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Tourism: A Tool for Track-two Diplomacy in Promoting People-to-People Relations Between Nepal and China.

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Abstract

This paper is a treatise on how citizen diplomacy between Nepal and China could be leveraged by adapting tourism industry as a track two intermediary sector. Believing that the apparent insufficiencies and repudiation created during inter-governmental deliberation through track-one diplomacy could be enhanced through track-two diplomacy as an effective measure, this paper attempts to recognize the role of tourism industry in establishing alternative political channel of communication which pulls the cooperation of track one decision-making that benefits people of Nepal and China. Both nations can draw strength from the diversity that prevails irrespective of uneven size, power potential, historical complexes and different speed in the development. This paper also tries to address the gap in the academic arguments regarding the conceptualization, essence, and practicability of citizen diplomacy in foreign policy processes and explores multiple micro-level themes and actors enhancing citizen diplomacy through the tourism industry in the context of Nepal-China relationships. Based on the aforementioned scene, the researcher situates the experience as an exchange fellow student, vis-à-vis tourism and the peace-through-tourism idea and mention ways of people-to-people engagement for multiple stakeholders.

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Background

A novel interaction between individuals from different states can forge one new friendship at a time this phenomenon is called citizen diplomacy. This form of diplomacy is about interstates connection through people-to-people relations where states try to showcase the best of its region through international business, educational and cultural exchanges, personal interactions, etc. These endeavors generate an amicable atmosphere that fosters mutual understanding and prosperous bilateral relations; hence citizen diplomacy is the idea that citizens have the right and duty to shape foreign relations. Tourists can be citizen diplomats if they are motivated to engage in dialogues with the host community. This paper unravels the several aspects relating to citizen diplomacy between Nepal-China and gives a special focus on the country image of both of the countries amongst one another in special reference to the tourism industry. The study discusses measures that Nepal needs to adopt for reaping maximum benefit from China's outbound tourism by projecting a favorable country image for tourists. The country image is the mental representation of a country that sums up the beliefs and impressions people hold about nations. Every nation has an image that can vary across time and space, Nepal has achieved a phase of political stability after many decades. There is a need for self-identification and revival of its unique country image in the international arena apart from just being known as a small country situated between India and China. Nepal is part of the Belt and Road initiatives (BRI) and the founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). China has already nominated Nepal as a member of the silk road tourism cities and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) dialogue partner these affiliations will provide a platform to strengthen and develop trade, tourism, and investment in Nepal. The aforementioned initiatives are emphasized as the "Chinese dream" in international politics. Chinese dream refers to the social and political ideology proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping, which entails aspirations like attaining well-being and happiness to achieving respected Great Power status, social unity and national success (Bhandari, 2019). The massive Chinese investment in South Asian region has increased Beijing's influence in South Asian neighborhoods (Wagner, 2017; in Pandit, 2019). Being a neighboring country to China, Nepal needs to materialize the concept. It is high time for Nepal to redefine its relations with China at the micro-level by creating mechanisms where the people from both nations can come together and share their stories, learn from each other, know about one- another despite the language barrier. Several image-building efforts, project, events can be attributed in the form of intellectual forums, informative campaigns, common experience sharing forum i.e. earthquake technology and lesson learning, dark tourism, combine research, educational projects, scientific research about mountains, trials, religious tourism, Buddhism, mountain people, cross-border tourism and trade. These linkages are the source of competitive advantage, promoting a positive image of tourism, exports, foreign direct investments and foreign policy of the country (Vicente, 2004; in Tafadzwa & Olabanji, 2014).

Significance of the study

The concept of the research paper is inspired from Fullerton and Kendrick's (2017) 'Model of country concept' that offers a new and inclusive lens through which to view the fields of nation branding and public diplomacy to illustrate how a nation's image gets established, shaped and maintained in the minds of global citizens. Model describes how six elements: people,

tourism/tourism promotion, brand exports, governance/foreign and domestic policy, investment and immigration, and cultural exports have a direct effect on nation branding, governance/foreign and domestic policy directly plays into the public diplomacy realm. Among these major channels, researcher tries to debrief tourism as a tool that influences Nepal-China people perceptions.

In spite of the geographical proximity and close high-level contact China and Nepal had little trade and cultural exchange for most parts of the 20th century. For one, Nepal borders the most sparsely populated areas of Tibet, with poor transportation conditions that make border trade difficult; for another, Nepal has been under the overwhelming influence of India both economically and culturally, thus its relationship with China could hardly improve whilst China-India relations bumped along slowly. But over the past two decades, China has been enhancing political, diplomatic, economic and cultural exchange with Nepal, getting even closer (Sharma, 2019).

This research work explores on how Nepal and China can cooperate at the micro-level through tourism as track-two intermediary sector. Tourism is a vital part of the burgeoning bilateral relationship (Mulmi, 2020). Nepal's tourism industry got badly affected by the devastating earthquake in 2015 and decade long political instability. Now, that Nepal has promulgated a constitution on Sep 20, 2015, and achieved a stable government favorable for tourism development. The renaissance for Nepal requires more effort and investments than ever. As a historically intimate friend of China, Nepal needs to look north for development and cooperation issues, while China has already articulated more west policies to hold up its development string to the western region. Chinese outbound tourism is massive and Nepal is an enticing destination for tourists around the world with naturally blessed infinite natural resources, cultural diversification, and wildlife diversification. Hence, Nepalese tourism professionals need to lure more Chinese visitors partnering and cooperating with tourism promotional bodies in China. To sum of all, this is a ripe moment for enormous micro-level engagement that strengthens people-to-people relations.

Research gap

How people-to-people contact actually meets the notion of foreign policy aim is hard to measure. The effectiveness of such exchanges cannot be exaggerated either. For instance, the expectation that tourists will serve as "ambassadors for country" is more a beautiful slogan than reality (Dynon, 2013; in Chen & Duggan, 2016). Tourists generally come in groups on packaged tours. Their destinations and routes are normally fixed. They meet locals who have been more or less trained to cater to their needs. Furthermore, cultural encounters are not always peaceful. Misunderstandings and cultural clashes can damage the relationships between people and create unpleasant impressions of one another. Again, how such individual-level and cultural-level of exchanges can affect state-level relations is unclear and difficult to measure. There is great ambiguity in evaluating the soft-power influence of China's outbound tourism to Nepal, a comprehensive measurement cannot be offered. The work identifies promising directions as well as weaknesses and gaps in existing knowledge and outlines a new research agenda. Nepal is a country strategically located, sharing a border with China in the North and with India in East, West, and South. It was tough to find literature on people-to-people relations between Nepal and its northern neighbor China. Nevertheless, Nepal's interaction with India has been more vibrant because of common religious and cultural ties, age-long friendships,

and open borders between the two countries (Bhandari, 2019, p.61). Hence, this research aims to fulfill the gap in the existing literature by exploring ways of leveraging people-to-people relations between Nepal and China.

