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## A Glimpse of the Tourism Sector in Nepal

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### Abstract:

Tourism is one of the possible economic sectors in Nepal because tourists from different parts of the world arrive annually in the country for various purposes like taking pasture and entertainment, mountain-trekking, business, seminars and study, etc. In this context, the study analyzes the situation of tourism in Nepal in terms of arrival number, stay duration, and arrival purpose. This study aims to analyze a glimpse of the tourism sector in Nepal during the last forty years. The general objectives were to analyze the major types of tourism practices in Nepal, focusing on the number of tourists arriving in Nepal who present the record monthly arrivals, highlighting tourists' visit purposes, sex composition and nationality. Both qualitative and quantitative data collected from secondary sources were analyzed through a mixed method as the methodological tool. Qualitative data are described in the paragraph and quantitative data are presented in the table. Findings and conclusions of the study are made on the basis of data interpretation and analysis. It is found that the tourism development is not so fruitful in Nepal because the coverage of GDP portion and total arrival numbers are not so high, whereas Nepal is known as the famous ecological and cultural zone in the world for visiting. The statistics show an overall glimpse of tourism in Nepal and provide guidelines for the future plans of the tourism sector.

**Keywords:** glimpse, tourism, Nepal, travel, tourist.

## 尼泊尔旅游业一瞥

### 摘要:

旅游业是尼泊尔可能的经济部门之一，因为每年来自世界不同地区的游客出于各种目的来到该国，例如牧场和娱乐、登山、商务、研讨会和学习等。在这种情况下，研究从入境人数、停留时间、入境目的等方面分析了尼泊尔的旅游情况。本研究旨在分析过去四十年来尼泊尔旅游业的概况。总体目标是分析尼泊尔的主要旅游实践类型，重点关注到达尼泊尔的游客数量，这些游客呈现出每月到达的记录，突出游客的访问目的、性别构成和国籍。通过混合方法作为方法工具对从二手来源收集的定性和定量数据进行了分析。定性数据在段落中描述，定量数据在表中呈现。研究结果和结论是在数据解释和分析的基础上得出的。研究发现，尼泊尔的旅游业发展并不卓有成效，因为其国内生产总值占比和总入境人数的覆盖率都不是很高，

而尼泊尔被誉为世界著名的旅游生态文化区。统计数据显示了尼泊尔旅游业的总体情况，并为旅游业的未来计划提供了指导方针。

**关键词：**一瞥，旅游，尼泊尔，旅行，旅游。

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world. Tourism refers to the activities related to travel, trekking and hiking, etc. Various scholars and organizations have defined the words ‘Tourist’ ‘Tourism’ and the word associated with them, i.e., travelers, visitors, exclusionists, etc. in various ways. ‘A tourist is a temporary leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home to experience a change’ (Smith, 2017, p. 4). As the World Tourism Organization (WTO) has defined, ‘tourist is any person who travels to a country other than that in which he or she has her/his usual residence but outside her/his usual environment for a period of at least one night not more than one year and where the main purpose of visit other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from the country visited. Page (1999) defined tourism as temporary short time movement of the people to the destination outside place where the normally live and work and their activities during the stay at this destination, it includes movement for all purposes, as well as day visits or excursions (Page, 1999, p. 17). Government of Nepal (GoN), Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation have adopted the definition recommended by the United Nations stating that “tourism is an activity of a person travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one year for leisure, business or any other purpose” (Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MOTCA), 2018).

Tourism has become one of the most important phenomena for people related to spatial behavior in modern time. Increasing pleasure and travel trends have caused numerous changes in human life everywhere in the world. Nepal has many tourist destinations and the exploitation of these destinations offer a wide range of comparative advance. The most spectacular mountains in the world people of different races, religious cultures and customs, a wide variety of flora and fauna and varied climates are the major source of attraction. To develop sustainable tourism and to achieve optimum socioeconomic benefits, the activities like eco-tourism, community-based tourism, or village tourism should be highly promoted. Nepal, one of the most unique, exotic and remote destinations in the tourism map of the world, in a questionably a country deemed with countries natural wonder and exhilarating tourism products (NTB, 2017, p. 6). The history of tourism goes back to the period of civilization. It cannot be said exactly since when humans started to travel but can be imaged that since the time of the human existence, they started to travel around the world.

