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Implementation of Sustainable Tourism by Private Tourism Enterprises in Kathmandu

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Abstract

The tourism as one of the growing industries is a prominent sector to deliver the long-term development. Tourism, in another hand, has inimical side with adverse effects on environment and socio-culture. Thus, sustainable tourism in Kathmandu is crucial to make out the tourism to benefit environment, society and culture; not just economic. There are several stakeholders to materialize sustainable tourism in the actuality. Private tourism enterprises, as it sells he tourism products and activities of the country, has salient roles to apply sustainable tourism in the tourism industry. This study attempts to study the implementation of sustainable tourism by private tourism enterprises in Kathmandu. It intends to find out how private tourism enterprises in Kathmandu implements sustainable tourism. From the results of this research, the different activities of private tourism enterprises in Kathmandu that align with sustainability were analyzed to obtain the information on ways of implementing sustainable tourism. Studying the cases of this study, it was found that private tourism enterprises in Kathmandu implement sustainable tourism by making economic prosperity, mitigating negative impacts on ecosystem, preserving environment, fostering culture and resulting in community welfare. This study is useful to comprehend in what ways private tourism enterprises in Kathmandu have adapted sustainability in the tourism industry through their business operation.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, Kathmandu, private tourism enterprises, implementation

Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CBET	Community-Based Eco-Tourism
CEIC	Census and Economic Information Center
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CSUWN	Conservation and Sustainable Use of Wetlands in Nepal
CTEVT	Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training
DFID	Department for International Development
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution and Trafficking
EE	Energy Efficiency
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EmPLED	Employment Creation and Peace Building based on Local Economic Development
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GoN	Government of Nepal
HITT	High Impact Tourism Training
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IHRA	International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KEEP	Kathmandu Environmental Education Project
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas

MAST	Marketing Assistance to Nepal for Sustainable Tourism Products
MoCTCA	Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPC	National Planning Commission
NTB	Nepal Tourism Board
SAG	Sustainable Action Group
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMTEs	Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises
SNV	Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (Netherlands Development Agency)
STN	Sustainable Tourism Network
TRPAP	Tourism for Poverty Alleviation Programme
UN	United Nations
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements
UNCSD	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
USD	United States Dollar
WTO	World Trade Organization
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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1. Introduction

This section sheds light on the research topic with a brief introduction of tourism in Kathmandu and Nepal, sustainable tourism and private tourism enterprises which are all the important parts of this study. The problem is defined to indicate why this research is necessary and then the research question is developed afterward.

1.1. Background Description on Tourism in Nepal

Tourism is one of the important industries with economic and social implications, especially in developing countries. The industry bears the potential to contribute in income generation, enhance employment opportunities and enable foreign exchange earnings (Richardson, 2010). Apart from the economic prospects, tourism helps in promoting sustainable development through the utilization of renewable resources and the enhancement of community well-being (Upadhayaya& Sharma, 2010).

Similarly, tourism plays a crucial role in the economic development of Nepal. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), tourism has supported 497,500 jobs and has accounted for 7.8% (direct contribution being 4%) of Nepal's GDP in 2017 (WTTC, 2018). Moreover, WTTC (2018) has made a forecast that the tourism sector will expand by 8.2% of GDP in 2020. In addition, the tourism industry in Nepal is expanding as the inflow of tourists visiting Nepal increased by 25% in 2017 in comparison to 2016(MoCTCA, 2018). Among them, 17.1% were from India (17.1%), 11.1% from China, 8.4% from the USA, 5.4% from the United Kingdom and 4.8% from Srilanka(MoCTCA, 2018).

Moreover, the tourists visit Nepal for various purposes as Nepal is bestowed with many factors that make the country an important tourist destination such as cultural heritages, and diverse landscape. The country entails 10 sites that have been enlisted in UNESCO World Heritage Sites and they are Pashupatinath Temple, Swayambhunath Stupa, Boudhanath Stupa, Kathmandu Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square, Bhaktapur Durbar Square, Changu Narayan Temple, Lumbini, Chitwan National Park and Sagarmatha National Park (UNESCO, 2018). In 2017, 70% visited Nepal for holiday and pleasure, 15% for pilgrimage, 8% for adventure and 7% for other purposes (MoCTCA, 2018).

Out of 10 World Heritage Sites, seven sites lie in Kathmandu valley, the capital city of Nepal. There are additional monuments, heritages, and pagoda styled temples in the valley. Similarly, all three cities of the valley, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur, are renowned

for their typical indigenous *Newari* lifestyle and a long history of craftsmanship, which also contributes in attracting tourists belonging to the market segment of culture and heritage (Thapa, 2003). Likewise, many *Jatras* (street carnival festivals) are organized in various parts of the valley on a regular basis (Khadka&Rayamajhi, 2016). These factors make Kathmandu valley a cultural hub and an important tourist destination (Khadka&Rayamajhi, 2016).

Another important factor, the diverse landscape, has fostered nature-based tourism in Nepal. “Mountain biking, bungee jumping, rock climbing, and mountain climbing, trekking, hiking, bird watching, mountain flights, ultralight aircraft flights, paragliding and hot air ballooning over the mountains of the Himalaya” (MoFA, 2018) are some of the popular activities within nature-based tourism of Nepal.

Given the inflow of foreign exchange, the government has always been targeting to expand the tourism industry to generate more income, employment, and other indirect contributions. Tourists use transportation services, amenities (like hotels, resorts, bars, and restaurants), and purchase local products including handicrafts. These purchases boost the income of the local people indulging in such kind of business (Paudyal, 2012). With an increase in the number of tourists, the aggregate demand for national products and services also increases, generating more income and employment.

Different studies (Bhatta, 2000; Kunwar, 2006; Muller-Boeker, 2000) have emphasized the high prospects of tourism development in Nepal. Upadhayaya& Sharma (2010) stated it is supported by “rich traditional culture, unspoiled and pristine nature and abundant wildlife” (pp 94). Despite the potential that the industry bears in strengthening the economy of Nepal, the country has not been able to reap optimal benefits from the tourism industry. Some of the factors that are hindering the ability to fully benefit from the tourism industry are political instability, lack of proper infrastructure, and the latest natural disaster, earthquake, that occurred in April 2015. The political situation in Nepal is very unstable. The decade long civil war from 1996 to 2006, the political movements followed after the war, and the ongoing struggle to adapt federalism from monarchy has made the country highly prone to political instability and brought people closer to security threats. Similarly, public infrastructure such as roads, electricity, and transportation services are not in proper condition. Moreover, the dreadful earthquake of 2015 did not only take away the lives of thousands of people, but also destroyed heritages, monuments, and various infrastructures such as roads and buildings. As Goeldner, Ritchie & McIntosh (2000) mentioned in their

article that various factors including country's infrastructure, access to transportation and communication, and safety are the factors affecting the rise of tourists, Nepal's lacking in these areas hindered the potential to foster the industry.

In order to improve the infrastructure of Nepal, the government is seeking support from the international community. Nepal receives foreign capital in the form of soft loans and grants from the multilateral donor agencies to develop the tourism industry and other infrastructure facilities (Paudyal, 2012). The upgradation of Tribhuvan International Airport funded by the Asian Development Bank is one of the instances. At the same time, the government is also investing in the infrastructure development to prosper tourism sector of Nepal and have been encouraging private sectors to invest, too, through different policy interventions (Paudyal, 2012).

The government has taken many initiations in recent years to enhance the industry, especially after the twin earthquake in 2015, in which the incoming tourists declined rapidly. One of the upcoming campaign introduced to develop the industry is the announcement of the campaign, 'Visit Nepal 2020'. Similar campaigns were held in 1998 and 2011, which were a success as claimed by the government. The preparation for the campaign taking place next year is underway – reconstruction of the heritages damaged by the earthquake; setting up the provision of homestays in the remote trekking route; and operation of another international airport, Gautam Buddha International Airport in Bhairawa. A newspaper article in The Himalayan Times mentioned that “the event will be a milestone to promote Nepal as a tourism destination in South Asia” (The Himalayan Times, 2018). This reflects that the scope this campaign bears is not only limited within the country but also has implications at the regional level.

Many developing countries are experiencing rapid transformation in the tourism industry, being one of the fastest-growing industries, due to innovations and creative campaigns (Tseng, Wu, Lee, Lim, Bui & Chen, 2018). The Nepalese tourism industry is no exception. The tourism in Nepal is fluctuating highly and is progressing lately with the campaign Visit Nepal 2020 around the corner. The Nepalese tourism industry exhibits great potential for enhancing the sustainability of its performance. Nepalese tourism has tried to establish its own tourism brand through a tangle line “Naturally Nepal: Once is not enough”. In addition to this, a lot of marketing strategies have been executed to increase the visibility and number of visitors. Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), which is a government body for the

marketing of Nepalese Tourism, actively participates and represents the country in various seminars, conferences, programs, and projects. However, most of the tourism promotions are encircled around natural beauty and monuments. These have been the main propagandas for Nepalese tourism for very long.

Nonetheless, the tourism industry needs to be expanded – the dimension of tourism in Nepal is huge such that it can appeal the tourists interested in something other than nature and historic architects (Khadka&Rayamajhi, 2016). Spiritual tourism is a good example for this. Kathmandu is a well-suited place for meditation and yoga processes in which another segment of tourists is attracted. Similarly, a music festival is another innovative way to attract tourists. One such popular event in Kathmandu is Jazzmandu. The prosperity of tourism in Kathmandu is big as the cities are ancient, yet hub for lively modern tourism activities too.