Review of literature

China-Nepal relation

Nepal and China relations began between Nepal and Tibet (China) since the medieval. The princess of the *Lichhavi* regime (600 CE) named *"Bhrikuti",* got married to Tibetan Emperor "*Songstsan Gambo"* (605-650 CE) and believed that she contributed a lot to explore Buddhism and Nepali Art and Culture over Tibet. Historical records show that friendly exchange of Nepal and China dates back to as early the mid-7th century and at that time China and Nepal had already started exchanging emissaries. Fahien, Chinese eminent monk in the Jin dynasty and Huen Tsang, another famous eminent monk in the Tang dynasty visited "Lumbini" the birthplace of Lord Buddha. While talking about the history of the Nepal-China relationship, one cannot forget the legend "Araniko" in Chinese "*ah nige*" (1245-1306)13, who contributed to ancient Nepali Art (pagoda) to explore in China. The relationship between Nepal and China is not only limited to cultural and religious aspects but also various streams, from the legend of Manjushree coming to Nepal and making Kathmandu livable by cutting out the gorge at Chovar to follow the drains to cross-border exchange for commercial motives. Nepalese traders used to travel to Lhasa for business purposes and the Tibetan traders also found coming to Nepal in connection with their business activities. The two countries formalized their relations on 1 August 1955 by establishing diplomatic relations. The relations between the two countries have been marked by friendliness, understanding, mutual support, cooperation and respect for each other's sensitivities. Both countries have relentless faith in the ideals of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence (MoFA, 2019).

Public diplomacy and tourism

Earlier definitions describe public diplomacy as "direct communication with foreign peoples, with the aim of affecting their thinking and, ultimately, that of their governments" (Malone 1985, 199; in Palash, 2017). The definition also suggests a two-step influence process: first, direct communication designed to create supportive public opinion in another state; and second, pressure by the informed public on its government to adopt friendly policies toward the country employing public diplomacy. Tuch (1990; in Palash, 2017) defined public diplomacy as "a government's process of communication with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas, institutions, and culture, as well as its national goals and policies. The definition of public diplomacy is updating along with development in international relations and communications. Public diplomacy means yielding soft power. A grand strategy today requires integration and application of three fundamental components: force, diplomacy, and communication. To achieve this outcome, an actor may employ two elements of hard power—coercion (sticks) and payments (carrots) and/or attraction (soft power). Soft power, according to Joseph S. Nye, occurs "when one country gets other countries to want what it wants". For Nye, soft power primarily relies on three resources: a country's culture, its political values, and its foreign policies (Nye 2005).

Tourism and its development in China

The earliest Chinese outbound travel began in 1983. In 1995, the government of PRC established five-day workweeks and declared 1996 the Year of Leisure and Vacation. Accompanying such policy changes were the growth of *xiuxian wenhua* (the culture of leisure) and *luyou wenhua* (the culture of travel), as well as the growth of a leisure industry (Xiao, 2003; in Chan, 2006). Luyou re (the craze for travel) has certainly been a prominent cultural phenomenon in China; there are two levels of travel in the '*luyou re*'. One is a national tourism *benguo luyou*, the other is outbound travel *chuguo luyou* .Outbound travel came into vogue as China signed more and more agreements with different countries to open new destinations for Chinese tourists. Along with the acceleration of economic reform and development, Chinese people's freedom to move has simultaneously expanded. China's GDP and individual incomes have increased considerably during the last two decades and rising disposable incomes have triggered higher travel and leisure expenditure (Chan, 2006).

China outbound tourism: A tool of soft power

Since the concept of 'soft power' was introduced to China in 1992, it has generated many discussions and has become a core concept in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) policy framework. Diplomatic means, as well as cultural, economic and political mechanisms, have been used to exercise soft power over the Chinese populace for either agenda-setting or attraction (Cho & Jeong, 2008; Kurlantzick, 2007; in Xu, Wang & Song, 2018). In November 2003, Bijian Zheng, the Chairman of the China Reform Forum in President Jintao Hu era, promoted the term 'the peaceful rise' (*heping jueqi*), which has re-emerged as the 'peaceful development' in 2004. Soft power is now an important strategy in the development of contemporary China, which is a country in transition moving from socialism to quasi-capitalism with socialist characteristics (Kwek, Wang, & Weaver, 2014). There is growing agreement among scholars in tourism studies that both outbound and inbound tourism as a forum of people-to-people exchange is a tool of soft power (Stumpf & Swanger, 2015; Gou, Li & Wang, 2014; Weaver, 2015; Kwek, Wang & Weaver, 2014). Tourists are becoming unofficial ambassadors engaged in building soft power (Tse, 2013; in (Xu, Wang & Song, 2018). According to the statistics of the China National Tourism Administration, 62.03 million outbound trips were made in the first half of 2017, which is an increase of 5% compared with the same period in 2016 and ranked the first among all countries in the world. One important reason for the growth is that the number of outbound tourism destinations included in the Chinese passport has greatly increased to 153 countries/regions. Among them, 65 countries/regions have provided convenient visa policies to Chinese tourists by July 11, 2017. Notably, the Chinese outbound tourism market still has great potential, since 90% of Chinese citizens still have not applied for passports for outbound tours. Although, the Chinese citizens have a very short history of traveling to foreign countries (Xu et al., 2018), yet at the present moment the outbound border-crossings reached 122 million trips in 2016 which have elevated China to the status of the world's largest outbound tourism market, and the expansion continues with an outbound tourism consumption of 109.8 billion U.S. dollars (CTA, 2017). Its effects are all-compassing and include projecting an image of a prosperous and strong China, showcasing the stability of Renminbi (RMB), refuting the 'China threat theory', boosting national confidence and enhancing the status of overseas Chinese (Fan, 2010; Xu et al., 2018).

