visit organized by travel agents or tour operators. The study of reasons of travelling the site indicated

that, 41.3% visited Lumbini to observe the holy place of Buddhism, 28.3% visited for religious purpose, 13% visited as a part of travel package, 8.7% visited to spend the leisure time and the same percentage visited for other purposes. Many people found to visit Lumbini for very short time, probably only for a day. 71.7% of the respondents had no longer plan to stay in Lumbini then the same day, 23.9% of them had plan to stay at least till tomorrow, very few i.e 4.3% only could stay more than 5 days in the site. While studying the frequency of visit, 67.4% visited the place for the first time. The study essentially related with the promotion and marketing of Lumbini. So, the respondents were asked whether they have seen any promotion or marketing activities about Lumbini. About 69.6% of the respondents had seen some promotions or marketing activities about Lumbini whereas 30.4% of the respondents never seen any promotions or marketing activities. The study showed that 39.1% of the respondents had high effect of promotion or marketing activities about Lumbini.

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Overall satisfaction	4.3043	.83292	184
Revisiting consideration	4.2391	.91579	184
Tendency to recommend	4.7609	.72984	184

Correlations

		Overall satisfaction	Revisiting consideration	Tendency to recommend
Overall satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.649**	.552**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	184	184	184
Revisiting consideration	Pearson Correlation	.649**	1	.478**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	184	184	184
Tendency to recommend	Pearson Correlation	.552**	.478**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	184	184	184

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The researcher tried to study the general impression of respondents regarding the tourism in Lumbini. Visitors had 'overall satisfaction' mean in a scale 4.3043, 'revisiting consideration' mean in a scale 4.2391 and 'tendency to recommend to others' mean in a scale 4.7609. The outcomes showed visitors are satisfied as a whole, consider revisiting and tend to recommend visiting Lumbini to others. Similarly, correlation among three of these questions was significant.

The marketing mix factors study in Lumbini with factor analysis showed that 71.31% of the overall variation is explained by seven factor components (7Ps: Product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence). The outcome showed first component counts the higher contribution for the satisfaction of respondents visiting the Lumbini. The statistical probability and the test indicated that there was a significant correlation between the variables, and the use of factor analysis was appropriate.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.884a	.781	.744	.42109

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	99.118	26	3.812	21.500	.000a
	Residual	27.839	157	.177		
	Total	126.957	183			

In multiple regression analysis study with ANOVA, to predict the goodness-of-fit of the regression model, the multiple correlation coefficient (R), coefficient of determination (R square), and F ratio were examined. First, the R of independent variables on the dependent variable (Tourists' overall level of satisfaction) is 0.884, which showed that the tourists had positive and high overall satisfaction levels with the given attributes or marketing mix factors. Second, the R square is 0.781, explaining that more than 78% of the variation of tourists 'overall satisfaction' was explained by those factors. Last, the F ratio, which explained whether the results of the regression model could have occurred by chance, had a value of 21.50 ($p=0.00$) and was considered significant.

Tourism Marketing

In marketing, 4 Ps, namely Price, Product, Place and Promotion are very popular. However, tourism marketing is a service business it needs to be analyzed from the point of view of service marketing. Service marketing mix consists some more factors

besides 4 Ps. These three of the additional factors are People, Process and physical evidence. The field study of altogether 7 Ps in tourism marketing of Lumbini Nepal is analyzed as below:

Product: It's the major thing in any business or service. In tourism industry, the destination itself is a product. When analyzing the tourism product in marketing, its related to transportation, accommodation, attractiveness, shopping and grocery stores, recreational places, tour packages, safety and hygiene of the place etc. The study showed that attractiveness has mean scale of 4.17391 which is very positive. Accessibility has 3.9130, a recreational place has 2.8261, accommodation has 3.2826, shopping & grocery store has 2.27391 and tour package has 3. It can be said that product attributes attractiveness, accessibility, accommodation and tour package provided average or more level of satisfaction to the respondents; however recreational places and shopping and stores provided below average level of satisfaction.

Price: It is important to set a right price considering the buyer's purchase capacity, disposable income, competitors' price, cost of the service, demand and supply etc. The study of some price attributes like prices level and segmentation in Lumbini showed that Prices level has satisfaction in mean scale of 3.5652 and segmentation has 3.0435. Though these are above average, stakeholders need to segment the services and products and set prices appropriately.

Place: Place is the study of channels and distribution. The attributes regarding place component studied were, local transport, safety & hygiene of the place and Information, communication and technology (ICT) infrastructure. The study showed local transport satisfaction in a mean scale of 3.3043, safety & hygiene satisfaction in a scale of 4.0652 and ICT in a scale of 2.7174. It can be said that safety & hygiene of the place is very satisfied, local transport is well but ICT is not satisfied.

Promotion: It is the communication activity between sellers and buyers for the purpose of influencing, informing or persuading a potential buyer's purchasing decision. Communication mix for promotion is advertising, sales promotion, public relations and personal selling. The studied attributes were advertising/publicity, promotions, personal selling and exhibitions/events. The study showed above moderate satisfaction for first three attributes but below average for the exhibition/events, 3.3913, 3.2826, 3.5652 and 2.8478 mean scales respectively.

People: people in tourism industry mean all related workers and employees whom tourists interact during the visit. So the behavior of tourism people directly influences the perceptions of visitors and their satisfaction for a particular destination. The studies attributes were travel agents/tour operators, hospitality of the workers and courtesy skills. The study showed satisfied level of hospitality and courtesy skills for the respondents being 4.1522 and 3.9348 mean scales respectively.