Tourism in Nepal has comparative and competitive advantages with strong linkages to other economic sectors like trade and agriculture (Upadhayaya& Sharma, 2010). Because of the distinctive features like “low capital intensive, endemic resource-based, high labourtilting, highly resilient and with ability to make chain impact in the economy”, the tourism in Nepal has immense prospective for large scale socio-economic mobilization (Upadhayaya&Upreti, 2009, pp. 94). With the growing emphasis for tourism growth in Nepal, the concern for the damages it brings along has also aroused. The initiation to build Nijhadh International Airport drew attention and began a debate on the environmental impact of the activity as the construction requires chopping down more than 2 million trees (New Spotlight Online, 2019). A narrow focus on boosting tourism can, therefore, raise serious concerns to the environment, social and economic status of the country. The next sub-section, thus, discusses about the drawbacks of ill-managed tourism and presents the significance of sustainable tourism.

1.2. Towards Sustainable Tourism

Human activity and ecology have an intertwined relationship, meaning that the human economy is embedded in ecology (Røpke, 2005). Therefore, any economic activity needs to consider its implications on ecology. Similarly, the tourism industry as well needs to be ecologically responsible. This is because, despite the economic prosperity that tourism contributes to, it also leads to a chaotic situation due to environmental damage, social stress, which can “erode culture and values and manifest conflict” if not operated properly (Upadhayaya& Sharma, 2010, pp. 105). In addition, the impact of demand for exhaustible

and renewable resources (Koncul, 2008); wastes generation and disposal problems (Stabler & Goodall, 1996) are some of the examples of environmental degradation that tourism brings. Other examples of ecological footprints of tourism as provided by Lacy, Battig, Moore & Noakes (2002) are degradation of heritage sites, commodification of the sacred, creation of a drug and prostitution market, reduction of biological diversity, destruction of habitat for wildlife, pollution of lakes, rivers, overuse of water resources, loss of scenic beauty, and reduction of pleasure and satisfaction obtained from unspoilt environment. The essence of ancient place deteriorates when the heritages are filled with the nearby noisy bar, and modern architectures (Nepal, Budhathoki & Gurung, 2011). The expansion of nature-based tourism needs to reconsider about the dependency on natural resources, huge exploitation of environment and generation of non-priced effects (Cater & Goodall, 1992). Similarly, Bjønnes (1980, as cited in Nepal, 2000) claimed a strong correlation between deforestation and trekking routes. As a result, human activities have disrupted the ecology, and that is what sustainable development seeks to reduce if not resolve, the tension between human activities and ecology (Costanza, Cumberland, Daly, Goodland & Norgaard, 1997).

Therefore, the concept, sustainable tourism, has been introduced followed by many policies and initiatives to put the concept into practice in order to bring a balance between economic activity and environmental protection. The United Nations World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities” (UNWTO, 2018). Niedziolka (2012) defined sustainable tourism as “all forms of activities, management, and development of tourism that preserve natural, economic, and social integrity and guarantee the maintenance of natural and cultural resources” (pp. 160). Sensible towards both ecology and culture, sustainable tourism tries to minimise negative impacts on the environment and local culture while fostering income, employment, and conservation of the local ecosystem (Adhikari, 2012). Hence, sustainable tourism is an active ambassador to preserve the resources via optimal use, and foster the local community without disrupting cultural values.

The environment in Kathmandu, in general, is already degrading with rising pollution (Bhattarai, 2012). The dumping from tourism-based sectors and the infrastructure like tourist buses are adding more pollutants. Thus, sustainable tourism needs to be prioritized by all

levels: public and private. The significance of private tourism enterprise is discussed in the following section.

Nepal has also internalized the concept of sustainable tourism and as a result, has formulated various policies and plans to maintain a proper balance between tourism development, and environment and society (Nepal, 2000).

Despite the ecological and social limits of finite resources, tourism in most of the countries continues to expand the industry which is associated with the growth (Desbiolle, 2018). The cultural heritages are losing the value in many ways like the close proximity of the modern tourist targeted restaurants and hotel buildings. The same thing applies to the heritage of Kathmandu valley too. About the environment, sustainable tourism also does not mean leaving the environment the same as it was but means preserving it and improving it. This means reducing the use of vehicles in Kathmandu to travel or using the same recyclable water bottle, or “staying at a guesthouse which is off-the-grid” (BuildAbroad, 2019).

Though sustainable tourism occurs at an individual level, it should not always be the government or communities coming up with the initiations; there shall be local businesses coming up with innovative ideas or independent traveler following the concept. Basically, to implement sustainable tourism there is a need of participation from all levels of stakeholders in the region (BuildAbroad, 2019). One of the stakeholders is the private tourism enterprise which is introduced in the next sub-section.

1.3. Private Tourism Enterprise

Private tourism enterprises play an important role in implementing and practicing sustainable tourism. According to Zhang & Zhang (2018), private tourism enterprises are the implementers of sustainable tourism practices. As the enterprises function at the local level, this enables solidifying sustainable practices from the grassroots level (Dewhurst & Thomas, 2003 and Liu, 2003, cited from Le, Hollenhorst& Triplett, 2005). Hence, the voluntary involvement of this enterprise plays a crucial role in adopting sustainable tourism (Rangel, 2000).

Tourism enterprise, an appropriate definition for this paper, as described by Breen, Carlsen&Jago (2005), comprises all the business operating in the tourism industry that may include upto 100 staffs and may have sole proprietor or partners established primarily for the

profits motives followed by different secondary motives. Tourism enterprise is characterized by vertically or horizontally integrated organizations and small family-owned enterprises (Lacy et al., 2002). The tourism industry, therefore, consists of several firms including tour companies, companies that provide accommodations, transportation, and communication services (Gee, Makens & Choy, 1989).

Within the tourism industry, private enterprise occupies a substantial space because most of the services or facilities required for tourism are provided by the private sector such as tour operators, hotels, lodges, homestays, private transportation, restaurants, pubs, night clubs, resorts, and amusement park. In this study, words like tourism company, enterprise, tourism enterprise, and small-medium tourism enterprise refer to private tourism enterprise.

Tourism enterprise provides a platform to fulfill the tour plan of the tourist. Tourism enterprise “interprets and mediates the destinations for visitors and is also a powerful agent of influence over visitor behavior” (GeoparkLIFE, n.d, p 2). It embraces all kinds of activities indulged in the creation and operation of legal tourism enterprises. Private tourism enterprises are one of the implementers of sustainable tourism and are also the main focal point for the tourists, their role in adopting sustainable tourism becomes significant. In order to implement sustainable tourism practices, it is essential “to localize the standards, tailor them to the destination and develop practical step by step actions that can be implemented within reasonable timeframes” (GeoparkLIFE, n.d, pp.14).

Realizing the significance of private tourism enterprises, this paper contributes to gaining a deeper understanding of the current role played by tourism enterprises in relation to sustainable tourism.

1.4. Problem Definition

Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, is one of the developing economies. The valley has both positive and negative aspects regarding the development of sustainable tourism. Particularly in the developing cities where the issue of economic growth often comes before environmental and social concerns, it is easy for the resources to get destroyed to make a short-term income (BuildAbroad, 2017). As the issue of sustainability is getting hype in the developing geographies (Hansen, Nygaard, Romjin, Wiczorek, Kamp & Klerkx, 2018) like Kathmandu, the tourism industry is one of the sectors to develop sustainability sooner than later. When it comes to sustainability in the tourism sector in Kathmandu, it is not only about tourism alone. Rather, industries like agriculture, hotel, and lodges, food and beverage,

handicrafts are closely interlinked, and the consequences of any actions are easily passed to another in the developing cities (Gerst, Raskin & Rockström, 2014). The sustainability in Kathmandu tourism influences, in this way, another industry too. As a fast-growing place not just in tourism but also in other sectors which shall have a chain effect, Kathmandu is an interesting setting to carry out study regarding the implementation of sustainability.

Likewise, being the fast-developing city of the country, Kathmandu is paced with rapid urbanization and unsustainable tourism (Upadhyaya & Sharma, 2010). To this reason even though there are also other several places that are popular for tourist destination in Nepal, the sustainability is urgent in Kathmandu as almost everything from government departments to education institutions and health sectors to commercial industries are centralized in the valley. It is already an economic hub as well as a cultural hub for the prosperity of tourism (Khadka & Rayamajhi, 2016). But at the same time, the valley has several issues concentrated which need to be tackled by sustainability.

