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**Destination Management: Nepalese Efforts,
Experiences & Challenges**

Prakash Chandra Neupane

Nepal Kasthamadap College, Kalanki, Kathmandu

npnprakash75@gmail.com

Abstract

Nepal with diverse geographical landscapes, rivers, mountains and alluring religious and cultural sites, has been declared as top first destination amongst various global destinations. Standardized destination management efforts with designated entities has not gone satisfactorily as expected, resulting poor inbound tourism in Nepal. This article will go around the various initiatives taken for the destination management from both government and non-government level and their implications for successful ecotourism practices in Nepalese perspective. Ideal destination management is all about providing convincing safety and security, logistics, entertainment, health and sanitation and much other to the tourists.

Keywords: *Alluring, destinations, satisfaction, management, ecotourism*

Introduction

The places and venues which are visited by the tourists, both domestic and external, for their varied interests and purposes like entertainment; adventures, sightseeing, cultural assimilation etc. are the destinations in tourism literature. As tourists are attracted by the specific features that destinations hold, their frequency for the visit would go increasing, spending pattern goes changed and intensified and eventually their stay and occupancy too get longer. So, the management of such venues to coincide and concurrent to meeting their needs, interests and desires is of much value.

Destination management is the coordinated management of all the elements that make up a destination. It takes a strategic approach to link-up these sometimes

very separate entities for the better management of destination. Joined up management can help avoid duplication of efforts with regards to promotion, visitor services, training, business support and identify any management gaps that are not being addressed.

It goes without saying that long-term investment in domestic tourism will also serve Nepali economy. The study by World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) on the economic impact of travel and tourism in Nepal reveals that in 2016, the direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP was Rs 85.2 billion which is 3.6 per cent of the total GDP. Meanwhile, the same study shows that in 2016, the total contribution of travel and tourism in providing employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry was 6.4 per cent of total employment. The study clearly indicates that development in tourism sector paves the way for economic growth. It's now time for Nepali tourism sector to come up with concrete plans and take charge of domestic tourism, and for Nepalese to explore the wonder their country has to offer. (Bashyal,2018)

Tourism industry plays significant role in economic and overall development of the country. As per data of WTTC-World Travel & Tourism Council 2014, it depicts that travel and tourism generated US\$ 7.6 trillion (10% of global GDP) and 277 million jobs (1:11 jobs) globally. In Nepal, it was NPR 171.6 billion (8.9 % of total GDP) and 1,059,000 jobs (7.5% of total job) (Gaire, 2011).

Literature review

Nepal is well known in the map of global tourism as one of the best destinations 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(MOTCA,2009).

Many travel planners and visitors regard Nepal as one of the top destinations to visit every year. (Khatri, 2018)

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. 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)

Tourism is fast growing businesses in the world; it because the population have enlarged their free time and based on the cost of travel is not higher. Tourism

boosts the employment and the revenue generation; tourism also contributes to the international trade among countries and supply beneficial foreign exchange. (Regular, 2012). Therefore tourism is a quicker developing sector in the world, it because these days people have the ability spend the money go to travel see around the world. Ramgulam (2012) cites as World Travel and Tourism council, (2009) also stated that tourism is fast growing business, so that it smooth the progress of the tourism development the WTO support countries diversify their economy.

Destination is very vital in the tourism sector. Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) is playing a major role in the running destination network, and it also helps to raise the relationship between the cooperation and the destination actors. (Pechlaner, 2012). Moreover destination believes as a tourism product. A destination not creates by one action then can become a destination it needs other process just can build “a destination product such as the tourism attractions, tourism institutions, transportation, hospitality, food and beverage lastly is host community. Gather all the operation it can build a successful destination package. (Botti, 2009).”

Destination is ‘a physical space in which a visitor spends at least one overnight. It includes tourism products such as support services and attractions, and tourism resources within a day’s return travel time. It has physical and administrative boundaries defining its management, and images and perceptions defining its market competitiveness.’ (UNWTO, 2007)

A Destination can be regarded as a combination (or even as a brand) of all products, services and ultimately experiences provided locally.(Kunwar,2017:169) The renowned destinations could raise their level of income, if the tourism products are diversified ensuring increased satisfaction level of the tourists.