It is found that tourism-based soft power is being built both through government policies, which include approved destination status, tourism culture activities, tourism foreign aid, and tourism cooperation as well as interactions amongst the tourists and hosts in addition to businesses, and depend mainly on its economic power, agenda-setting, and somewhere between hard and soft power, rather than upon the country's attraction (Xu, et al., 2018). Tourism and politics are highly intertwined (Butler & Suntikul, 2017; Hall, 2005; in Seyfi & Hall, 2018). On one hand, politics and political change have an effect on how tourism develops in a destination and, on the other, tourism has political consequences, that are international and/or domestic in scope (Hall, 2010; in Seyfi & Hall, 2018, p.5). China controls its outbound tourism through the Approved Destination Status (ADS) scheme, a series of bilateral agreements with other countries that allow Chinese tourists to travel overseas in tour groups and countries that are part of the ADS are only allowed to promote their tourism markets in China. This is a form of sanction by the government. Sanctions have significant implications for travel and tourism (Seyfi & Hall, 2018a, 2019a, 2019b; Hall, 1994; Seyfi, Hall, & Kuhzady, 2019; in Seyfi & Hall, 2019). However, a review by Hall (2017) shows that sanctions have not been noted as a significant theme in the tourism and geopolitics literature, despite the significance of politics and foreign policy in relation to tourism as well as the mobility of individuals within geopolitical systems (Hall,2017; in Seyfi & Hall,2019). Sanctions and economic boycotts have frequently been used as a means of international public and 'carrot-and-stick' diplomacy (Hall, 2005; Leyton-Brown, 2017; in Seyfi & Hall, 2018). Nepal is the first South Asian country to receive an "approved destination" for Chinese visitors in 2002 A.D (Mulmi, 2020). There are criteria to guarantee the principle of reciprocity, meaning that not only does the number of Chinese tourists to other countries increase, but the number of visitors from other countries comes to China. Additionally, according to Hall (2017a; in Bhandari, 2019), geopolitics is important in tourism because; i) tourism is implicitly geopolitical activity; and, ii) on many occasions' tourism is subject to the outcomes of the geopolitical activity. In such a situation a geopolitical approach to tourism allows us to better "understand world politics in terms of the ways in which elites and publics actively construct the spaces of political action that are then the medium for the policies of states and other actors" (Agnew, 2010 cited in Hannam, 2013, p. 184). In 2014, cultural similarities, geographical proximity, and hence lower travel costs continued to make Asia the most popular destination for Chinese tourists (*Travel China Guide*, 2014; in Chen & Duggan, 2016).

Research methodology

This paper adopts an exploratory qualitative research design and examines research methods used to investigate linkages between public diplomacy and tourism. The secondary reviews include models, paradigms and comparative analysis. The primary information is acquired through surveys and interviews. To assess the track-two diplomacy and its tourism impacts, the researcher conducted a convenient survey about Nepal's country image to Chinese citizens with the objective to explore Chinese native's awareness of Nepal. The researcher wanted to discover potential effects of tourism openness on bilateral relations between Nepal and China hence the perception of tourism stakeholders from private sectors from both Nepal and China were interviewed to identify the current challenges and assess the recommendation for better relations. The response was collected in the duration of four months (March 2018 to June 2018) as a research fellow at Sichuan University, 137 respondents are interviewed. The researcher was interested in whether opinions differed according to

socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education, etc. There were no differences in specific. The natives from both nations, who participated in the interview held very positive views about the tourism benefits between Nepal and China. Desk review was conducted, several speeches from the head of the state of both the countries were reviewed, tourism policies of both the nation were assessed, historical milestones forwarded to strengthen bilateral relation between Nepal and China was reviewed. Along with that several news about Nepal- China relations, diplomatic visits between Nepal and China since the inception of diplomatic relations in 1955 to 2019 was analyzed during the research process. Several kinds of literature on tourism working as a tool of track-two diplomacy to promote people-to-people contacts were reviewed which consisted of best practices on citizen-based diplomacy. With the amalgamation of the aforementioned techniques, the work identifies promising directions as well as weaknesses and gaps in existing knowledge and outlines a new research agenda that provides practical recommendations to several tourism stakeholders working in Nepal-China tourism field.

This study is based on the discipline of international relations. This work was initially a part of a research assignment submitted to the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) of Sichuan University in 2018 as a research fellow. After the completion of the fellowship, the researcher further continued the study in Nepal and the work has been thoroughly revised in the form of a research paper.

Findings and analysis

In the course of exploring Nepal-China informal engagement on the micro level, the researcher identified several themes that could acme the people-to-people relation between Nepal and China. The researcher has shaped the findings and analysis by positioning Nepal as tourism host to the Chinese guests.

Tourism theories in the context of Nepal-China tourism linkages

This paper tries to analyze the interactions of an Asian host and an Asian guest, within specific social, cultural and historical contexts. The researcher uses two of the most widely quoted tourism theories in the context of Nepal- China tourism linkages, namely, John Urry's (2000) 'tourist gaze' and Dean Mac Cannell (1976) 'staged authenticity'. John Urry's tourist gaze is something socially organized and systematized by tourism and tourism-related institutions, including tourist agencies, television travel programs, travel books, advertisement, as well as all sorts of semiotic reproductions of touristic images that satisfy the quest of tourists for something extraordinary. The tourist gaze is a political one; it has framed a major type of power politics in tourism, concerning not only the power of tourists to travel to other places to gaze upon 'others' but also the power of those which authorizes and shapes such gazes. Based on Urry's (2002) gaze, this article analyses the gaze of Chinese tourists. But instead of looking into how the tourism industry structures such gaze, it illustrates the 'modernity urge' of the Chinese gaze intersecting with Mac Cannell's (1976) thesis of the quest for authenticity. Urry's tourist gaze solely focus on the tourist, it ignores the gaze of the host. In this article, the researcher tries to position the host gaze together with the tourist gaze in order to stress that the host's collective power of 'gazing' (at the tourists) and manipulating such a gaze is as important as that of the tourist gaze. Once the tourists reach a tourist destination, it is not only the local people who are on

display, the tourists also immediately constitute part of the visual reality of the local landscape, and are exposed to the close scrutiny of local gazes. The Nepalese gaze, in this case, is particularly ferocious when taking into consideration that it contains an accumulation of stereotypical perceptions of the language barrier. The host gaze received from tourism workers in Nepal about Chinese tourists mostly paraded issues of language barrier, comments included: they come in massive numbers and virtually fill up many tourism destinations in the region, stroll along the main streets, visit historical sites and temples, and shop a lot- souvenir shops and visit the markets where every group member buys similar things. Local people could still distinguish them through the way they dress, talk, speak or gesture.