There have been a number of studies about the sustainable tourism in Nepal (Nepal, Irsyad & Nepal, 2019; Chaplin & Brabyn, 2013; Nepal, 2008; Dangi, Chaudhary, Rijal, Stahl, Belbase, Gerow, Fernandez, & Pyakurel, 2018; Thapa, 2008; Poudel & Neupane, 2017; Shakya, 2015; Poudel, Nyaupane, & Budruk, 2014; Nepal, 2002; Upadhyaya & Sharma, 2010; Adler, McEvory, Chettri and Kruk, 2013; Niroula, 2004; Allis, 2008; Aryal, Ghimire & Niroula, 2019). Some of these studies (Aryal et al., 2019; Chaplin & Brabyn, 2013) mostly shed light on the things to be done for sustainability, initiatives of the government and I/NGOs, local participation, problems with mass tourism. Whereas some of these studies about the policies and strategies needed for sustainable tourism. This thesis acknowledges the studies (Poudel et al., 2014; Nepal, 2002; Upadhyaya & Sharma, 2010) that narrate the roles of stakeholders for the achievement of sustainable tourism in Nepal and Kathmandu. These are mostly about government and NGOs, and the public-private partnerships. The studies on private tourism enterprises that are established for profit motives are available in few numbers. Though there are a large number of tourism enterprises in Kathmandu that are responsible for the development of tourism and that practice (voluntarily) sustainable tourism, the studies on them are also equally important to get an insight about the necessity for sustainable tourism in Kathmandu. Thus, this study intends to understand the ways private tourism enterprises are implementing sustainable tourism in Kathmandu. The study about how private enterprises involved in the tourism industry are implementing sustainable

tourism is equally important to know the phenomena of sustainable tourism being implemented. Hence, the research question of this paper is

How is Sustainable Tourism Implemented by the Private Tourism Enterprises in Kathmandu?

This research question intends to understand how private enterprises involved in tourism industry are implementing the principles of sustainable tourism while operating their business in Kathmandu valley. Here, the private enterprises mean hotels, travels and tour operators and restaurants that mainly focus on tourism. This research question tries to find out if such sectors in Kathmandu Valley are taking responsibility for the three aspects (economic, socio-cultural and environmental) of sustainability and in what ways. In another way, it is seeking answers about how they are actually running their business in line with sustainable tourism practices. In what ways they are implementing sustainable tourism in their respective fields. For reaching out to answer the research question, first, it is important to have reviews about the previous studies conducted in a similar subject matter to get insight.

2. Literature Review

As per the research question, it is first required to understand the concept of sustainable tourism. The principles, importance, and dimensions of sustainable tourism are necessary to comprehend at the first place so that the research question of how tourism enterprises are implementing it can be answered. This section provides a literature review on these topics and how it has been developing its dimensions. The description of the tourism trend in Nepal is also provided to present an overview of the development of tourism overtime. The importance of tourism in the context of Nepal is described, too, which emphasizes on the necessity of this study. This section also outlines the negative impacts of tourism in Nepal and Kathmandu reflecting the significance of studying sustainable tourism practices in both Nepal and Kathmandu in particular. This exemplifies the essentiality of sustainable tourism in Kathmandu which adds weight for this study. The stakeholders to practice sustainable tourism in Nepal are also introduced in order to know their roles and how they differ from each other. At last, the practice of sustainable tourism by private enterprises are reviewed.

2.1. Sustainable Tourism

Tourism is one of the strong drivers of wealth and job creation although there are major concerns about environmental cost and social inequalities (Nepal et. al, 2019). Tourist destinations have been harmed disturbing the environment and society due to over-tourism which draws the attention of unchecked increase (Kruczek, 2019). Lacy et al. (2002) have explained some of the consequences of inappropriate mass tourism such as degradation of heritage sites, commodification of the sacred, creation of a market for prostitution and drugs, reduction of biological diversity, destruction of habitat for wildlife, pollution of lakes, rivers and coasts, over-usage of valuable freshwater resources, significant contribution to global warming, loss of scenic beauty, and reduction of pleasure and satisfaction obtained from an un-spoilt environment (p 4). The negative impacts have, however, exceeded beyond these examples.

Hence, an adjustment to traditional tourism needs to take place. There is increased interest in the alternative form of tourism which can be seen as responses to the overtourism, especially in the developing countries (Kilipirisa & Zardava, 2012). Sustainable tourism, therefore, is one such approach that is based on the notion of sustainable development. Bhatta (2000) stated that sustainable tourism is under the framework of sustainable development that adopts economic, environmental and cultural aspects. In support to this, Upadhayaya &

Sharma (2010) mentioned that sustainable tourism seeks economic development that also benefits the environment and well-being of people and society. To put simply, sustainable tourism adapts the mechanism of sustainable development which is based on growth, equity, and environment. Lacy et al. (2002) argued that sustainable principles are developed in response to the worldwide concern over the environment depletion and varieties of social impacts that are being experienced in a poorly planned destination.

The concept of sustainable tourism appeared in the report by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 (Moeljadi, 2015). Subsequently, in 'The Earth Summit' sustainability emerged as a key to development (Berno & Bricker, 2014). The concept of sustainable tourism is a branch of sustainable development to generate economic growth with minimum impact on the environment, culture, and ecosystem. The concept of sustainable tourism has received attention and acceptance as it results in a desirable outcome of tourism development. The World Tourism Organization has adopted and applied principles of sustainable development in all of its planning and development activities related to tourism (Berno & Bricker, 2014). The United Nations declared the year 2017 as the International Year for Sustainable Tourism for Development to consider the impact of tourism and to support the development and promotion of sustainable tourism policies (Nepal et. al., 2019). The road map of sustainable tourism around the globe is presented in *Appendix 1: Roadmap of Connecting Tourism with Sustainable Development*.

However, developing and implementing sustainable tourism is not a simple task, primarily because of the vague nature of the concept (Delgado & Palomeque, 2014). It is necessary to clarify the concept to transform the abstract notion into a practical tool (Delgado & Palomeque, 2014) which can also aid in the implementation of sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism being a broad topic has definitions ranging from ecotourism to green tourism or even to responsible tourism. The continuous search for a sustainable way to handle tourism has received strong attention lately. The principles of sustainable tourism are extracted from the positive aspects of traditional tourism with the inclusion of environment, culture, and people (Hall, Jenkins & Kearskey, 1997). What sustainable tourism must fulfill is the needs of present tourists and destination country or place, and at the same time providing opportunities for future development maintaining ecological and heritage integrity (Pan, Gao, Kim, Shah, Pei & Chiang, 2018).

Sustainable tourism reduces the impact of tourism on climate change, and excessive dependence on energy consumption like fossil fuels which has detrimental environmental consequences (Becken, Simmons & Frampton, 2003; Nepal, 2008). Therefore, for the promotion of sustainable tourism, “the understanding of the interrelationships between tourism, underlying economy, and the natural environment is critical” (Nepal et. al., 2019, pp 145). Angelevska-Najdeska & Rakicevik (2012) argued that sustainable tourism works successfully “only when its constituent elements, which cover economic, socio-cultural and environmental components, are deemed equally important and are interconnected without any single element dominating” (cited from Tseng et al., 2018 pp 407). In the same way, Janusz & Bajdor (2013) argued that sustainable tourism involves environmental conservation and the social and economic dimensions of the tourism area. These discussions illustrate the need to balance economic and environmental concerns in tourism that leads to good practices in terms of energy savings, recycling, waste and emissions minimization, and welfare of local populations (Tseng et al., 2018).

Lacy et al. (2002) expressed their point that unmanaged tourism development has resulted in several negative impacts on nature and culture as these two resources are largely consumed in the tourism industry. The ecological footprint of tourism is huge and traceable too. Hence, sustainable tourism is about tourism that is economically efficient and along with that, safeguards the environment and promotes the social and cultural progress (Upadhaya & Sharma, 2010).

As developed through sustainable development, sustainable tourism, too, can be represented in three pillars of sustainability. As mentioned in Allis (2008), these pillars are discussed below:

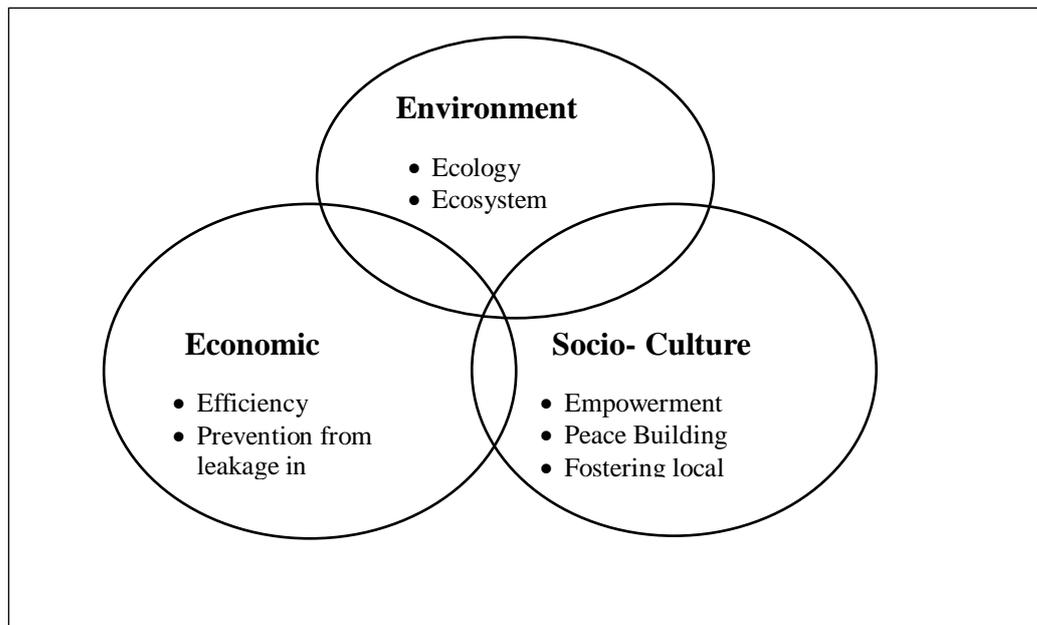
Environmental Sustainability- This includes the preservation of resources that are especially non-renewable in the destination. Apart from that, this also means to minimize wastages from the tourism industry like air pollution, toxic chemical, solid waste, and emission of the harmful gas.