Destination management is the functions focused towards a specific tourist destination to boost the level of satisfaction and extend the staying period of the tourists. The concept of destination management has been developed on the basis of recognized industrial economics and management theories (Keller & Koch,1997; Bieger, 2002.) Ideal destination management is all about providing convincing safety and security, logistics, entertainment, health and sanitation and much other to the tourists.

Destinations are the real competitive factors within the tourism industry (Pechlaner and Weiermair,1999;Bieger,2002).Destinations are areas where customers benefit from all the services they deem necessary for a stay according to their needs. The greater the distance from the resident country of the guest, the bigger the destination areas has to be defined , and the more specific the interests of the guest, the smaller the destination must be defined (Kunwar, 2017).

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)

Attributes of tourist destinations

Tourist chooses one destination over another because of the destination itself, customers' ability to access the area, cultural and social and physical appeal. It requires an equitable sharing of benefits, with a focus on alleviating poverty.

In dealing with tourist destination there are many characteristic that affect the appeal of the area, such as infant mortality, life expectancy, level of poverty and migration from rural to urban.

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 (Kotler & Armstrong, 2002).

There are many destinations that have multiple attractions, which can appeal to a broad segment of the market. One way of categorizing destination attributes is based on the following.

- Natural resources (climate, beaches, mountains)
- Cultural resources (historical sites, museums, theatres and the people themselves)
- Convention and conference facilities (major public investments to attract business visitors to resort or city destinations)
- Recreational facilities (theme parks, ski slopes and marinas)
- Events (Mardi Gras in New Orleans, Rio Olympic games, marathons, international expositions, music festivals etc.)
- Specific activities (Gambling in Las Vegas or Monaco, Shopping in Hong Kong or theatre in New York)
- Psychological appeal of romance, adventure, and remoteness (Gee et al, 1997:134)

With but little variation among studies (travelers in choosing a holiday destination), the list of the most important attributes are as follows:

Weather, Scenic beauty, Hospitable attitudes of the local people, Suitable accommodations, Interesting culture and way of life, Reasonable prices, Safety and security, Favorable currency exchange.

The five top destination features were identified by the Japan Travel Bureau Foundation for the 1990s as follows:

(i) Resort (ii) Safety (iii) Scenic Beauty (IV) a city's charm and (v) culture (Gee et al; 1997:134).

Elements of tourist destination

Destination should encompass some specific features and characteristics to attract and appeal large number of tourists with diverse interests, needs, desires and background. It needs to take in to account of their budgetary strengths and purchasing power as well so as tourism products and packages for the distance destination could be designed accordingly.

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 (Kotler & Armstrong, 2002)

Dickman's (1997) has suggested five A's of a Destination as follows: Five A's of a Destination

Attractions, Activities, Accessibility, Amenities and Accommodation

There are 8 A's to highlight the features of any destinations. They can be enumerated as follows.

Attractions: Natural (Himalaya, lake, sea, landscape, rivers, beaches, etc.)

Man made (historical monuments iconic buildings such as the Eiffel tower, heritage monuments, religious buildings, conference and sports facilities, museums, theatres, art galleries, cultural events)

Access: (Air, land, sea)

Accommodation: (hotel, resorts, home stay, camping, time sharing sites, recreational vehicles etc.)

Amenities: (facilities such as visitor information, recreations facilities, guides, operators and catering and shopping facilities) actions Resources

Activities: Natural (fishing, hunting, bird watching etc.), Man made (cultural show, swimming, game etc.)

Affinity: (relationship between host and guest), guest is god, decoration, smiling, hospitable behavior etc.