In analyzing literature about Chinese tourists in Nepal, Dean Mac Cannell (1976) 'staged authenticity' is coincided with authenticity by Mac Cannell, which is not particularly a concern of Chinese tourists. Very rarely would they search for 'naturalness 'and a simpler, purer form of life, nor is there an urge for deeper communication with local people in unfamiliar places. As many of them do not speak languages other than their own, many are actually 'afraid' of talking to strangers. The majorities of the Chinese tourists are travel abroad in package tours and are brought to places in air-conditioned tourist buses for sightseeing and shopping. Some might complain about the lack of fun and excitement of the scheduled programs, but seldom would they ask to check out the everyday life of people. Chinese tourists request for things to be touristic rather than the authentic. Nepalese tourism workers deem Chinese tourists not to be interested in visiting places and seeing mountainous region inhabited by the ethnic people. A travel agency manager explained, 'Chinese tourists are not interested in ethnic groups. They hate walking too much. They have a habit and eagerness to evaluate a place in light of its infrastructural development. In the last three decades, China has developed from a country of extreme poverty to a fast-growing economy and is now undertaking a rapid modernization process. Pervasive nationalistic discourses of modernization and getting rich and strong have invaded most public and private space in the whole nation. Being shaped by a heavy developmental mentality, the gaze of the Chinese tourists acts like a torchlight searching for signs and representations of development and underdevelopment.

Perspectives of stakeholders on Nepal-China relationship

The leaders and stakeholders from both Nepal and China have been showing an affirmative response on people to people relations between the countries. This can be justified through statements from several stakeholders : Chinese President Xi Jinping (2017) urging the two countries to intensify people-to-people exchanges, cooperation between local governments, and collaboration in promoting Nepal's tourism in China; the Chinese Vice Premier (2018) Wang Yang highlighting Nepal and China as natural friends and partners in several interviews; Nepali Prime Minister K.P Sharma Oli (2018) highlighting the role of China to be very instrumental to enhance bilateral cooperation through cross-border railroad connectivity, energy, transportation, infrastructure development, investment, tourism, and people-to-people contacts under the Belt and Road Initiative; ambassadors from both nations conferring great importance to bilateral tourism cooperation in promoting people-to-people exchanges and creating harmonious relationships.

On top of that, the two-day (October 12, October 13, 2019) Nepal visit by the Chinese head of state President Xi Jinping after 23 years is the milestone for Nepal-China relations. President Xi's visit is

taken as a herald for new beginning in Nepal-China relations that deepens bilateral cooperation in multifarious sectors (Acharya, 2019). During the visit, President Xi and Prime Minister of Nepal KP Sharma Oli witnessed the signing of 20 memorandums of understanding and agreements to promote bilateral cooperation. The agreements include a boundary management system, the establishment of a sister city relationship between Chinese and Nepalese cities and the establishment of Confucius Institute at Nepal's oldest Tribhuvan University. The understandings and agreements were about cooperation on governance capacity building, traditional medicine, disaster risk reduction, and emergency response, a treaty on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, promoting key projects on investment and cooperation, feasibility study of China-Nepal cross border railway project, and Sagarmatha protection cooperation among others. President Xi assured that China will assist Nepal in transforming itself from a landlocked country to a land-linked country by developing the Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network. This indicates opening of many trade transits with Nepal, the additional entry points will surely enhance the connectivity between the two countries (Bhuju, 2019). This demands on the need of improvement of tourism facilities for tourists in Nepal as conveyed by several private tourism stakeholders in Nepal who believe that the promotion should be focused on the quality services and sound infrastructure for the tourists. There's a misconception about the Chinese tourism market in Nepal as people perceive the Chinese market as a lower end based on larger quantity (Lee, 2019). Nepal has to open the market for high-end tourists from China. A country needs not a larger number of tourists, but quality customers.

Nepal's brand dimension amongst Chinese guests

A place is a culture that makes it a place and there is no place branding devoid of an understanding of culture(s) that make a place (Evans, 2003; in Almeyda, 2017). Konecnik and Gartner (2007; in Almeyda-Ibáñez & George, 2017) proposed four brand dimensions: Destination awareness, destination image, destination quality, and destination loyalty. In this study, these dimensions are analyzed in the aspect of Nepal's country image as host and Chinese visitors' expectation and perspectives as a guest. Destination awareness represents the strength of brand presence in the mind of the target market (Pike & Page, 2014; in Almeyda-Ibáñez & George,2017). Destination image is the multi-dimensional construct influenced by cognitive (beliefs and knowledge about destination/brand) and affective (feelings toward the destination/brand) images that jointly affect the tourist's behaviors (Qu, Kim & Im, 2011; Smith, 2005; Balojlu & Brinberg, 1997; in Silva, Castenholz & Abrantes, 2013, p.17; Almeyda-Ibáñez & George, 2017, p.12). Destination quality surfaces to how tourists perceive the quality of the environment surrounding the destination specifically, the quality of accommodations, food, atmosphere, and personal safety among others. Keller (2008; in Almeyda-Ibáñez & George, 2017) identified seven dimensions of product quality: performance, features, conformation quality, reliability, durability, serviceability, style, and design. Destination loyalty deals with the intention to revisit the destination and desire to recommend it to others.

Upon asking the question about country image of Nepal to Chinese citizens with whom the researcher got to interact with, Nepal's image was portrayed as a neighboring country having good terms with China, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, land of brave Gurkha warriors who carried '*Khukuri* (national weapon of Nepal), country with many mountains, countries hit by massive earthquake, country

featured on a Hollywood movie named '*Doctor Strange*' etc. These impressions prove Nepal's country image is so limited among the citizen of its northern neighbor. There needs to be a lot of effort carried out for its image rebuilding and tourism industry which is still in its infancy based on the service that should improve the quality of its service. One university student from Sichuan who traveled to Nepal in a tourist group said, 'I think the Nepalese tourism industry is not yet mature and has limited knowledge on packaging products and services that look more attractive to the tourists highlighting Chinese concepts of places receiving tourists to be decorated, well-dressed salesperson, eye-catching uniforms or ethnic costumes. To her, the market in Thamel was just too 'ordinary', in other words, too authentic and raw. The researcher interviewed a Nepali tourism professional whose work is based on China for Nepal tourism promotion. He said the promotional aspects of government are not being able to reach the Chinese clients due to the language barrier and are quite hopeful about the adoption of language inclusive advertisement and promotion campaigns of the Nepal government targeting the Chinese tourists. These microcosms of the larger tourism boom associated with the arrival of Chinese people in Nepal calls for the need for local entrepreneurs to adapt to this new reality by learning new skills (Mulmi, 2020).