Economic Sustainability- This contains the feasibility of the tourism industry and the activities that shall remain in the long run. Moreover, this also means generating profit at different levels of society from the tourism industry.

Socio-cultural Sustainability- This enables equitable distribution of benefits mainly with a focus on poverty alleviation through tourism. Likewise, this also includes promoting social

progress, respecting human rights, equal opportunities, supporting local communities, preserving cultures and heritage and languages, avoiding exploitation, and deformities like drug, sex, unethical use of languages and dress code.

Though these pillars are described individually, these are strongly connected with one another. These three aspects of sustainability are interconnected and are represented in *Figure 1*



*Figure 1: Holistic Framework of Sustainable Tourism
(Adopted from Kruk et al., (2007))*

As can be seen in the figure that sustainable tourism tends to overlap the three aspects. The figure illustrates that sustainable tourism represents different elements of three aspects.

Sustainable tourism is about striking a concrete balance between all three pillars to make sure about the long term strengthening of the tourism industry with multiple importance (Allis, 2008). Based on such three pillars of sustainable tourism, Niedziółka (2014) has explained the importance of sustainable tourism which are presented in *Appendix 2: Importance of Sustainable Tourism*. This table lays down reasons for how sustainable tourism is not only about mitigating the negative impacts of tourism but also how it regulates the positive changes across other industries. Perhaps, Kunwar (2006) and Upadhaya & Sharma (2010) have put this reasonably mentioning that sustainable tourism plays a role of promoter for the development of multi-dimensional sectors managing natural and cultural resources to maximize the visitors' enjoyment and local community advantages and at the same time, to

minimize harmful effects on the environment, community, and destination and to optimize the usage of resources including biodiversity.

With an extension of the various priorities, the pillars of sustainable tourism are also segregated in some cases. Similarly, with reference to the sustainable development goals, the UNWTO has recommended five pillars to which the tourism industry should refer to make persistent contribution for sustainable development (Pan et al., 2018, pp 454): i) inclusive and sustainable economic growth, (ii) social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction, (iii) resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change, (iv) cultural values, diversity and heritage, and (v) mutual understanding, peace, and security. Likewise, some scholars describe that sustainable tourism covers four aspects: environmental, economic, social and cultural. These works of literature divide social and cultural aspects into two. Such divisions in the aspects ensure strong attention to small details too. However, it also raises confusion when the aspects are highly specific. For example, in the five pillars developed by UNWTO, why is there nothing included about health and education?

For this study, the three pillars are taken into consideration because the extension or division of the socio-cultural aspect is not important for this thesis. The study intends to study socio-culture as a whole, not as a fraction such as peace, security, heritages or values.

Sustainable tourism is a powerful approach that paves the way to mitigate the friction caused by the interaction of the tourism industry, and visitors with the environment and local communities (culture and society) (Upadhaya & Sharma, 2010). Similarly, they also discuss that sustainable tourism needs to be directed by a long term perspective. Allis (2008) added that sustainable tourism is a continuous process that needs constant monitoring and revisiting the preventive measures if necessary so that the tourism industry does not degrade the natural and cultural resources.

Allis (2008, p 8) has listed down the recommendation to integrate sustainability with tourism based on 12 principles of sustainable tourism developed by UNEP in partnership with the United Nations World Tourism Organization as in *Table 1*.

Aims	Description
Economic Viability	To ensure the viability and competitiveness of tourism destinations and enterprises, so that they are able to continue to prosper and deliver benefits in the long-term
Local Prosperity	To maximize the contribution of tourism to the economic prosperity of the host destination, including the proportion of visitor spending that is retained locally

Aims	Description
Employment Quality	To strengthen the number and quality of local jobs created and supported by tourism, including the level of pay, conditions of service and availability to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability or in other ways
Social Equity	To seek a widespread and fair distribution of economic and social benefits from tourism throughout the recipient community, including improving opportunities, income and services available to the poor.
Visitor Fulfillment	To provide a safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability or in other ways
Local Control	To engage and empower local communities in planning and decision making about the management and future development of tourism in their area, in consultation with other stakeholders.
Community Wellbeing	To maintain and strengthen the quality of life in local communities, including social structures and access to resources, amenities and life support systems, avoiding any form of social degradation or exploitation
Cultural Richness	To respect and enhance the historic heritage, authentic culture, traditions and distinctiveness of host communities
Physical Integrity	To maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes, both urban and rural, and avoid the physical and visual degradation of the environment
Biological Diversity	To support the conservation of natural areas, habitats and wildlife, and minimize damage to them.
Resource Efficiency	To minimize the use of scarce and non-renewable resources in the development and operation of tourism facilities and services
Environmental Purity	To minimize the pollution of air, water and land and the generation of waste by tourism enterprises and visitors.

Table 1: Recommendation to practice sustainable tourism

It is not the case that if any of the parts given in *Table 1* is unattainable, sustainable tourism could not be implemented. Rather this should be more like a benchmark. These principles provide a guidance to attain maximum benefits from sustainable tourism.

The concept of sustainable tourism sounds good, but it is equally challenging to practice it. The transition from mass tourism to sustainable tourism has numerous challenges.

Pan et al., (2018) have presented six challenges prevailing in sustainable tourism.

1. Excessive energy use and greenhouse gas emissions:

Tourism is a large contributor to the already increasing greenhouse gas emission arising from transportation, accommodation, and other activities. It is estimated that tourism accounts for 5.2% to 12% of global warming (Pan et al., 2018). The usage of energy is also in large amount which is mostly caused by fossil fuels, transportation, space heating, and lightening.

2. Extensive water consumption:

Water consumption in tourism mostly accounts for the use of water from golf courses, irrigated gardens, swimming pools, spas and guest rooms (Pan et al., 2018). The accommodation facilities account for the largest consumption of water. The direct water use per tourists ranges from 100 to 200 liter per guest night (UNEP & UNWTO, 2012).

3. Inappropriate waste management and treatment:

The unsustainable production and consumption pattern in tourism have increased unmanaged waste and poor treatment. (UNEP 2003, cited from Pan et al., 2018) reports that one kilogram solid waste per person per day is generated from every international tourist in Europe and similarly, two kilograms per person per day in the US. The poor facilities to segregate garbage have set difficulties in recycling and reuse of the waste.

4. Loss of biodiversity and habitat destruction:

Mass tourism has forced the destruction of natural spaces to enable touristic activities. This affects the biodiversity and even lead to habitat destruction in some areas. The challenges include (Pan et al., 2018, pp 457) “(i) introduction of invasion alien species, (ii) disturbance of wildlife, (iii) transformation of land use for tourism activity, (iv) overexploitation of natural resources for water, food, materials, and recreation and (v) water pollution and waste generation.”

5. Threats to heritage management and cultural integrity:

The establishment of tourism facilities has placed cultural heritages' value into vulnerable position. An example could be the operation of a bar near a heritage site. The construction of infrastructure for tourism has severely disturbed the cultural atmosphere mainly in the developing cities like Kathmandu. The cultural integrity of host countries gets hampered from the growth in tourism activities. One good example is wearing a revealing dress in holy places (Allis, 2008).

6. Lack of communication channels and information platforms:

A lack of information exchange leads to an unsystematic tourism system to convey messages and raise public awareness (Pan et al., 2018). The information flow from local communities, visitors, governing department, and enterprises are key to sustainable tourism practice. The challenge is to have integrated communication platforms.

Amplifying the positive impacts of tourism, enhancing its benefits and diminishing the negative impacts are the challenges of sustainable tourism.

Even though tourism development in remote areas or even in urban areas involve economic benefits along with increased business activity and job prospects, social and environmental costs are also equally involved (Greiner, 2010). Proper management of tourism industry requires local stakeholders and tourism business enterprises to work closely in cooperation within the framework of sustainable development (Ballantyne, Packer & Hughes, 2009). Growth in tourism sector has brought major threats to natural resources, biodiversity and culture around the world. Therefore, it is absolutely essential to initiate efforts towards sustainable tourism at all levels, kinds and parts of tourism industry. Despite numerous attempts to undertake sustainable tourism at many levels, change in unsustainable consumption and production patterns have not changed significantly (Delgado & Palomeque, 2014). The consumption is at the individual level which means that the sustainable tourism must place in the individual level since tourism is a local activity and thus, the success of sustainable tourism begins at the levels of SMEs and travelers (Delgado & Palomeque, 2014). Nevertheless, sustainable tourism is achieved from active participation of local community of the destination which is known as bottom-up approach which should help in the reduction of financial leakage and upgrade of local business (Lacy et al., 2002). Sustainable tourism needs the change in behavior from the host community and traveler and that change is ultimately executed in the tourist destination. Hence, it is also necessary to understand the complexities of the destination so that sustainable tourism takes place in rightly manner.

Destination place or a country is a major factor that needs to be considered in the study of sustainable tourism. Tourist destinations can in many ways such as large cities, urban areas, protected area, natural park, human-made enjoyment premise, and rural villages.

Huang (2011) stated that tourist destination is a complex phenomenon involving various stakeholders. Thus, sustainable tourism is determined by how well the destination's resources (environment or culture or society) are sustainable enough to absorb the benefits and prevent the drawbacks of tourism activities. Huang (2011) has developed a figure to demonstrate the complexity of destination *Figure 2* showing many angles from four main divisions.