Actors: Stakeholders (Government, local community, business organization)
Human resources: (skilled, semi-skilled, labor)

Act: Rules/regulation

Administration: Planning/Management

Working modality for Destination Management

Destination management could be successful if there is a proper coordination between and among the relevant stakeholders

Involvement of public and private sector stakeholders

- National (MOCTCA, NTB)
- Economic development agencies
- Local authorities/government (DDC, Municipality, VDC)
- Town centre management organizations
- National Park/ Protected Areas authorities
- Transport companies
- Event's Organizers
- Cultural organizations
- Accommodation providers (hotel, motel, resort etc.)
- Restaurant, leisure and retail operators
- Intermediaries (for example tour operators and conference organizers)
- Destination representation agencies
- Media
- Local tourism associations and partnerships (local tourism development committee)
- Representative Agencies (NATTA, TAAN, HAN, REBAN, TURGAN etc.)
- Skills development organizations.(Khadka,2016)

Co-ordination and co-operation mechanism of stakeholders

- Tourism management development groups
- Liaison groups
- Functional groups
- User groups for:
- Joint strategy development.
- Joint destination management planning.
- Implementation on a coordinated basis.
- Product development and promotion projects.
- Bringing together partners for focused project

- Planning (including investment planning) and
- Implementation over specific time scale (Khadka,2016).

The process.

The Destination Management Plan (DMP) is a key instrument for building partnership and commitment.

- Integrate the action of separate organizations
- Confirm and strengthen the link between strategy and action
- Apply the DMO's knowledge and expertise to the project planning of other organizations
- Foster an evidence-based and learning approach to destination promotion and management (Khadka, 2016).

Challenges of destination management

Spontaneous flow of the tourists can be ensured if the tourist destinations possess the characteristic features and values that majority stake of tourists prefer to. It is highly significant to develop a specific brand value of the tourist destination as per the situation that destination is being served to the tourists. The factors that pose hurdles to develop a place as an excellent tourism destinations are obviously the challenges of destination management. We can enumerate the numerous points as challenges of destination management in Nepalese context.

In Nepalese context, political variability comes as one of the major challenges and restraints in development of tourism sector. Decade long disturbance in Nepalese political scenario by Maoist insurgency changing of government time to time, disagreement among political parties and leaders has stalled the potential of tourism growth of Nepal. Moreover, Nepal ranks at top in context of foreign labor migration. Fact and figure of government and other says that there are more than one million Nepal migrant workers including 100 thousand female who are working outside Nepal. These have resulted in lack of youth and energetic work force needed in tourism field. (Khatrri, 2018)

Overall increase in inbound tourism is an outcome of proper destination management over varied destinations in the country to some extent.

Some of the problems and challenges of destination management are as follows:

Slow and slack of infrastructural development

Nepal is beautiful country with countless natural sceneries, historical and religious sites, arts & architecture and social cultures. Nepal can be the best tourism destination with the abundant availability of their unique features. But due to lack of

infrastructural development it is unable to utilize its features. If we are able to provide all the infrastructural facilities to the destinations, we can appeal a large number of tourists to visit our country due to only such appealing destinations.

Lack of conservation of cultural and religious sites:

Nepal is country rich in cultural and religious sites which helps to attract large number of tourists. Some tourists are researchers and nature lovers as well. The destinations where they can enjoy and envision the efforts of conservation and value retention, they would be more attracted towards such destinations.

But due to lack of conservation activities such sites are being deteriorated which hampers tourism development. (Gaire, 2011)

Inadequate means of entertainment:

The means of entertainment for tourists are not sufficient and properly managed. As mainly tourists visit Nepal to pass their leisure time by hoping to get more entertainment. But means of entertainment are not properly managed for tourists. So, it is a major problem of tourism industries.

Lack of tourists goods:

The goods which are used by tourists are not produced in Nepal. The tourist's goods are imported from different countries which are very expensive. If the required goods are manufactured in our country many tourists will visit Nepal.

Lack of proper tourism centers:

We do not have proper tourism centers and help desks to provide them necessary information. Tourists does not want visit places without any information. So, tourism centers should be established in order to increase number of tourists.