### 1.1. Tourism Components

Transportation plays an important role in the tourism industry. The mode of transport as well as the nature of transport will affect the tourism development. If there is an easy type of transport in the reliable cost, there will be a high flow of tourists to that destination. The tourism industry has reached its current position because of the development of the railroad transport. Thus, transport is an essential component of tourism development.

### 1.2. Accommodation

It means the facilities, which are offered to the tourists in the destination. Such as if there are hotels and good restaurants, there will be more attractive for tourists. For example, the tourists will go to Iceland from Switzerland to enjoy ice because there is not only ice but also comfortable and warm hotels. Thus, tourists are attracted to Iceland from Switzerland. We will find the same possibility in the content of Nepal. Thus, accommodation is also an important component of tourism.

### 1.3. Attraction

It is mainly associated with the destination. It means the attraction of the destination. There should be special characteristics of the destination, which will be able to attract the tourist. The attraction should not be congested with building. It should have good sunshine, good fresh wind flow etc., which will highly attract the tourists. The beaches of Italy and France are the main attraction of tourists from all over the world. These are good examples of attractive locations. Thus, the attraction is also a good component of tourism (Upadhaya, 2008, p. 5).

### 1.4. Types of Tourism

Basically, foreign and domestic tourism are two types that can be seen in Nepal. The purpose and nature of the visit also determine the types of tourism that Upadhaya (2008) mentioned as:

- *Holiday/Pleasure Tourism*

Holiday or pressure tourism focuses on the schedules organized during the time of holiday period. Holiday tourism is limited by sightseeing, such as sea beaches, rivers, waterfalls, lakes, mountains, natural views, flora and fauna, etc. Sometimes visitors can observe the man-made sightseeing museums, historical places, religious place, archeological sites, festivals, exhibitions, etc. According to the tourist department of the government of Nepal, in 2020 38% of tourists arrived in Nepal during the holiday period for pleasure. The number of arriving Indian tourists is high in the holiday period; however, tourists from Japan, the

USA and UK also arrived for holiday pleasure (GoN, 2020).

- *Agro-Tourism*

In the context of Nepal, agro-tourism is used as observation visits organized by various farmers' group and agriculture office of the different local bodies. Such practice is a new phenomenon in the tourism business. Day by day agro-tourism is expanding in the world. Agro-tourism helps exchange ideas and goods related to agriculture. It makes linkage between agroindustries and tourism once at a time. In agro-tourism, tourism industry focuses on the farm bed-and-breakfast, farm vacation, horse riding, fishing, camping sites on farm, agricultural fair and festivals, etc.

- *Adventure Tourism*

Adventure tourism is one of the popular types of tourism that has been applied throughout the world since long. Main motto of adventure tourism is to fulfill the adventurous desire of the visitors. Bungee jump, rafting, mountain climbing, skating are the activities that visitors involve in adventure tourism.

- *Health Tourism*

Health tourism is one of the oldest types of tourism which is related to the people's desire to visit a healthy environment. People desire to improve their health by taking rest in a certain environment. Due to the fitness of the environment, some foreigners come to Nepal for treatment and bed rest. Climate the clean environment play role to promote health tourism in a nation. Particularly for eye treatment, people from India come to Nepal and stay for a long time as tourists.

- *Sports Tourism*

Playing games is an international phenomenon so that people usually visit new places to entertain through playing or watching games. In Nepal, annually various teams come involved in international elephant polo game and other games like hunting animals, mountain bike race, and climbing a mountain.

- *Business and Conference Tourism*

For business purposes people visit various parts of the world. In ancient times, many businesspersons and travelers visited Nepal and were involved in various types of business-like woolen clothes, herbal medicine. In recent time too various people have visited Nepal for business; however, the number of visitors is unknown due to the lack of proper record management.

- *Ecotourism*

Ecotourism is a new concept of tourism that developed during the 1980s. The concept of ecotourism is related to sustainable development. Ecotourism mostly focuses on natural tourism specially flora and fauna of particular area. The concept of ecotourism does not believe on urbanization and star hotels and luxurious infrastructure. Due to the pressure of urbanization, industrialization and monotonous life of the city, people love to visit peaceful rural areas where life runs with spontaneous time. Nepal is a heaven for eco-tourism because various peaceful places with natural beauty are located in the area.

- *Space Tourism*

Space tourism is a new type of tourism that began during the last decade. People of developed nations are involved in such tourism and visit the Space Centre with scientists. In the context of Nepal, there is no possibility of that type of tourism.