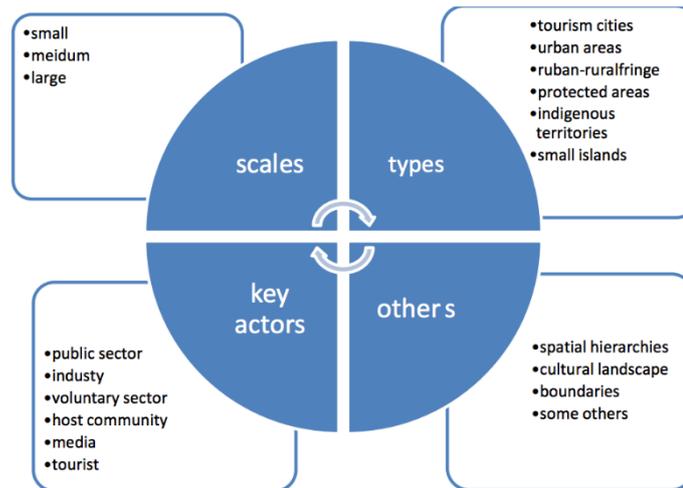


Figure 2: Angels of destination

Source: Huang (2011)

There are less empirical studies that focus on the linkages between the stakeholders (Shakouri, Yazdi & Ghorchebigi, 2017) and especially in the context of destination with mountainous geography despite its critical role in sustainable development as green growth (Nepal et. al., 2019). Mountainous countries like Nepal are popular destination for international tourism, but hazardous environmental and social consequences from over-tourism undermine the possibility to develop it in a sustainable manner (Nepal et. al., 2019).

The primary beneficiary of tourism in Nepal, as in other developing countries, is mostly private sector whereas, the environmental and social cost has to be borne by the government or the citizen which suggests the need for strategies for the practice of sustainable tourism (Heredge, 2005). Gotame (2017) put forward that Nepal lacks laws and policies to mitigate negative consequences associated with the development of tourism. Proper formulation and implementation of policies on sustainable development can lead to many benefits. The next section explains the status of sustainable tourism in Nepal.

2.2. Tourism Development in Nepal

The study of tourism development and its policies are relevant to this thesis to discuss and understand the progress of tourism from conventional to the sustainable development of tourism in Nepal. In the initial phase of tourism development, the government of Nepal focused on the economic aspect of tourism. Therefore, the study helps to understand the shift of policies and action plans focused solely on the economic profit of the country to improve the economic condition of the community, protection, and preservation of the environment, culture and social feature of the country and also to develop infrastructure in the later years.

Nepal attracted many mountaineers soon after the introduction of democracy in 1950 and with the conquest of Mount Everest in 1953, it boomed in mountaineering activities and mountain tourism (Upadhyay, 2019). Before the democracy, foreigners were prohibited to enter Nepal. Although Nepal had the potential of developing as a profitable destination, there was no plan, policies or study regarding tourism in Nepal (Upadhyay, 2019). Therefore, the Government of Nepal started Tourism development with a five-year development plan (1956-1961) in 1956 where different tourist organizations obtained membership (Agarwal & Upadhyay, 2006). It was during the development plan; Nepal Tourism Board was formed in 1957 (Panta & Panta, 1997). In the second three-year plan (1962-1965), the National Travel Agency was established to conduct tours and traveling facilities for the international tourists in Kathmandu. The plan also targeted the development of infrastructures such as 110 hotels and 15 domestic airports (Agarwal & Upadhyay, 2006). An increase in the inflow of international tourists and foreign exchange; reconstruction or maintenance of temples in Kathmandu and conservation of historical places such as Lumbini was the action plans of the third five-year development plan (1965-1970) (Agarwal & Upadhyay, 2006). With the inflow of tourists, the development plan focused on the establishment of international standard hotels in Kathmandu. Conservation of the historical places and efficient exhibition of art and architecture were the priority of the plan as it realized these were important for tourism development of the country (Agrawal & Upadhyay, 2006).

The fourth five-year development plan (1970-1975) was different and important for the development of tourism in Nepal. During this period, Nepal formed the tourism master plan into two phases with the joint cooperation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1972 (Agrawal & Upadhyay, 2006). The master plan emphasized development qualitative tourism and the creation of a distinct and independent tourist market in Nepal with sustained and intensive efforts from the government and the private sectors (Banskota & Sharma, 1995).

The Ministry of Tourism was fully developed in 1977 during the fifth five-year development plan (1975-1980) with important policies to establish infrastructure in close cooperation with public and private sectors for the promotion and enhancement of tourism industry; to encourage domestic products instead of imported goods in the tourism industry; to provide employment opportunities to the people with indigenous skills and technology; to boost the national economy through tourism (NPC, 1975). The Sixth-year plan (1980-1985) was an extension of the previous five-year plan following the same policies to develop

infrastructure for the promotion of tourism, generating employment and enhancing economic development. A separate budget was allocated for tourism and the second phase of the tourism master plan was prepared with the assistance of the European Economic Community in the development plan (Agarwal & Upadhyay, 2006).

Nepal Tourism Development Program was organized in the Seventh five-year development plan (1985-1990). It aimed to increase foreign exchange earnings by attracting high-class tourists, to generate employment opportunities through tourism-related business, to expand the tourism activities and business to increase the duration of stay and ensure the increment of income and to produce domestic goods and encourage domestic tourism industries. Despite the formulation of objectives and policies, actions were not accomplished (Agarwal & Upadhyay, 2006).

The eighth five-year development plan (1992-1997) observed a gap in terms of availability of necessary material for the promotion of tourism. Lack of appropriate policies, rules and regulations were realized during the plan (NPC, 1992). This plan was developed after two years of gaps due to political turmoil (NPC, 1992).

It was the ninth five-year plan (1997-2002) where policies were formed for local and community involvement for sustainable tourism development, improving the existing tourism infrastructure, preservation of religious places. Another important element of the policy in this development plan is private sectors were encouraged for tourism diversification and development of new tourism destinations and the development of the basic tourism infrastructure was the role of the government (NPC, 1992). This plan also emphasized the economic growth of the country while reducing poverty and unemployment. However, the plan failed to include aspects of leakage of foreign currency earnings, develop tourism as an academic career, establish industries producing domestic products to reduce the use of imported goods, and monitor all tourism activities as a continuous process (Shrestha, 1999). Sustainable Tourism Network was established in 1999 to bring key stakeholders working for sustainable tourism together with their diverse projects, experience and interests (Lama, 2013).

The tenth five-year plan (2002-2007) realized tourism as an important organ of the economy as it aims to provide benefits for the tourists as well as increase the income and

employment opportunities in the country (Agarwal & Upadhyay, 2006). The objectives of the Tenth plan were:

1. Sustainable development and qualitative promotion of the tourism sector.
2. Conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the historical, cultural, religious, archaeological heritages.
3. To make air transportation secure, standard, accessible and reliable.

According to Agarwal & Upadhyay (2006), strategies to achieve the objectives set in the development plan were to promote less risky tourist destinations other than the established tourism market, promotion of tourism in the neighboring countries, increase locally produced goods, local retention of money, the involvement of women and communities in the tourism activities. Other strategies were to establish domestic tourism as an alternative economy, development of infrastructure, enhancing cooperation between non-government and private sectors. Study, preservation, and conservation of art, culture, heritage by the government as well as non-governmental sectors were prioritized strategy of the plan (Agarwal & Upadhyay, 2006).

After the tenth five-year plan, the total numbers of mountains permitted to climb reached 263. Six new tourist destinations were opened for travel which was previously restricted (Parajuli & Paudel, 2014). Destination Nepal Campaign 2002/2003 started which integrated the international year of mountain 2002, international year of eco-tourism 2002 and visit south Asia 2003. The government of Nepal decided in 2008 to launch “Nepal Tourism Year 2011” with the mission to increase the inflow of international tourists to at least 1 million and make tourism earnings to get rid of poverty and unemployment (Parajuli & Paudel, 2014). The campaign gave promotion to domestic tourism as a part of sustainable tourism development. Infrastructure development, discover and improve the destinations, promotion of tourism in domestic and international level, improving the community and enhancing service quality were important agenda of the campaign (Parajuli & Paudel, 2014).

Three-year Interim Plan (2007/08-2009/10) introduced study courses in Travel and Tourism where Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management and Mountain Academy Nepal of international standard were established (Upadhyaya & Sharma, 2010). The concept of homestay was also introduced in this period (NPC, 2007).

A new tourism policy was introduced in 2008 aiming the development of tourism by supporting poverty alleviation, economic development with foreign exchange earnings, increase employment opportunities and raise the living standard of the people. At the same time, it focused on promoting rural tourism, tourism infrastructure development, improve the quality of services, discover and promote new destinations, and increase access to safe destination (Government of Nepal, 2008).

Tourism Policy 2009 targeted for creation of self-employment opportunities for the community by expanding the tourism industry. It encouraged village tourism and ecotourism to alleviate poverty in the country (MoTCA, 2009).

Development of tourism in local level and earning more foreign currency and employment opportunities from tourism were expected in Three-year plan from 2010/11 to 2012/13(Subedi, 2018). Whereas the thirteenth Three Year Plan (2013/14-2015/16) strategized to develop sustainable tourism by providing quality services to the tourists(Subedi, 2018).