Inadequate Publicity:

Nepal is the beautiful country with various natural, cultural and historical sites. But without its publicity it has got no importance. Efforts to publicize Nepal in international arena are not sufficient yet. Nepal is unknown to many peoples in the world which affects tourism development. Means of publicity should be tourists focused and so the information could flow to target tourists of varied nature.

Poor provision of facilities and safety for tourists: We are still poor in providing better facilities and security to the tourists which is deserting tourism development in our country. They should be free from fear and provided with better facilities which helps to increase number of tourists. Tourism destinations should concentrate their efforts towards the incorporation of trendy facilities considering the need and interests of tourists. And the tourists should feel safe and secure while being involved

in entertainment and adventurous activities like Trekking, paragliding, Bunzee Jumping, rafting etc.

Internal conflict:

Even though, decade long political turmoil has come to an end, there is a high chance of internal conflicts in Nepal such as strike, Banda, political movements etc. which damages the reputation of tourism development in Nepal among the tourist community. The destinations which fall into such reasons which are much prone to strikes and political movements would obviously lead to the flux of tourists than in the normal and fair condition.

Lack of effective marketing and management:

Potential destinations are not having suitable and timely advertisement and promotion. Even with existence of various tourism organizations, government bodies and others, the potentials of tourism have been left behind. One of the main causes is the absence of sound co-operation between these organizations which is very essential. Politics and interference can be found from lower level to upper level in most of the organizations.

Lack of long run strategic and tourism plan and policies:

Nepal can explore and exhibit the high potential of religious tourism as we have well exercised the sense of religious harmony. We do not have conflicts in the name of religious sites, significance and celebrations. It could be one of the good points we have to show for the tourists. Devghat, Muktikshetra, Lumbini might be the exemplary destinations to show our religious harmony and tolerance.

Nepal can be cultural and pilgrimage tourism hub for Hinduism from India and Buddhism for China. But it should increase the carrying capacity of demanding arrival from both countries in future.

Timely review of policies is needed in order to assure plans are executing as expected and to eliminate the constraints that may arouse during execution. Moreover, government and private sector should work together to allure and create favourable environment for investors in infrastructure development such as attractions (natural and man-made) accommodation (hotel & homestay), accessibility (land, air, and sea) lastly amenities and facilities needed to facilitate tourist in visit like ATMs, restaurant, parks, information centres (Gaire, 2011).

Lack of tapping seasonal visiting trend of Tourists at specific destinations.

Most of the Nepalese tourist destinations are popular on seasonal basis and get the number of tourists excessively swollen. It seems difficult to handle and accommodate such large number of tourists during the season. Once the season gets over and

number of tourists goes lower, it would be good to plan and implement the policies for the next season so as increasing number could be adjusted easily. But, there lacks such a trend and practice that there should be a new beginning from zero level in every newer season.

As there seems a higher trend of tourists to visit some specific destinations in certain seasons, such trend should be tapped well to attract more number of tourists for the season because need to wait another season for the flow of tourists again. Seasonal income should help sustain the administrative and subsistence cost for the remaining period with considerably poor number of visitors. As there is a long holiday trend in Nepal during Dashain and Tihar and thus people go for holidaying to Himalayan destinations, they should be well prepared to welcome larger flock of tourists during such festive seasons.

Lack of regular destination development efforts

Need and interests of tourists keep changing as per time, situation and place. And so, destinations need to be developed considering these factors. Destinations developed once based on the need of a certain clusters and canopy of tourists, might not be the same in terms of their attraction and beauties. So, there should be regular efforts for their timely development to attract and retain the good flow of the tourist round the year.

Lack of 7 Ps analysis for destination marketing.

Destination package should be considered as a product or offerings for the tourists and so need to be quantified and exercised from product perspective. As in marketing a product in business, 7 Ps concept (Product, price, place, promotion, people, process and Physical evidence) should be exercised tactfully. Tourism destination branding is a general concept; destinations can be branded like products or people. The power of branding is in making people aware of the location and linking desirable associations (Damnjanovic, Kravic & Razek (n.d.).