Tourism cooperation at present

There is growing agreement among scholars in tourism studies that both outbound and inbound tourism as a forum of people-to-people exchange (Stumpf & Swanger, 2015; Gou, Li & Wang, 2014; Weaver, 2015; Kwek Xu et al., 2014). The increase of Sino-Nepal interactions in trade, aid and investments has attracted Chinese tourists to Nepal. Hence, it is important to know the consumer needs, wants, policy and politics. China's cultural diplomacy in Nepal is delineated through a number of cultural cooperation: education; press, publishing and media; and tourism and people-to-people exchange programs in academia and think tanks among young people, women, and athletes. China could be vital to revive Nepal's tourism industry battered by earthquake and Indian embargo and political instability. Nepalese destinations are rejuvenating with the focus to rebound all potential tourist source markets to cover and develop more advance tourism industry in Nepal. On December 25, 2015, as an effort to recover the battered tourism industry, the Nepalese government announced the waiver of visa fees for Chinese tourists traveling to Nepal. Data of the Ministry of culture, tourism and civil aviation shows that there is an increasing trend of Chinese Tourists traveling in a Nepalese tourist destination and China is the second-largest tourist source market for Nepal after India. As per the data of the first eight months of 2019,782,600 tourists visited Nepal of which 106,050 were Chinese. The number of Chinese tourists visiting Nepal has increased by 9.8 percent compared to the same period last year. In the year 2018, a total of 134,362 Chinese tourists visited Nepal (Bhuju, 2019). The tourism sector is hopeful that the agreements between Kathmandu Metropolitan City and Butwal Sub Metropolitan of Nepal with Nanjing and Xi'an of China for the establishment of a sister-city relationship will help in the promotion of tourism in Nepal and encourage Chinese to visit the sister cities. For the Chinese, being able to travel to exotic foreign places and having adventures is something that one can show off to family members, colleagues, and friends. The burgeoning of various Chinese social media platforms fosters this culture (Hou & Wang, 2014; in Chen & Duggan, 2016). The appreciation of China's currency is also the key reason behind Chinese people visiting Nepal. Nepal with its natural landscape and cultures that is starkly different from China could be benefited through extensive tourism cooperation.

Cultural differences between the hosts and the guests

While the Chinese government is making attempts to build soft power through various policies, the effectiveness of this is achieved mainly through interpersonal and business communications. Chinese outbound tourists rank the top place in Nepal. Hence, Nepal as a destination should make an effort to understand these cultural differences and understand the Chinese ways of doing things. Tourist-host interactions may have great potential. But currently, the group tour dominant model limits interaction with the locals and even generates a negative image. Hence, the soft power building through the current form of Chinese outbound tourism, which is under government control and lacks individual contact, is more difficult to achieve, and it might be a long way to go before such tourism can flourish and soft power can be built. An important inhibitor, with global ethical implications that can affect China's soft power diplomacy, is the unethical behavior of Chinese outbound tourists (Guo & Zhang, 2008; in Xu, Xu et al., 2018). The unfavorable behaviors of Chinese outbound tourists have been identified by an official from Foreign Affair, Pin Huang as below (China News, 2013; in Xu, Wang & Song, 2018): some Chinese tourists do not have good behavior, such as bathroom etiquette, spitting manners, etc. They lack understanding of the local customs and lack of respect; Intentional or unintentional breaking of local laws; improper guidance from travel agencies; overprotecting their rights and benefits. This type of behavior can be attributed to the fact that they are inexperienced in tourism and visiting other cultures. The Chinese government, realizing that these unethical behaviors constitute a bottleneck in increasing national soft power, has developed an intervention program on regulating outbound tourists' behaviors (Xu, et al., 2018).

Language is another important aspect that maintains and conveys culture and cultural ties. Learning a new language involves the learning of a new culture (Allwright & Bailey 1991; in TEFL, 2019). The Chinese language is closely tied to Nepali nationalistic ideology where learning Chinese is interpreted as a major weapon to maintain an adequate distance and optimum proximity with China (Sharma, 2018). The boost in outbound tourism of the world's largest economy signifies Mandarin Chinese as a lingua franca in tourism contexts and Nepal as a neighboring travel destination should employee bilingual tourism workers who can speak Chinese. There have been studies about the scope of the Chinese language in the context of Nepal's tourism and related businesses. Researcher borrows the findings of (Sharma, 2018) on ethnographic and interview data from Chinese language learners and users such as tour guides, hoteliers, vendors, and business people that there is a changing linguistic landscape of some places in Kathmandu noting that due to the recent boom of Chinese tourists to Nepal, a mini Chinatown has appeared within the winding streets in the city which are now covered with Chinese language signs, Chinese restaurants, and hotels. The findings as a whole highlight the power, prestige, and commodity value of Chinese in Nepal, regimenting another lingua franca alongside English in international tourism contexts. The Ministry of Education signed a memorandum of understanding with the Chinese Embassy in Nepal on the Volunteer Chinese Teachers' Program in Nepal (Ghimire, 2019).

The use of a dedicated tourist year is recognized by scholars as a means to comprehensively expand tourism cooperation and cultural exchange, promote bilateral relations and improve friendliness between nations. Tourism culture activities of this type include the establishment of 'Year of Tourism' (Xu et al., 2018, p.8). Nepal has dedicated "Visit Nepal 2020" in order to leverage

its tourism values. President Xi during his visit to Nepal in 2019 has committed to fully support the idea and agreed to encourage Chinese nationals to visit Nepal in the year 2020 and promote the Visit Nepal Year 2020. The statement by Xi is considered significant and the tourism entrepreneurs are enthusiastic that this will definitely help to boost the tourism industry of Nepal. The Chinese Government had announced the year 2017 as Nepal Tourism Promotion Year in China (MoFA, 2019).