- *Cultural Tourism*

Cultural tourism is one of the important types developing in the world with the changing status of the globe. The global community is changing into multi-cultural society so that people take interest in culture. Annually, thousands of people travel around the world to enjoy a strange culture. Taking information about new culture is one of the popular phenomena of the world. In the context of Nepal to cultural tourism is one of the major types of tourism. According to the national data 2020, 20% tourists visit Nepal for cultural sites scene such as Pashupatinath and Lumbini. Cultural elements like language, festivals, painting handcrafts, sculpture, art and music, history, traditions and dress, etc. also play a role in attracting tourists to Nepal (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

- *Pilgrimage and Religious Tourism*

In the world, religious tourism is known as the main type; annually, millions of people visit famous religious places like Mecca, Medina of Muslim, Ganga Sagar, Turupati Balaji (India) of Hindu. In the context of Nepal, annually many tourists arrive from India to visit Muktinath and Pashupatinath. Similarly, Buddhists from different parts of the world also visit Lumbini for religious purpose (Lumbini Development Trust, 2021).

- *Recreational Tourism*

Recreational tourism has three major aspects. Tourism focuses on sand, sea and sex. In recreational tourism people take enjoy with sitting at the seashore, sandbank with their lover, husband or wife, friends. Swimming in the sea and taking delicious food with wife or girlfriend is the main attraction of recreational tourism. In the context of Nepal, such type of tourism has developed yet.

Tourism can be characterized by many components and functions; however, the ideas given by Sharma, (2009) are worth stating.

- Tourism involves a complex set of interrelations between people, places and products.

- The interrelationship involves through the transportation of people to various destinations outside their normal place of residence and their stay at those destinations.

- The duration of the visit must generally be of a short nature.

- Tourism is essentially a pleasure activity that does not involve earnings travel.

- Tourism products are not homogeneous. A tour package to a destination depends upon the circumstances.

- Tourism industry is a hidden industry because it is much spread out which means it covers more industries than the eyes see.

- The tourism product is highly perishable. A hotel room or an airline seat not used today is a total loss.
- Tourism products cannot be used for future use.
- Its raw materials are in exhaustible.
- Tourism products do not diminish with constant use.

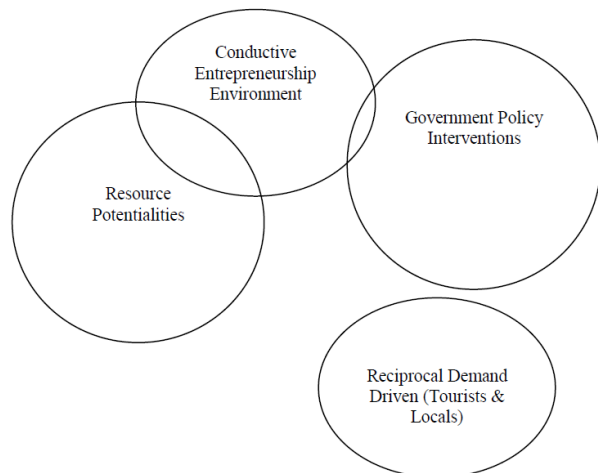


Figure 1. Factors of tourism development in Nepal (Sharma, 2009)

Tourism development should enhance government policy, potential uses of resource mobilization and increase the role of entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. The tourism sector is one of the sensitive industries in Nepal because various components play a role to develop tourism in Nepal. Infrastructure development, enhancement of resource potentiality, visa policy of government play role for tourism development in Nepal (Dhakal, 2021, p. 11).

## 2. Methodology

The study followed a mixed method to obtain the research objectives. “A mixed method research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and ‘mixing’ both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A mixed method helps describe the numerical information using tables and graphs. Numerical data can be analyzed using descriptive mode of quantitative research. “Descriptive research design is a type of research design that aims to obtain information to systematically describe a phenomenon, situation, or population. More specifically, it helps answer the what, when, where, and how questions regarding the research problem, rather than the why” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The author described the numerical data collected from different sources and categorized in different themes. Tables were used to analyze the data and fulfill the objectives of the study.