2016/17-2018/19 is the fourteenth plan to promote and market major tourism product of Nepal, develop diverse tourist destinations and to improve income level of people by attracting more tourists (Subedi, 2018).

Visit Nepal 2020

The vision recognizes tourism as the source of the sustainable economy of Nepal. It aims to achieve the inflow of tourists to 2 million a year, adding 1 million jobs in the sector and making tourism the main source of employment generator by 2020(Government of Nepal, 2019). The visions seek to develop safe, unique, exciting and environmentally sustainable tourist destinations. The objectives of Tourism Vision 2020 are promotion and marketing of the existing and new destinations, develop international connectivity through air service agreements and land transport links and provide incentives to private entrepreneurs to expand tourism services (Government of Nepal, 2019).

According to GoN & NTB, Visit Nepal 2020 aims to achieve the goal of increasing the inflow of tourists by committing to sustainable development the tourism sector and offer lifetime tourism experience to the tourist while integrating conservation, green initiatives and socio-economic development (2019). It is focused on climate change, managing trekking and mountaineering to overcome crowding, mismanaged tourism practices. It wants to adopt

green local development strategy by allocating resources, planning and implementing through coordination among government and tourism agencies. It aims to develop tourism in remote corners of the country to boost the economy of the community, providing employment, equitable distribution of revenue and protection of culture, tradition and heritage (Government of Nepal & Nepal Tourism Board, 2019).

National Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2024

The action plan provided guidance and direction for the implementation of Tourism Vision 2020. It plans to develop tourism in sustainable manner by encouraging sustainable and responsible development that protects the natural, cultural and historical resources, explore the opportunity of planned infrastructure development and influence such development priorities, develop new attraction destinations while improving the existing ones (MoCTCA, 2019).

For reducing poverty and increasing sustainable access to foreign exchange it aims to involve communities in the supply and value chains of tourism products and services, enhance efforts on rural and agro-tourism and park people partnerships, increase training and skills for the youth, women, the unemployed and people with disabilities and promoting investment in tourism industry to attract FDI and internal investment (MoCTCA, 2019). It also aims to improve the quality of tourism services by developing sustainable code of tourism practices for all businesses in tourism, enhance and update accommodation standard rating system, implement food safety and hygiene standards and, improving visitor services, tourism operating standards (MoCTCA, 2019).

Cultural heritage goals are planned to be achieved by increasing awareness among local communities and providing incentives to them to preserve and promote the culture, establish local cooperatives to manage cultural heritage, promoting research and studies related to the significance of cultural heritage and promoting cultural activities and events, local products and skills (MoCTCA, 2019).

MoCTCA(2019) aims to reduce the impact of tourism by diversification of destination to avoid the pressure on the environment of crowded destination, encouraging waste management by appropriate disposal and recycling, promoting research and develop strategies to mitigate the challenges of climate change through tourism.

The action plan is implemented in 2 stages. During phase 1 (short term: 2015-2019), the development and diversification of products and services are the main targets. The second phase (medium-term: 2020-2025) aims to expand and strengthen products and services achieved in phase 1. This phase aims to expand the product range, target new markets, control and maintain the quality of tourism (Government of Nepal, 2009). For example: developing Kathmandu as a hub for rock climbing in the region is one of the product development under the development plan (MoCTCA, 2019).

Beyond the 10-year strategy (long term) is proposed to closely monitor and adjust unexpected situations to meet the objectives. After 10 years, the government will decide to formulate a new policy or revise the strategy being pursued (MoCTCA, 2019).

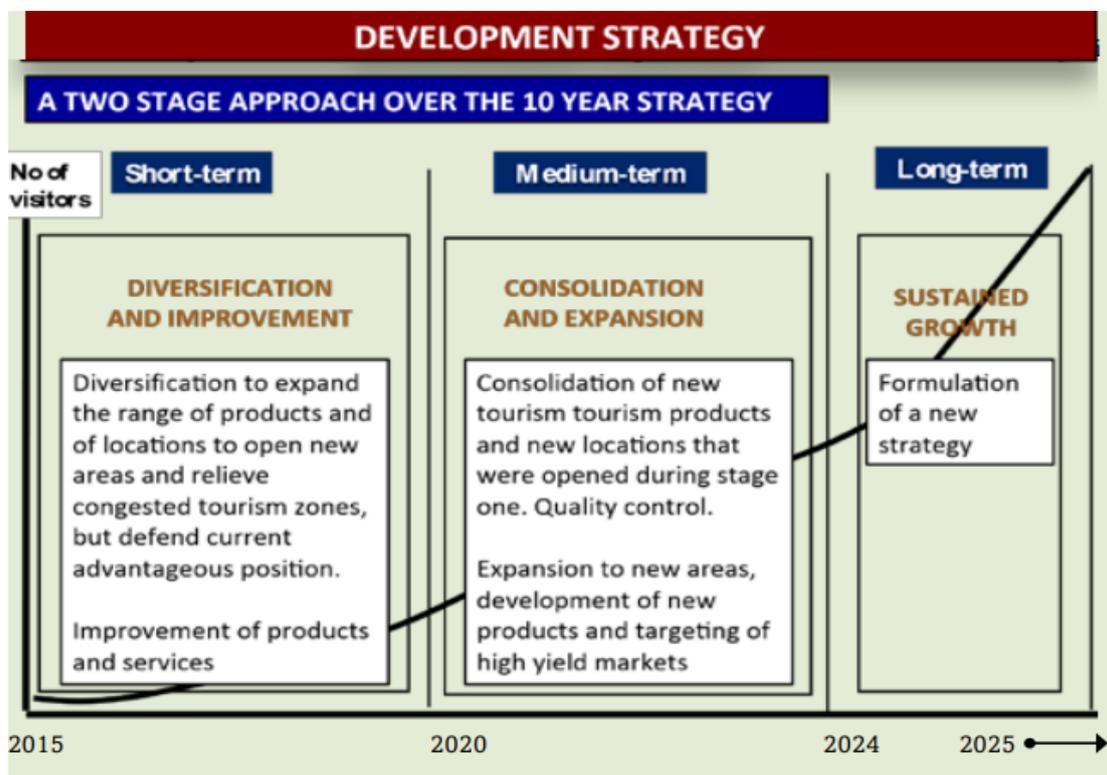


Figure 3: Strategy rationale and competitive positioning.

Source: MoCTCA, 2019.

Impact of tourism in Nepal and Kathmandu

Tourism has affected various aspects of Nepalese lives such as providing employment opportunities, generating income and foreign currency in the country, promotes culture and art of the country whereas it has negative impacts the local community and environment as well (Thapa, 2012). Major impacts of tourism in Nepal and Kathmandu can be outlined as follows:

Environmental Impacts

According to Allis (2008), with the increase the tourists in the country and unsustainable tourism, it has worsened the environmental conditions of Nepal. Environmental impacts caused by the tourists led to soil erosion, decreased vegetation, disturbance of wildlife and litter in Nepal. Unmanaged or unsustainable tourism can cause land grabbing leaving less land for vegetation and tree plantation, unmanaged solid waste, and water and air pollution (Allis, 2008).

Unmanaged tourism creates environmental problems not only in the mountain areas of Nepal but such can be seen in Kathmandu as well. Mass urbanization and unmanaged tourism has increased air and water pollution, and waste (Thapa, 2012). These environmental impacts are connected with infrastructure development such as roads, hotels, restaurants and shops in Kathmandu which are also necessary for tourism development. Mass visitation of tourist in Kathmandu affects not only the local culture and tradition but also has greater negative impacts on the local environment (Pandey, Chhetri, Kunwar& Ghimire, 1995).

Tourism development leads to water diversion from irrigation, reducing the agriculture produce and hampering the livelihoods of the farmers (Allis, 2008) as arrival of tourists in huge number in tourist sites leads to increased stress on resources available in Kathmandu and lead to competition for resources (UNCSD NGO, 1999). According to Allis (2008), water in Kathmandu is extracted from the groundwater supplies. These supplies are consumed beyond capacity and there is less recharge from the watershed resulting in the decrease in the level of groundwater. Groundwater extraction in Kathmandu is 58.6 million liters per day which is higher than the sustainable extraction .i.e. 26.3 million liters per day. Continuity of extraction of groundwater beyond capacity can cause the source to become dry (Allis, 2008).

Tourism is also a major generator of wastes in Nepal (UNCSD NGO, 1999). Unmanaged wastewater disposal has hampered the quality of water in Kathmandu. This

pollution imposes threats not only on public health but also on flora and fauna. It contaminates the water resources required for drinking, irrigation and other purposes (Allis, 2008). He continued, in Kathmandu, traditional disposal practice prevails where the solid waste is disposed in an open field or along the rivers.

The conventional tourism affects natural resources such as flora and fauna resulting in the degradation of the environment of the destination. The entry of tourists in the national parks, conservation areas in Nepal has led to the destruction of the natural habitat of plants and animals (Bista, 2009). Such degradation of the environment leads to long term damage to climate change such as rise in temperature, change in wind patterns, glacial melting, extreme weather conditions which has harmfully affected tourism as well (Allis, 2008).