Geopolitics and tourism

Nepal is a country strategically located, sharing a border with China in the North and India in East, West, and South. Nepal's engagement with China is constrained by the Himalayas in the north and Nepal's interaction with India has been more vibrant because of common religious and cultural ties, age-long friendship, and an open border between the two countries (Bhandari, 2019, p.61). Nepal is situated in-between the two giant countries; hence role of Nepal is assumed to be important with respect to the geopolitical theory. In relation to geopolitics and tourism, it is important to note that there are heritage attractions in the geopolitically important border regions that connect Nepal, India, and China. One such attraction is the pilgrimage to Mt Kailash and Mansarovar in Tibet which is of great religious significance to a large number of Hindus in India, and to which Nepal offers a more convenient traveling route (Bhandari, 2019, p.67). Thus, a geopolitical perspective in tourism can provide important insights "on these interrelated practices by enabling nuanced studies of how, for instance, issues of territoriality, representation, and power over destinations become critical sites of struggle for economic and political sovereignty" (Mostafanezhad & Norum, 2016, p. 227; in Bhandari, 2019). One such site of struggle is Lumbini, Nepal as the other important aspect of geopolitics and tourism in the region is Buddhism. In 2011, a Chinese non-governmental organization named the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation and Exchange Foundation (APECEF) came up with a proposal to invest three billion US$ in Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautama Buddha, aimed at making it a tourism hub and a "Mecca for Buddhists" (Economist, 2011; in Bhandari, 2019). The tourism development plan included building an airport, hotels, convention centers, a highway, Buddhist temples and a Buddhist university in Lumbini. Lumbini has huge geopolitical significance for Nepal, as Buddha's dominance extends beyond Buddhism in Nepal (Bhandari, 2019). Hence, it is important to commence projects by ourselves to eliminate ownership and protect national sovereignty and integrity. Nepal as a sacred land for more than 535 million Buddhists and our neighbor China alone has 244 million of those potential religious pilgrims (Poudyal, 2019). If we could attract the Buddhist population in the region then it will definitely yield major tourism gain for the country. Over the past few decades, the Eastern movement of yoga has become increasingly popular in the Western world. Approximately 36 million Americans, more than five million Britons and 10 million Chinese are estimated to incorporate some form of this practice into their lives (Poudyal, 2019). Nepal can be highlighted as a spiritual tourism getaway highlighting yet another dynamic tourism niche.

Revisit citizen diplomacy

The state no longer has a monopoly on foreign policy because the country's image is influenced by many stakeholders therefore, it is necessary to involve all stakeholders as diplomats to promote the country's image. Present world demands that state doesn't only communicate with the authorities of the states with which it maintains diplomatic relations, but also tries to create a direct connection with

their citizens, by using various channels of communication: written press and audio-visual, Internet, conferences, debates, cultural events, festivals, exhibitions, etc. Hence, citizen diplomacy needs to be revisited. In the context of Nepal-China relationship, both sides have been carrying out activities in culture and youth sectors as per the provisions of the MoU on Cultural Cooperation-1999 and MoU on Youth Exchange-2009. Both sides have been promoting people-to-people relations through regular hosting of the cultural festivals, friendly visits of the people of different walks of public life, exhibition, cultural and film show, food festivals, etc. Sister city relations between the cities of the two countries are growing (MoFA, 2019).Country image and perception can be changed via multiple engagements i.e. in areas, such as technology, environment, research and business opportunities for effective involvement of stakeholders in decisions that affect the country's image: non-governmental organizations, think tanks, businessmen, students. The use modern technology and communication tools for information dissemination are vital, given the fact that this is an age of information abundance. China has the largest online population in the world, and Chinese consumers heavily use the Internet when making travel decisions. China emerged as the number one source market for Nepal's tourism. Hence, appreciating the role and contribution of China in Nepal's tourism, Nepal launched an interactive tourism website www.welcomenepal.cn (2018) which is an initiative of Nepal Tourism Board, the main tourism promotion body, to communicate in the Chinese language to attract more Chinese tourists. The website comprises information on various tourism destinations of Nepal, photos and videos, different activities and things-to-do, and necessary information for the Chinese nationals visiting the Himalayan country. Nepal will increase air connectivity with China by adding flights to some new cities within a few months and the underway works with regard to road connectivity between the two countries can ease the flow of Chinese tourists via land route. This initiative plays a crucial role to meet the target to attract 1.5 million tourists during 'Visit Nepal Year 2020.'

A sustainable change can be achieved, only if it is implemented in a bottom-up approach. Institutions must first address the causes that generate the image problems: economic performance, tourism infrastructure, the behavior of the host. The study on the fluctuating perceptions of foreigners and take more or less effective actions in order to influence these perceptions in a positive direction needs to be carried out i.e. environmental pollution of Nepal is currently the most noted hindrance to the tourism industry of Nepal. Nepal's tourism brand should promote environmental concerns and address it through programs to reduce pollution or to introduce clean production technologies. The need for continuous monitoring of the perception of foreigners about Nepal, and to identify the reasons that led to the emergence and spread of these perceptions is really important. Implementing an inside-out approach can lead to a noticeable improvement in the country's image. Promotion of the country and the objectives of the foreign policy are a priority to be addressed through a well-planned strategy hence allocating more resources is significant. Allocating financial resources for public diplomacy and tourism promotion activities is limited in Nepal. There are a lot of inefficiencies in promotion because of lower costs and the use of resources from other sources (third-party) than the state budget. The intensive promotion will be possible only with the successful implementation of policies; there are several instances of policy illiteracy in the case of Nepal-China ties. Destination markets not only need to "know consumer needs and wants" but they must also "understand the policy and politics" at play. Nepalese stakeholders need to be aware of the tourism policies of china

and vice-versa. But the underlying problem is that Nepal's policy is unstable and even Chinese experts find Chinese policies "ambiguous" (Tse, 2013). Both governments should make visa applications easier and more convenient. There needs to be inherent stability in visa procedures. The negative reviews must be eliminated. There are macro-structural challenges that hinder in attracting Chinese visitors could be the immigration policy, visa procedures, trans border policy, language, tourist-friendly services, accommodation, accessibility, amenities, and food.

China as a priority: Nepal should look north

China's soft power in Nepal is evident from both governmental and non-governmental actors. These actors accept the importance of increasing Chinese outbound tourism to Nepal and prioritize it in their policies. In other words, the target audiences of China's soft power, such as governmental and non-governmental agents have started to feel that they are stakeholders of the issue of promoting Chinese visits to Nepal. The contemporary strong political and high-level government's relationship is enhancing Nepal-China multivariate bilateral ties in a positive direction. As Nepal has officially become a Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) dialogue partner it will provide a platform to strengthen and develop trade, tourism, and investment in Nepal. Nepal is the largest trade partner with China's TAR (Tibetan Autonomous Region). Their 58.6% trades remain with Nepal beside those spectacular phenomena relying on China-Nepal co-operation, Nepal-China frontier not only for two countries also can be a vibrant bridge for south Asian countries easier connectivity (Batala et al., 2017). The finding shows that Nepal's efforts to attract Chinese tourists - have different levels of capability to lure Chinese tourists. Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) created by the World Economic Forum every two years. The TTCI is generated on the basis of a number of indicators, ranging from a country's general environment (e.g., business environment, safety and security, health and hygiene, human resources and labor market, availability of information, and communication technologies), to travel and tourism enabling conditions (e.g., prioritization of travel and tourism, international openness, price competitiveness, environmental sustainability), to infrastructure (e.g., air transport infrastructure, ground and port infrastructure, tourist service infrastructure), to natural and cultural resources. China grabs 15th position while Nepal is at the 103rd position in order of tourism competitiveness. Hence, Nepal needs to work on multi-level to leverage the tourism industry.