### 2.1. Study Area

Nepal represents a bend of ancient history, vibrant cultures and scenes of grandeur located between China and India. Nepal’s main geographical features include snow-capped peaks, lower mountains, mid hills and

fertile Terai plains of tropical jungles. Nearly one-third of the total length of the Himalayan and eight of the world’s 14 highest peaks are in Nepal. The landlocked country covers an area of 147181 square kilometers ranging from 70 meters to the highest point at 8848 meters about sea level. Nepal’s popularity as a tourist destination has increased vastly over the years. While tracking and mountaineering have long been popular, an entire range of other activities are carried out with various adventure options, the country is a favorite among adventure lovers (NTB, 2017).

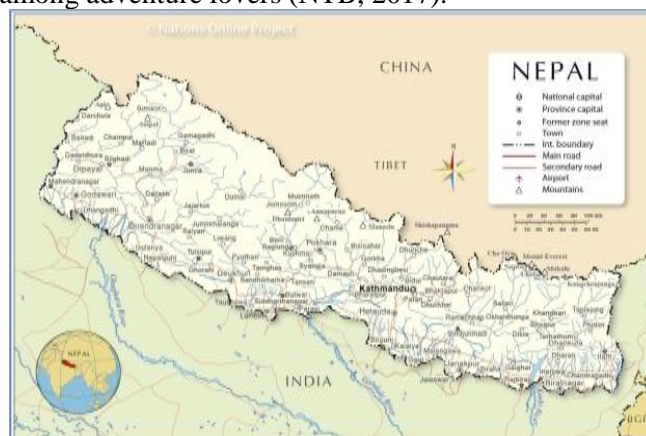


Figure 2. The map of the study area (<https://www.nationsonline.org>)

Nepal is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of bio-diversity, due to its unique geographical position and altitudinal variations. Most Nepalese people live in rural areas. Thus, the lifestyle of the Nepalese people represents a rural scenario.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. A Glimpse of Tourism in Nepal

The paper analyzes the situation of tourism in Nepal in context of past few decades. Tourism is not a new phenomenon in Nepal. Various religious leaders, monk and kings had visited in Nepal in different historical period. During the Kirant period, Ashoka, a powerful king of Kapilbastu had visited Nepal and married his daughter Charumati, with the prince of Nepal. Like that in Lichhivi’s period, Hsuan Tsang had visited Nepal and prepared the document about Nepal and India. These events proved that Nepal was one of the tourist centers in south Asia. Currently Nepal is known as the nation of Sagarmath, (Mt. Everest, the highest peak in the world) and the birth place of Gautam Buddha.

During the Rana regime, Nepal was restricted to tourists, however, some diplomats had visited Nepal with delegates of the Rana. In 1949 Rana regime had abolished and Nepal was opened to tourists, however, there was no provision to record the number of tourists. Record of the tourists had been kept since 1964 in a systematic form. The following table shows the number of tourists who arrived in Nepal from 1964 to 2020.

Table 1 indicates the total numbers of tourists have been arrived in Nepal since 1964 till 2020. In Nepal, most tourists arrive by land and around 20% tourists arrive by air. It shows that the situation of air transport

is not so good in Nepal. Most of the tourists have arrived through India. During five and half decades, Nepal has organized various events inside and outside the nation; however, the number of tourists is not so

high. In 2020, only 230,085 tourists arrived in Nepal by land and air transport. Among them 79.6 % of tourists arrived by land transport.

Table 1. Tourist arrivals and average length of stay, 1964-2020 (Department of Tourism, 2020)