Tourism in Nepal has contributed in maintaining clean environment as a part of sustainable development. Awareness programs and trainings on waste and water management, conservation of natural resources and wildlife, conservation of national parks and energy efficiency in the tourism destination to reduce the effect of climate change are conducted in Kathmandu and Nepal as a whole. Green mobility options carts, bikes, and local tourism trips contributed for the protection of environment in the local community of Nepal (Kafle, 2011). Kathmandu Environmental Education Project has conducted various environmental awareness programs such as clean-up program in various places, tree plantation programs in Kathmandu (KEEP Nepal, 2019).

Economic Impacts

Kathmandu and the country as a whole is benefitted from foreign exchange earnings earned from providing goods and services like transportation, accommodation, security and food to the tourists (Bista, 2009). Other positive impact of tourism is that it generates money through taxation, royalty and visa fees from the international tourists (Bista, 2009). In 2018, tourism sector generated USD 643 million in Nepal compared to USD 551 million in the previous year (CEIC, 2019).

Tourism industry has important role in improving the economic condition of the country including Kathmandu. Around 53% of employment of total number of employees working in tourism industry was created in Kathmandu (Nepal Tourism Statistics, 2017). Tourism can contribute in the development of infrastructure in Kathmandu.

Economic opportunities in the country brings new prospect for wage labor and service provisions, however, it promotes dependency of the local people in the resources needed for tourism challenging resiliency of local production (Metz, 1990). Consumption of Nepal's forest resources for tourism displaces resources away from other traditional economic activities of the local people (Metz, 1990). Other economic impact of tourism is unequal distribution of revenue among local inhabitants. According to IUCN (1998), distribution of benefits and revenue from tourism has been restricted to the principal tourist locations. It was seen in the study on tourism in Solu Khumbu area of Nepal where the area was becoming the wealthiest in Nepal; however, the ethnic groups of the area did not receive the actual benefits (Adhikari, 1998). Retention of income from tourism is also difficult in Nepal as the products consumed by the tourists are highly imported and also foreign-based tour operators gain high portion of income from tourists arriving in Nepal (Raj, 2001).

For economic sustainability in Nepal, community development through employment, fair-trade, equitable hiring, protection of employees, local entrepreneurship are implemented in the recent years. All level of government of Nepal is supporting and facilitating the sustainable development of tourism sector. Various programs with coordination of entities in the tourism sector such as women empowerment, rural organic farming initiatives, gender diversity in the workplace, promoting equal distribution of revenue and local tender policy are empowering women and uplifting the lives of local community (Kafle, 2011). For example, the Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (TRPAP) from 2002 to 2007 used community-based sustainable tourism program to reduce poverty by engaging the local people in decision making process to ensure the benefits are reached to the rural poor. Similarly, Sustainable Tourism Network encouraged best practices in community-based eco-tourism (CBET), The High Impact Tourism Training (HITT) provided job-related vocational trainings to women, the youth, the skilled and unskilled people (MoCTCA, 2019).

Socio-cultural Impacts

Pandey (2009) states tourism has mostly helped women in Nepal to gain the ability to earn money by engaging in tourism activities. With the increase of homestay options for the tourists, it has provided the opportunity for the women to earn income and reevaluate their roles in the society (Pandey, 2009).

Tourism has made the local people more conscious and protective about their culture as large number of tourists is drawn towards Nepal because of the culture and tradition.

Tourists are interested in understanding the culture and tradition of the place (Maharjan &Guni, 2005). Importance of socio-cultural lifestyle can be seen in Kathmandu. For example, Newars are the ethnic people of Kathmandu with their own culture, tradition, language, cultural dress and festivals (Maharjan &Guni, 2005).

Tourism can transform a remote area or place into tourist place; however, the cultural and social consequences are to be considered. For example, the Mani Rimdu festival celebrated by Nepal's Khumbu Sherpas has attracted international tourists. It is a 19 days festival where Buddhist monks perform masked dances and religious rituals. It has brought finance to reconstruct religious sanctuaries; however, the monetization of the culture has decreased the attractiveness of the religious life of the destination (Din, 1988). The effect of commoditization of culture and tradition are quite visible in the form of social inequality, values change, shift of lifestyle and frustration and disputes over resource use (Din, 1988). Because of these conditions, the villagers in the Nepal's trekking routes complain about the inappropriate behavior of the tourists and increase of theft and violence to trekkers has been reported (Zurick, 1992).

Furthermore, tourism development on a particular destination has resulted in mass migration impacting the economy and the local environment of Nepal. For example, Sauraha in Nepal is one of the most attractive tourist destinations. Due to this, many people migrate to the place wanting to buy land for establishing hotels for tourists. Consequently, the price of the land rises compared to many places in Nepal resulting in economic imbalance (Pandey et al. 1995). The situation is similar in Kathmandu as well. Since Kathmandu is the gateway to Nepal and it links with every corner of the country, many people migrate for better employment opportunity or for investing in hotels and restaurants. Moreover, the local people of Kathmandu suffer as it can result in loss of their culture and identity (Greenwood, 1989). Since there are many restaurants, bars, casinos for the tourists to enjoy the nightlife in Kathmandu, it has drawn attention of tourists towards the streets of Thamel. It has imposed a serious issue of child prostitution for years (Pile, 2019). In November 2018, police rescued at least 35 girls aged between 15 and 17 from dance bars in Thamel, Kathmandu (Pile, 2019). This is linked with poor economic background of the people (Pandey et al.,1995). Tourism imposes bad habits among the youths as it promotes gambling in casinos (Bista, 2009).

According to Maharjan & Guni (2005), drastic adoption of foreign culture has been seen in Kathmandu. It has adverse effects on the lifestyle such as in fooding and drinking and dressing habits of the local people of Kathmandu (Maharjan & Guni, 2005).

To address the issues of tourism, sustainable development of tourism is important in Kathmandu where all the stakeholders in tourism sector actively participate for the process of continuous learning and innovation (STN, 2007). Thus, sustainable tourism in Nepal and Kathmandu and its importance in Kathmandu are discussed in following sections.

2.3. Sustainable Tourism in Nepal and Kathmandu

As it is observed that the sustainable tourism in the different forms has been included in different development plans and policies of Nepal over the years, the dimension of sustainable tourism in these years in Nepal have been shifting. This is summarized in *Appendix 3: Sustainable Tourism in Development Plan of Nepal*. While many non-government organizations such as ADB, UNDP, DFID, SNV, WWF provide support to the communities and assist the government in achieving the objective of sustainable tourism development (Raj, 2001).

Nepal has developed large number of hotels, communication network, privately owned airlines for domestic travel which has made tourist destination in all part of the country accessible (Raj, 2001). Sustainable Tourism Network (STN), an informal network of individuals, private as well as public organizations to promote sustainable tourism practices in Nepal by sharing knowledge, skill transfers, compiling and distributing best practices and market support for sustainable tourism products (Sharma & Bhattarai, 2009).

Nepal has implemented some of the best practices of sustainable tourism. Particularly, the conservation and tourism development of Annapurna region by creation of lodge management committee, conservation and development committee have received recognition internationally (Raj, 2001). Likewise, community tourism in Gorkha district operated by the local community has helped in income generation for the people and retained the earnings in the area (GoN & ADB, 2000). According to Raj (2001) Bhaktapur, a city in the east corner of Kathmandu was once a polluted city, but it has been managed quite well with the cooperation between the municipalities and the community.

Trekking permit and entrance fees are required for some National parks and protected areas. Some portion of income generated from entrance fees in Annapurna area and Sagarmatha National park are spent on sustainable development of tourism in the areas(Raj, 2001). Similarly, municipalities in Kathmandu utilize income generated from the entrance fees in the historical sites to restore the historical and cultural monuments(Raj, 2001).

To obtain economic sustainability, SNV Nepal has introduced Poverty Alleviation Through Rural Based Tourism Program in Humla, Dolpa and on the trail of Mount Kailash to develop tourism-related economic activities such as porter services and production of agricultural products, development of private enterprises (Raj, 2001).

For environmental sustainability, some trekking areas use only kerosene instead of fuelwood in the lodges such as in Sagarmatha National Park and are easily available along the trekking trails(Raj, 2001). Many lodges in Annapurna area use energy efficient stoves and solar heaters. The area has easy access to 36 kerosene and LPG station and 14 micro hydro projects for electricity (Raj, 2001).

Similarly, Kathmandu Environmental Education Project as established to enhance the ecological and cultural prosperity of Kathmandu by conducting various campaigns such as environmental awareness programs, clean-up programs of places like Tundikhel, and Balaju in Kathmandu, Chovar tree plantation program in Kathmandu, Bagmati clean- up program in Kathmandu, heritage clean-up and awareness program (KEEP Nepal, 2019).

Currently, tourism in Kathmandu is highly concentrated on cultural attractions. Tourists mostly arrive in Kathmandu for visiting the heritage sites and other major reason is it being the only gateway to other destinations. Therefore, the government of Nepal aims to diversify tourism offers, attract more visitors, extend their stay and spend in Kathmandu (MoCTCA, 2019).

For the protection of heritage sites in Kathmandu, the Department of Archaeology has regulated the ‘Ancient Monument Act’ and the ‘Ancient Monuments Preservation Rules in 1989 for the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage sites, where its umbrella ministry, MoCTCA works to facilitate better coordination for preserving and promoting cultural heritage sites for sustainable development of tourism (MoCTCA, 2019).