A surge in Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI)

China's pursuance of soft power (Hollinshead & Hou, 2012; in Bhandari, 2019, p.61), which is defined as the capacity of populations and governments to achieve what they want to attain through influence and understanding rather than through the hard power techniques of coercion (Nye, 2004; in Bhandari, 2019, p.) Foreign direct investment is one of the many soft power approaches of China. According to the BOM5 (Balance of Payments Manual, 5th Edition), FDI refers to an investment made to acquire a lasting interest in enterprises operating outside of the economy of the investor. Further, in cases of FDI, the investors' purpose is to gain an effective voice in the management of the enterprise. The foreign entity or group of associated entities that make the investment is termed the direct investor (Basnyat, 2013, p.70). In addition to supporting economies through outbound tourism as diplomacy there is also an increment in the Chinese overseas tourism investment. A major shift of Chinese international policy has occurred by prioritizing the sectors of tourism cooperation amongst

member states that are part of the Belt and Road Initiative, at both central and local level. In general, these policy advocates strengthening cooperation in tourism, expanding tourism scale, arranging mutual tourism activities to produce international tourism routes and tourism products with features of the Silk Road, together with other countries (China Comment, 2016; in Xu, Wang & Song, 2018). In this strategic background, the Chinese government has deepened cooperation with neighboring countries by increasing infrastructural investments in tourism traffic facilities such as highways, railways and shipping. In addition, various Chinese tourism enterprises, like hotel operators, travel agencies, large tourism conglomerate, and real estate enterprises, encouraged by the 'going-out' policy and stimulated by outbound tourism market have been increasing their investments in major Chinese outbound tourism destinations in recent years (Li, Yan, & Chen, 2014; in Xu et al., 2018).

China has increased its Foreign Direct Investment commitments to Nepal in recent years (NRB, 2018), and has been projecting itself as a benevolent power as against the patronizing attitude of India towards Nepal (Bhandari, 2019, p.61). People and the government of Nepal look up to China as a resource for capital and investment. Nepal has also introduced a new Industrial Enterprise Act, the Special Economic Zone Act and the Foreign Investment Policy, seeking to create a more friendly investment environment. The policies and programs of the Nepali government aim to achieve double-digit growth in the next five years from current 5.9 percent by attracting investment in the areas of agriculture, energy, transport, physical infrastructure, information technology, tourism and civil aviation which are termed as the key areas driving economic growth in the country. A number of highways, hospitals, industries, cultural institutions, science & technological aid, and many more co-operations are enhanced by China. In terms of trade and transit of high-altitudinal geographic disadvantages in China and Nepal it trade and trade have positively risen. According to Nepal's Department of Industry, China has contributed around 58 percent of FDI commitment out of the total 137.30 million U.S. dollar pledged by foreign investors during the first half of the current fiscal year that began in mid-July 2017. Chinese FDI and Aid granted by China in Nepal are increasing dramatically. Reports show that in terms of a number of projects running by Chinese investors in Nepal listed number one position by surpassing Indian investors. Nepal and China agreed to a feasibility study of the free trade agreement (FTA), the historic MOU of Nepal's accessibility to Chinese port for outside trade and transit and understanding of enlarge Lhasa-Shigatse (Shigatse) railway to Nepal border port Gyrong (Kerong) by 2020 as well further extension to capital Kathmandu in future.

Recognizing tourism resources and minimizing weakness

Marketers categorize "hard factor" such as infrastructure, economy, accessibility, availability of financial incentive and "soft factor" such as the environment, friendliness of local people, art, cultural traditions, and leisure activities are gaining importance as nation branding elements related with tourists and investors (Morgan et al., 2011; in Almeyda-Ibáñez & George, 2017). Nepal needs to look for visitors who are already coming to the region and determine what is attracting them. Identify what the community can do to gain more benefit from these visitors. It can be improving signage, providing more community information at places or businesses these people are already frequenting, or looking at services these visitors need that it would be easy to provide. When a sector is clear about what they have and know what they would like, it's time to ask for help from regional and state

tourism offices. Frequent changes in policy will act as a de-motivating factor for visiting the country. Development of a politically sustainable tourism policy can be benefits the people. Campaigns and projects initiated by one leadership are often abandoned due to political changes in the leadership of the responsible institutions it brings about unjust use of resources and work duplication. To ensure continuity and avoid instability it would be wise if accountability for elaborating and promoting the country brand to be managed by an organization that is independent of the political changes. In order to implement a long-term branding strategy, it is recommended to avoid general approaches, which lack originality. Tourism policies must be contextual because nothing is permanent – even tourism and the way people travel can change. Also, particular importance should be given to clarifying and improvising the situations that could damage the country's image, through the diplomatic communication channels. Weak and fragile roadways connectivity, insufficient airport in Nepal, not enough direct flight, insufficient tourist infrastructure along border side, financial incapability, insufficient communication with both sides on central and local government level, lack of experience in cross border cooperation issues, inconvenience of language exchange at all, some of these compositions of natural and manmade obstacle the cooperation between Nepal and China.

Tourism and security

The interrelationships between tourism and security have been interpreted largely negatively (Hall & Sullivan, 1996; Tarlow, 2006; Chhetri, 2018). Tourism has been referred to as "goose that not only lays a golden egg, but also fouls its own nest (Aramberri, 2001; in Kunwar 2010, pp.42-43). With the adoption of mass tourism practice in Nepal starting from late 60s and opening its border to the foreigners not only opened the opportunity in the country for its development but also exposed the nation to several vulnerability and crime (Kunwar & Barmashkha,2014,p.10).Tourists may become victims of crime, may be accomplices of various offences, and they may commit offences against the tourism infrastructure and personnel (Tarlow 2011; in Lisowska,2017).The negative effects of foreign arrivals concerning to developing countries underlines that for these countries' tourism is the easiest route to rapid development, overshadowing the negative influence on natural, social and cultural environments (Alejziak,1995, p. 9; in Lisowska,2017). There are several security concerns that come along with the influx of people-to-people exchanges between Nepal and China. There needs to be constant monitoring and investigation on aspects of criminal networks, violation of immigration laws and overstaying visas. Nepal and China have signed a treaty on mutual assistance in criminal matters. Recently, two groups suspected of carrying out cybercrimes and hacking into bank cash machines were detained by police in Nepal. It is a biggest crackdown on crime by foreigners where 122 Chinese nationals entering the country on tourist visas were caught on December, 2019. Similar incident in September 2019 had happened where police arrested five Chinese nationals on a charge of stealing money by hacking bank cash machines. Chinese citizens were also arrested with smuggled gold this year. Speaking in Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said Chinese and Nepali police had cooperated on the case and China was willing to increase law-enforcement cooperation with its neighbor (Sharma, 2019).The government is also concerned about the use of Chinese digital wallets, which were banned in Nepal in May 2019 because of its incompatibility to Nepal's banking laws with payments technically bypassing the country as the transactions are made between Chinese accounts. Hence, legalization of online payments, and transactions should be taxed in order to benefit Nepal (Mulmi, 2020).