Process: Main elements in process are planning, system, documentation, control etc. The process is the action or activities of companies to deliver the product or service to the target customers. In tourism, its about conveying messages and information about the services in an easy manner to the customers. The attributes information, documentation, connecting tours, ticketing and provision of exchange & insurance were studied. Availability of information and ticketing showed good satisfaction to respondents; however documentation, connecting tours and exchange & insurance were not at that level.

Physical evidence: Every visitor has an image of services and products before travelling to a destination. Physical evidence is essentially the overall environment or facilities visitors experience reaching upon a particular destination. It is related with ambience, corporate branding, route maps, information on rules & regulations etc. The study of attributes rules& regulations, route maps and physical ambience showed well satisfaction to the respondents being the mean scales of 4.1304, 4.1739 and 4.0870 respectively.

The study in Lumbini shows that though it is an attractive destination, visitors do not find enough infrastructure and facilities in Lumbini area. Many visitors come and return at the same day because of unavailability of entertaining sources and absence of cultural activities. Promotional campaigns need to be operated throughout the year by government bodies, local development bodies and private agencies. The stakeholders should focus on the strengths the Lumbini has and should improve on the weaknesses. There is always potentiality of tourism in the area but what matters is, an integrated effort and planning for destination management and marketing.

Conclusions

Study of tourists' inflow in Lumbini as recorded at the information department of Lumbini Development Trust showed that there is increment in the inflow of tourists from domestic and international level. A significant change is seen in some years which need to be sustained, marketing the destination through promotion activities at national and international front.

The concluding remarks are as below:

- ICT is the modern means of communication; however it is found that these sources were not the major sources of information. So, the stakeholders should use and take advantage of these sources to advertise the destination at regional and international level.
- A significant number of respondents never had seen any promotion or marketing activities about Lumbini in Nepal as well as in abroad which reflect the weakness in promotion or marketing of the destination Lumbini.

- Many people visiting Lumbini organized their travel themselves. Travel agents and tour operators should think about making attractive packages so that visitors could visit nicely and cost effectively. Even they could increase their business.
- The length of stay is a big issue the study found. More than 70% of the respondents had no plan to stay even for a day around the site. They choose to return after the observation of the place. It could be because of non-availability of new products & recreational places, presence of Indian travel operators, lack of guided tours etc.
- However overall satisfaction of the respondents visiting Lumbini is good. Further they consider to revisit the Lumbini and think of recommending to visit the destination to other people. It shows the attractiveness and importance of this pilgrimage destination.
- The study of 7Ps showed however, People, Price and Physical evidence factors scored average or above, the factors Product, Place, Process and Promotion scored average or below average. Stakeholders need to focus on the low scoring marketing mix factors of tourism marketing since it is an integrated activity.

Recommendations

Recommendations for effective tourism destination marketing of Lumbini are assessed as: 1. Provision or improvement of adequate physical infrastructure and utilities. 2. Increasing the visitors' length of stay. 3. Encouraging repeat visit by different programs, packages or offers. 4. Manpower development in tourism and hospitality such as linguists, tour guides, chefs and others. 5. Regional cooperation and promotional campaigns within the country or outside of country. 6. Community involvement to make them felt responsible as well as benefited.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Prof. Oystein Jensen, University of Stavanger, Norway and Prof. Dominique Thon, Nord University, Norway for their guidance and support. I want to acknowledge to Prof. Dr. Ramesh Raj Kunwar, Tribhuvan University, Nepal for making this article possible. Also I want to extend my thanks to HHB, Business school, Nord University for the partial financial support for this study.

References

- Anholt, S. (2009). *Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding*. World Tourism Organization: Madrid.
- Damjanović, V., Kravic, M. & Abdul Razek, T. (n.d.). *Tourism Branding Strategy of the Mediterranean Region*. (1st ed).

- Ferrario, F. (1979 a). "The evaluation of Tourist resources: An Applied Methodology (Part 1)." *Journal of Travel Research*, 17 (3), 18-22. "The evaluation of Tourist Resources: An Applied Research (Part 2)." *Journal of Travel Research*, 17 (4), 24-30.
- Florek, M. (2005). The country brand as a new challenge for Poland. *Place Branding*, 1(2), 205214.
- Ghimire, H. (2006). "Lumbini: A Touristic Overview". Lumbini: Present Status and Future Challenges. UNESCO: Kathmandu.
- Himalayan Glacier. (2011). Prospects Of Tourism In Nepal. March 26, 2011. Derived from <http://www.himalayanglacier.com/blog/prospect-of-tourism-in-nepal.html>. Accessed on September 20, 2016
- Kanno, K. (2006). Lumbini: Present status and future challenges. UNESCO: Kathmandu.
- Kotler P, Armstrong G. (2002). *Principles of Marketing Management*. Prentice Hall: New Delhi.
- Kunwar, R. R. & Ghimire, H. (2012). "Lumbini as International Pilgrimage Destination: Authenticity and Significance". *The Gaze Journal of Tourism and Hospitality*. Vol. 4. No. 1, pp. 1-33.
- MOFA. (2015). Tourism In Nepal. Drived from <http://www.Mofa.gov.np>. Accessed on 02 November 2016.
- MOTCA. (2009). Tourism Policy. Ministry of Tourism and Civil Association: Nepal Government.
- Musa, M. (2013). "Marketing: A tool to develop Bangladesh's tourism sector". *International Journal of Business, Economics and Law*, Vol. 2, Issue 1 (June) ISSN 2289-1552.
- Nepal Tourism Board. (2000). Lumbini. Nepal Tourism Board: Nepal.
- Neupane, G.P. (2009). "Heritage complexity and tourism: the case of Lumbini Nepal." *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 4 (2): 157-172.
- Yeoman Y. (2008). *Tomorrow's Tourist: Scenarios and Trends*. Elsevier Ltd: Amsterdam.