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 door, creates trust and respect and raises the expectation of quality, competence and integrity (Anholt, 2009).

Nepalese efforts for destination Management

The prospects of domestic tourism in Nepal largely depend on the physical attraction of the destinations. Nepal has an immense opportunity for tourism development. Despite many political challenges and infrastructural hurdles, tourist arrival has been growing steadily in recent years. Investment in the hospitality industry has also been growing accordingly. Tourist arrival, which was hit hard by the earthquakes of 2015, started picking up from 2016, when the country welcomed

729,550. In 2012, tourist arrivals had hit an all-time high of 796,946 due to positive impacts of Nepal Tourism Year 2011 campaign (*Republika*, 2018).

Tourism is a people business and the involvement of local community in tourism sector makes the community more sustainable and also strengthens the sense of ownership. Majority of the tourist hotspots in Nepal lies in rural vicinity where people have gradually adopted professionalism in their business to adhere to the growing need of tourism.

The Nepali tourists are in great advantage as they have a variety of choices ranging from pilgrimage destination, wildlife destination, trekking destinations to holiday destination. There are plethora of activities like mountain climbing, rock climbing, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, bungee jumping, mountain biking for Nepali travelers who are enthusiastic about adventure tourism.

In order to uplift the sinking tourism industry, the government had declared the year 2073 as the Nepal Travel Year to promote domestic tourism. The Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) had allocated Rs 2 million for executing promotional activities. Last year, there was an exponential growth in the domestic tourism sector as around 4.5 million internal tourist visited different parts of the country. For the development of domestic tourism, NTB is currently continuing the last year's Travel Nepal programmers and has also added other programmes such as Photo Nepal for advocating Nepali tourism through photography, Safa Nepal to promote cleanliness around heritage sites and Chulo Nepal to promote Nepali food along with food hygiene. NTB is also running programs to support home stay services through market linkage, capacity building and other training schemes (Bashyal, 2017).

Domestic tourism in Nepal is mainly reliant upon seasonal trends. Majority of Nepalis pack their bags and head for tourists hotspots like Manang, Mustang, Rara Lake, Ghandruk etcetera only during peak season. As a result, the tourism entrepreneurs and investors in these places find it difficult to safeguard their investment and effort only through tourism. Therefore, the notion of tourism based economy is not a reality for these localities.

According to data compiled by Department of Immigration (DoI), Nepal welcomed 940,218 tourists in 2017. The government had set a target of welcoming one million visitors during the Nepal Tourism Year 2011 campaign. But the target has eluded the tourism sector so far. Though the target of welcoming one million tourists could not be achieved in 2017, tourism entrepreneurs are buoyed by the arrival figures. The tourists industry of the country is gradually improving with the increasing number of tourist arrival.

Over the years, more resources have been allocated for external tourism and this form of prioritization has led to the poor growth of domestic tourism in the country.

As per NTB, in line with Visit Nepal year 2018, it has designed some programmes under the campaign like photo exhibition, talk on mountaineering, 'Send a friend to Nepal' campaign, tourism promotion through Nepali restaurants in Europe, Buddha Jayanti and Everest Day celebration in Europe, FAM trips for travel tour operators and media, and training for Nepali diaspora to promote Nepal's tourism, among others.

Recommendations

Based on the above discussion and analysis, it seems better to furnish following recommendation for the destination management in Nepal.