Cross- border tourism cooperation and connectivity

The world has examples of neighboring regions of different countries sharing priceless natural or cultural resources that have the potential for joint tourism development. In some of these regions, the principles of sustainable development can be implemented more efficiently through cross-border cooperation. However, all of these cases require the support and approval of the government. The importance of cross-border tourism and cultural co-operation is more pragmatic and obvious importance for the mutual strengthening of the tourism industries of neighboring countries. The Ansoff (1988; in Batala et al., 2017) product-market expansion grid can be used as a theoretical base to apply co-operative marketing strategies to cross-border tourism marketing growth strategies. The grid involves market penetration, market development, product development, and diversification. It is a useful tool to identify market opportunities. There is not an absolute destination marketing technique in practice, destination marketing is a collective effort that requires various organizations and businesses in a geographically limited area to harmoniously work together to achieve a common goal. There are many major and subjective issues for significant increments of Chinese tourists into a Nepalese tourist destination, to achieve tourism marketing growth strategy, Nepalese tourism authority and private tourist industry need to pay attention to Chinese promotion activities. Promotion refers to the communicative activity of marketing. It fills the perceptual and informational gaps that exist between suppliers of tourism (industry) and the tourists (market).

Nepal has road connectivity via Rasuwagadhi and Tatopani for trade and international travelers. There are four other border points designated for bilateral trade. Nepal has direct air links with Lhasa, Chengdu, Kunming, Guangzhou and Hong Kong SAR of China (MoFA, 2019). Air travel is burgeoning between China and Nepal, with more than 50 round-trip flights per week between China and Nepal. The two countries in June signed an agreement on air traffic control to enhance bilateral cooperation in air service (Huaxia, 2019). Political sensitiveness over TAR is yet a challenge in Nepal-China relations. The mobility and accessibility along frontier still not so convenient, since, 2002 people classified as "border inhabitants" only those who live within 30 km of border both sides have been issued border citizen cards which allow them to cross the border without any passport or visa and can travel up to 30 km on the other side. Although Nepal Government extremely supports one-China policy-coding the remaining Tibet separatist issue of China, it's not so easy for the Chinese government to let freely tourism activates in the border area. Boundaries have most often been viewed through history as visible barriers to interconnectivity among people. Cross-Border Tourism can give benefits of border trading places: new economic geographies across the Himalayan borderlands in the context of Nepal and China. Both governments should prioritize cross-border coordination by respecting the sovereignty of both nations. A special tourism management structure needs to be set up in the border areas of Nepal and China. There is a possibility of Inter-trans-regional tourism circuit. The mutual cooperation initiative may create a way of progress (development) along with south-Asian countries. The researcher emphasizes the scope of further study in the new inter trans-regional tourism circuit along India's Sikkim, Nepal's Lumbini, Bhutan's Paro and China's Tibetan Plateau as a highly reunited Buddhist circuit. Cross-border cooperation in tourism has the potential to develop a more stable and secure environment for tourists.

Conclusion

In spite of the geographical proximity and close high-level contact China and Nepal had little trade and cultural exchange for most parts of the 20th century (Sharma, 2019). The paper tries to explore the scope of the infrequent people-to-people relations between Nepal and China. Irrespective of uneven size, power potential, historical complexes and different speed in the development of Nepal and China, there are plentiful of micro-level cooperation that can be leveraged by adapting the tourism industry as a tool of track-two diplomacy. A sustainable change can be achieved, only if it is implemented in a bottom-up approach. Tourism as a track two intermediary sector can be used as an effective measure by using an alternative political channel of communication which pulls the cooperation of track one decision-making that benefits larger people.

Nepal is assumed to be an important partner to China with respect to the geopolitical theory. According to Hall (2017a; in Bhandari, 2019), geopolitics is important in tourism. Chinese outbound tourism is massive and Nepal is an enticing destination for tourists around the world with naturally blessed infinite natural resources, cultural and wildlife diversification. The study discusses the measures that Nepal needs to adopt for reaping maximum benefits from China's outbound tourism by positioning role of Nepal as a tourism host. Thus, the Nepal government should focus on bringing plans and programs and carry more interactions and engagements dedicated to Northern neighbor whose presence has been highlighted as the next great power and 'Chinese dream'(Bhandari,2019). Nepal's government needs to invest in tourism infrastructures, scientific destination management, provide the fame of securities among foreign and domestic tourists. Nepal needs to cooperate with international tourism forums and neighboring countries to cash its natural tourism endowment as tourism is one way for states to increase and maintain soft power. Tourism can be a platform of interaction and tourists can act as citizen diplomats in promoting people-to-people relations between Nepal and China. The multi-level engagements between China and Nepal which prepares citizen diplomats who represent their own culture and develop intercultural awareness to comprehend, respect, and represent the perspectives of another culture. It builds the notion of moral responsibility and civic engagement with the value of community beyond the borders entailing recognition of learning based on reciprocity, recognition of civic identities, and responsibility for one's actions and representations abroad.

The researcher concludes with a plea for more collaboration and open dialogue between policymakers, industry representatives, and scholars in order to facilitate people-to-people relations between Nepal and China. The tourism industry can shape a new form of Chinese– Nepalese interaction between people-to-people. Nepal as an (Asian) host deals with Chinese (Asian) guests implies a revisit to the historical relationships of China and Nepal, which necessitates Nepalese hosts tourism to balance between interpretive historical discourses and pragmatic tourism economics both at the macro tourism management level as well as micro interpersonal level. There are plenty of scopes to conduct another study within the same area of research, most importantly with the incorporation of tactics of cultural assimilation and intercultural communication between Nepal and China.

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