Year	Total		By Air		By Land		Average Length of Stay
	Number	Annual Growth	Number	%	Number	%	
1964	9,526	30.9	8,435	88.5	1,091	11.5	NA
1965	9,388	-1.4	8,303	88.4	1,085	11.6	NA
1966	12567	33.9	11,206	89.2	1,361	10.8	NA
1967	18,093	44.0	15,064	83.3	3,029	16.7	NA
1968	24,209	33.8	19,717	81.4	4,492	18.6	NA
1969	34,901	44.2	28,130	80.6	6,771	18.4	NA
1970	45,970	31.5	36,508	79.4	9,462	20.6	NA
1971	49,914	8.6	40,369	80.9	9,545	19.5	NA
1972	52930	6.0	42,484	80.3	10,446	19.7	NA
1973	68,047	28.6	55,791	82.2	12,256	18	NA
1974	89,838	32.0	74,170	82.6	15,668	17.4	NA
1975	92,440	2.9	78,995	85.5	13,445	14.5	NA
1976	105,108	13.7	90,498	86.1	14,610	13.9	NA
1977	129,329	23.0	110,180	85.2	19,149	14.8	NA
1978	156,123	20.7	130,034	83.3	26,089	16.7	NA
1979	162,276	3.9	137,865	85.0	24,411	15.0	NA
1980	162,897	0.4	139,387	85.6	23,510	14.4	NA
1981	161,669	-0.8	142,084	87.9	19,585	12.1	NA
1982	175,448	8.5	153,509	87.5	21,939	12.5	NA
1983	179,405	2.3	152,470	85.0	26,935	15.0	NA
1984	176,634	-1.5	149,920	84.9	26,714	15.1	NA
1985	180,989	2.5	151,870	83.9	29,119	16.1	NA
1986	223,331	23.4	182,745	81.8	40,586	18.2	NA
1987	248,080	11.1	205,611	82.9	42,469	17.1	NA
1988	265,943	7.2	234,945	88.3	30,998	11.7	NA
1989	239,945	53.7	207,907	86.6	32,038	13.4	NA
1990	254,885	6.2	226,421	88.8	28,464	11.2	NA
1991	292,995	15.0	267,932	91.4	25,063	8.6	NA
1992	334,353	14.1	300,496	89.9	33,857	10.1	NA
1993	293,567	-12.2	254,140	86.6	39,427	13.4	NA
1994	326,531	11.2	289,381	88.6	37,150	11.4	NA
1995	363,395	11.3	325,035	89.4	38,360	10.6	NA
1996	363,395	11.3	325,035	89.4	38,360	10.6	NA
1997	421,857	7.2	371,145	88.0	50,712	12.0	NA
1998	393,613	8.3	343,246	87.2	50,367	12.8	NA
1999	491,504	6.0	421,243	85.7	70,261	14.3	NA
2000	463,646	-5.7	376,914	81.3	86,732	18.7	NA
2001	361,237	-22.1	299,514	82.9	61,723	17.1	NA
2002	275,468	-23.7	218,660	79.4	56,808	20.6	NA
2003	338,132	22.7	275,438	81.5	62,694	18.5	NA
2004	385,297	13.9	297,335	77.2	87,962	22.8	NA
2005	375,398	-2.6	277,346	73.9	98,052	26.1	NA
2006	383,926	2.3	283,819	73.9	100,107	26.1	NA
2007	526,705	37.2	360,713	68.5	165,992	31.5	NA
2008	500,277	-5.0	374,661	74.9	125,616	25.1	NA
2009	509,956	1.9	379,322	74.4	130,634	25.6	NA
2010	602,867	18.2	448,800	74.4	154,067	25.6	NA
2011	736,215	22.1	545,221	74.1	190,994	25.9	NA
2012	803,092	9.1	598,258	74.5	204,834	25.5	NA
2013	797,616	-0.7	594,848	74.6	202,768	25.4	NA
2014	790118	-0.9	585981	74.2	204137	25.8	NA
2015	538970	-32	407412	75.6	131558	24.4	NA
2016	753002	40	572563	76	180439	24	NA
2017	940218	25	760577	81	179641	19	NA
2018	1173072	25	969287	82.63	203785	17.37	NA
2019	1197191	2.05	995884	83.19	201307	16.81	NA
2020	230085	-80.7	183130	79.6	46955	20.4	NA

To increase the number of tourists, Nepal had organized 'Visit Nepal-1998', 'Destination Nepal 2011'





Continuation of Table 4

2014	395,849 (50.1)	97,185 (12.3)	24,494 (3.1)	98,765 (12.5)	32,395 (4.1)	13,432 (1.7)	53,728 (6.8)	74,271 (9.4)	790,118 100.0
2015	386,065 (71.63)	9,162 (1.70)	20,876 (3.87)	14,996 (2.78)	21,479 (3.99)	9,038 (1.68)	77354 (14.35)	-	538,970 100.0
2016	489,451 (65.0)	66,490 (8.83)	24,322 (3.23)	82,830 (11.0)	21,310 (2.83)	12,801 (1.7)	55,797 (7.41)	-	753,002 -100
2017	658,153 (70.0)	75,217 (8.0)	NA	141,033 (15.0)	NA	NA	65,815 (7.0)	-	940,218 100
2018	703,843 (60.0)	187,692 (16.0)	NA	169,180 (14.4)	NA	NA	112,357 (9.6)	-	1,173,072 100
2019	778,173 (65.0)	197,786 (16.52)	NA	171,937 (14.36)	NA	NA	49,301 (4.12)	-	1,197,191 100
2020	139,202 (60.5)	28,530 (12.4)		35,893 (15.6)			26,460 (11.5)	-	230,085 100