- NTB should also engage in dialogue with the private sector and allocate budget for programmes after discussions and consultation.”
- Infrastructure must be built across the country if we want to venture into new areas and engage people within the country for tourism purpose.”
- Opportunity to compare the destinations in terms of their features and uniqueness.
- Proper incentive and motivation to the staffs from the specific destination
- Purpose analysis for Appropriate and trendy hospitality services

Development and execution of guidelines for the regulation to DMOs

Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) are responsible to promote the long-term development and marketing of a destination with its key components like attractions, transportation, restaurants, accommodations, events, guided tours and other retailers serving travelers in an exact model. DMOs are concentrating on convention sales, tourism marketing, and services. DMOs are also creating public awareness about their destination; arrange booking for the meetings and event business that feeds the economic engine of the region. Much of literature on destination marketing has focused on attempting to understand the competitive market environment for destinations. In spite of the collaboration need in promotion, less attention has been paid to enhance destination competitiveness all together. To contribute to broader destination development goals, all key components of a distinct destination have to come together. In the literature, the collaboration issue takes place as within and between destinations (www.researchgate.net).

Diversification and contextualization of tourism products and packages

Tourists may not prefer same types of products time and again rather seek varieties and novelty. Products should also be time and situation specific so as it can please and appeal tourists a lot.

Encouraging tourism package to ensure repeat visit of the tourists by different programs, packages or offers.

There should be the different packages to address the varied needs and economic level of the tourists so as all groups could enjoy at their fullest and be accommodated.

Regional cooperation and promotional campaigns within the country or outside the country

Destination management would go fruitful if all the relevant stakeholders from all level are taken into this journey together. All can play their respective roles, bigger or smaller, and eventually could feel their ownership over the success story.

Sensitization for community ownership

Involvement of local public for the planning and implementation of destination management projects and strategies as it creates sense of ownership is much important. The involvement of youths in adventure tourism is very positive for the industry. The tourism in rural areas must rely on the involvement of local communities. So there should be such packages to ensure public participation for wholesome community ownership at the end.

Development and execution of guidelines for the regulation to DMOs

- Coordination between and among the ministries and other administrative units of the government
- Development and promotion of trending and emerging destinations
- Designating celebrities and leaders as brand ambassador for the promotion of specific destinations
- Exposure visit between the management committees of various destination for mutual learning and sharing .
- Formulation of effective and implementable periodic plans
- Developing brand specific destinations like Dhaka Topi from Palpa, Khuwa from Thecho.

Conclusion

Nepalese tourism sector has managed to bounce back even if it had a serious blow by the devastating earthquake of 2015. It's all been possible due to meticulous planning, strong promotion and large investments. NTB, private sector, government authorities must demonstrate the same spirit in order to promote domestic tourism through effective destination management.

Tourism in Nepal has faced lots of up's and downs. Proper marketing and promotion is highly essential to establish good image of Nepal in international arena.

Domestic tourism needs to focus with promotional packages to suit income standard and purchase parity of the people. Similarly, rural and village tourism need to be considered as Nepal itself being a country full of villages and countryside. Government, tourism organizations, stakeholders in management, Police and Administration need equally be involved responsibly to control illegal and unethical practices in tourism sector and develop control of new destination, and vision for sustainable tourism development

Inadequate infrastructure, improper management of tourist destinations and lack of promotion are some of the major problems impinging the growth of domestic tourism. The fact that tourism destinations spread across the same region are not linked through road ways and visitors have to rely upon airways is a worrying factor that needs to be addressed. It is very difficult to implement a collective model for the development of tourism within a region due to poor transportation network. Lack of promotion is another matter that needs to be resolved. Even though Nepal is promoted globally as a perfect gateway to experience the beauty of rich natural environment and cultural heritages, lack of promotion of tourist destinations within the country is indirectly forcing people to tour foreign destinations.

Nepal with diverse geographical landscapes, rivers, mountains and alluring religious and cultural sites, has been declared as top first destination amongst various global destinations. Standardized destination management efforts with designated entities has not gone satisfactorily as expected, resulting poor inbound tourism in Nepal.

It's a high time to pay attention on destination development through quality assurance, sustainable transportation system and promotion of local distinctiveness. Plan should be devised to retain and repetition of the visit through revising tourism packages of the destination. Everything should run by plan and systems rather than by god's grace. Tourists sometimes, especially research and promotion focused, prefer to look into the convincing sustainability plan so as they could raise fund themselves for the promotion, development and diversification of the destination itself.

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