Table 4 indicates the purpose of visiting Nepal by tourists between 2010 and 2020. Data shows that majority of the tourists visited Nepal for holiday pleasure. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic created problems in the tourism sector so only few tourists visited Nepal for mountaineering purpose. Pleasure and entrainment are the main purpose of visit because people generally used to go out for refreshment.

#### 4. Discussion

Nepal is one of the attractive destinations for tourism because tourists can be involved in various types of tourism-related activities in Nepal like trekking, pilgrimage, site scene, mountaineering and cultural activities.

While analyzing the number of tourists arriving in Nepal from 1964 to 2020, it was found that only in two years (1967 and 1973) the percentage of tourists (44%) increased compared to the previous years.

In 2015 earthquake created the problems in Nepal, and the number of tourists decreased compared to the previous years. Similarly, in 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic created a problem in the tourism sector worldwide. The number of tourists decreased by more than 80% compared to the previous years.

It is found that March, April, October and November are the best months for tourism because the number of tourists' arrivals is higher than in the other months. The study focused on the period of 2006 to 2020 and found that March is the best for tourists because more tourists arrive in this month.

Tourists travel to Nepal for various purposes; however, pleasure and entertainment are the main purposes for visiting because large numbers of tourists arrive in Nepal for this.

The number of female tourists is less than males; however in 2011, the number of females was higher than that of the males (52.2%).

The total staying day and expenditure amount are not fixed because only a few quality tourists arrived in Nepal during the study period.

In previous studies, researchers and writers only focused on the problems and prospects of tourism in Nepal but they did not present the overall all data related to tourism sectors. The study highlights the data and draws the conclusion that tourism sectors do not

provide sufficient benefit for the people and nation on the basis of investment and national priority. The research findings are based on tourism data and the most significant projects of the government; therefore, this research differs from previous studies and fills their gaps.

The findings of the study are helpful to implicate the policy and program related to tourism development because it shows the total figure of tourism sectors, including total numbers of tourists arrived in Nepal during the last forty years, their purpose of visit and favorite arriving time. Tourism sector of Nepal is leading with a bitter fact and bright hope; therefore, the study can play significant role for implication in both the policy making process and policy implementation procedure.

In Nepal tourism sector only covers the 3.6 GDP in total (Economic survey, 2020). However, tourism sector is known as the major economic sector in Nepal. For 40 years ago government has been conducting various programs and events for tourism promotion. The total number of tourist arrivals in Nepal is not so high in cooperative with neighboring nation. In India around eight million visitors visit a single monument, Taj Mahal (<https://www.tajmahal.gov.in>). Similarly, around seven million visitors visit annually only one monument – the Eiffel tower, France (<http://www.tou Eiffel.com>). In the context of Nepal, the number of tourists is not satisfactory so that government effort is not effective to attract visitors in Nepal.

#### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Nepal has got both opportunities and threats to tourism. The country is one of the ecological zones of Asia where two national parks are listed as the world's heritage site. Nepal is a famous cultural and archeological site in south Asia where ten different monuments and temples are listed as the UNESCO cultural heritage items. However, Nepal is facing various problems in tourism sector; the lack of transportation, insecurity in tourist sports, and negligence in cleanness are the major problems. The government also made huge investments to change the situation, but the effort could not act properly in the past, therefore, the number of tourists in not satisfactory in Nepal.

The recommendations can include:

- Policy should be made on the fact base.
- Security systems should be enhanced for tourists.
- There is a lack of proper infrastructure development.
- A tourist-friendly environment should be maintained in Nepal
- The government should think of ecological protection and maintain the cultural heritage that is going to decay.
- Proper advertisement policy should be followed.
- Local people, community organization, local and province government should support the federal government to prepare a national policy and strategy for tourism development after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further studies should focus on different topics related to tourism in Nepal, for example, strategies for the recovery of tourism from the COVID-19 pandemic in Nepal. This title will be helpful for the government in making policy on the basis of the findings of this study.

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