The restoration of cultural heritage sites, preserving its art and crafts and conserving the natural environment in Kathmandu has identified the necessity of community involvement and commitment, although the challenges to solve the issue of water and waste management, pollution, and restoration of historical and cultural monuments destroyed by the massive earthquake in 2015 are still present (Raj, 2001). Raj (2001) states that unmanaged settlement and construction activities near the UNESCO heritage sites that are not compatible with the traditional architecture can result in the sites being put in endangered list. The issue of cultural deterioration, unregulated urbanization, pollution has affected tourism not only in Kathmandu but also in other tourist destination of the country.

Therefore, the importance of sustainable tourism in Kathmandu is discussed in the next section.

Importance of Sustainable Tourism in Kathmandu

It is a challenge for Nepal to develop tourism that does not destruct the cultural, natural and economic environment but promotes the sustainable development instead of only economic growth (Boselli, Caravello, Scipioni, & Baroni, 1997). Kathmandu must be developed in such a way that it sustains its strong identity of the past with the existence of preserved cultural heritages, majority of original habitats, and has potential for economic growth and improve self-reliance through a strong local government structure. In the long term, sustainable economy is required in preserving the historical heritage and conserving the environment of the city (Bjønness, 1992).

Sustainable tourism in Kathmandu is important and is a requirement of today because the people need to be self-reliant on the available resources and the resources are limited for the huge population (UNCHS Habitat, 1991). According to Hall & Richard (2000), preservation of natural resources is responsibility of the communities and societies which exploit as well as depend upon it. For example: In Kathmandu numerous tourists' services are provided including city tours, heritages tour, hotels, food and it is also a center for the supply of equipment and tools for trekkers and mountaineers traveling around the country. Tourism in Kathmandu can be developed as eco-tourism, cultural and festival tourism, pilgrimage and spiritual tourism, adventure tourism and village tourism (Khadka & Rayamajhi, 2016). Therefore, tourism in Kathmandu has a prospect to grow (Khadka & Rayamajhi, 2016) and hence sustainable development of tourism results in economic benefit by increasing foreign exchange, reduce poverty and creation of employment (MoCTCA, 2019).

In the Kathmandu Valley Development Concept Plan, policy to protect and promote religion, culture of Kathmandu was developed to develop tourism and strengthen the economy of Kathmandu. Similarly, environmental policy especially focusing on the improvement of the quality of air in Kathmandu to foster tourism and improve health of inhabitants was formulated (UNDP, 2012).

According to MoCTCA (2019), there is further opportunity for Kathmandu to develop as a popular destination as it can provide diverse and all-season products such as different festivals celebrated in different seasons. Furthermore, Hindu religious sites in Kathmandu have become a huge attraction for the Indian market. For this, the government must prioritize the management and conservation of tangible and intangible cultural resources by ensuring sufficient funds for it, promoting potential tourist attractions and diversification of products (MoCTCA, 2019). Traditional homes in Kathmandu can also be promoted for accommodation of the tourists to generate income and preserve architectural heritage (MoCTCA, 2019).

Strategies for Sustainable Tourism Development in Kathmandu

Kathmandu is a tourist destination with high possibilities of tourism growth. Different types of tourism such as rural, adventure, nature, cultural tourism are popular in Kathmandu. The local people, Nepal government and private organizations must play significant role in developing tourism in a sustainable way. Joint efforts must be provided for maintain the already established attraction and research, identify and develop new ones as well. The strategies mentioned below are gathered from the studies like MAST Nepal, 2008; Maharjan & Guni, 2005; UNCSD NGO, 1999; Kadhka & Rayamajhi, 2016 and MoCTCA, 2019. Some of these studies are old for the current scenario, however, the suggested strategies from these studies are general which might be applicable in the current context of Kathmandu.

Proper Tourism Planning and Implementation

Planning must be done to create tourism with low impact, community and locally based, holistic and long term. Different alternative tourism options should be researched and discovered such as nature-based tourism, responsible tourism, green tourism, village tourism, culture tourism and many others (Khadka & Rayamajhi, 2015). Unlike mass tourism, which has created various undesirable environmental and socio-cultural impacts, these alternative tourism must be planned properly and implemented. Proper planning must also be carried out for the development of tourism infrastructures without harming the essence of the destination,

developing accommodation, transportation facilities and marketing and promotion of tourist attractions (Khadka & Rayamajhi, 2015). Involvement of the communities and coordination of related institutions are necessary for the successful planning and implementation (Maharjan & Guni, 2005).

Product Development

There are many possibilities of discovering new attractions and activities in Kathmandu. Local communities and private organizations must be involved in identifying new attractions for the tourists (Khadka & Rayamajhi, 2015). In Kathmandu, homestay has gained popularity among the tourists where they experience everyday lives of the community. Many tourists want to experience various festivals in Kathmandu. Through this, the local community as well as the tourist can benefit. Local community can promote the culture, handicrafts, other products such as organic tea, coffee, vegetables and fruits. Similarly, various trekking routes can be discovered within Kathmandu or improve the existing ones. The monuments and historic structures destroyed during earthquake in 2015 should be preserved and protected (Khadka & Rayamajhi, 2015). According to MoCTCA (2019), it plans to diversify and improve Nepal's tourism products by developing outdoor rock climbing destination in Kathmandu along with developing cycling network starting from Kathmandu to places such as Daman, Chitlang, Bhimphedi, Pharping and Hetauda. Similarly, it aims to promote the intangible heritage like traditional dances especially the Kartik Nach, a traditional dance performed in the evenings in October. The project aims to provide platform for the artist to train and perform and make it a income-generating event to sustain the culture (MoCTCA, 2019).

Environment Sustainability

To attain environmental sustainability, all concerned public and private organizations, non-governmental organizations, and local communities should prioritize actions to protect the environment, manage solid waste, manage and conserve water sources, identify alternative and renewable sources of energy, employment opportunities and conduct awareness programs in Kathmandu (UNCSD NGO, 1999; Khadka & Rayamajhi, 2015). Monitoring and protection of areas such as trekking, historical places, and environmentally sensitive areas must be conducted (Khadka & Rayamajhi, 2015).

Many practical, technology-oriented actions can be adopted by the tourism industry such as investment inefficient energy, identifying renewable sources for energy,

environment-friendly transportation, reducing consumption of natural resources and promoting tree plantation. It is important for tourism industry to conduct these actions as their business depends upon tourism (Khadka & Rayamajhi, 2015). According to Allis (2008), tourism organizations can introduce many green mobility options such as bicycles, electric scooters/ cars, low emission vehicles, etc. to visit nearby attractions in Kathmandu. However, quality, feasibility and safety should be priority for those organizations. Not only in the tourist destinations, but the tourism companies should adopt energy efficiency options such as use of solar energy and energy-efficient light bulbs which has positive impact on the environment and well as their business (Allis, 2008).

Water conservation in Kathmandu is important to recover the declining level of potable water resources. Tourism companies should implement water conservation and management actions such as low flow toilets, water-saving showers, rainwater collection, water-efficient utilities, and awareness to visitors about minimal use of towels, basic maintenance, and plantation of local flora (Allis, 2008). Companies can design advanced or natural wastewater treatment systems depending on their scale of operation to manage wastewater (Allis, 2008).

Solid waste management is a serious problem in Kathmandu. The tourism companies might have limited role in better management of waste material, however, they can aware the tourists and employees to produce less waste and recycle. Companies can implement refilling water bottles policy to reduce the purchase of single-use plastic water bottles (Allis, 2008). Waste disposal systems such as separate garbage into organic and non-organic waste should be developed where the organic waste can be reused on hotel gardens or for farming and other waste can be recycled (UNCSD NGO, 1999). The government should take actions to address the problem of solid waste management to reduce pollution in Kathmandu. Strict waste processing, management of allocated dumping sites and recycling practices should be implemented by the government, various industries as well as the community. Proper measurement and study of treating the solid waste must be conducted by the government (Khadka & Rayamajhi, 2015).

Economic Sustainability

For economic sustainability, local community of Kathmandu must participate in planning and decision making of tourism development programs. They can provide their ideas, opinions, and lead to self-reliance, effectiveness, sustainability and equity (Khadka & Rayamajhi, 2015).

Involving the local people of Kathmandu instead of foreign tour operators, creates overall empowerment as it provides them the opportunity to develop skills and ability through proper educational trainings and income-generating programs (UNCSD NGO, 1999;Khadka & Rayamajhi, 2015). The tourism companies in Kathmandu can also implement local organic farming initiative to produce fresh produce and meet the demand of the tourist, save the cost relating to purchasing and transporting the supplies and support local people in the community. Through such programs, women can also generate income and achieve economic security in the society(Allis, 2008). Tourist activities which require local knowledge and skills such as heritage sites tours, souvenir sales, cultural dances and festivals in Kathmandu creates employment opportunity for local people(UNCSD NGO, 1999).

The establishment of small and medium-sized tourism enterprises such as homestays in Kathmandu should be promoted and supported by the tourism industry and granted low interest loans to promote such enterprises(UNCSD NGO, 1999).

Socio-cultural Sustainability

Proper plans, policy and guidelines must be implemented by the local people, government and other related sector to protect and preserve the cultural heritage sites in Kathmandu to achieve sustainability. Security, cleanliness and preservation of the old valuable statues must be the priority of such programs in Kathmandu (Khadka & Rayamajhi, 2015). Tourism companies act as an intermediary between the tourists and the local people; therefore, they play a great role in the sustainability of culture and heritage attractions in Kathmandu. Tourism companies can promote or choose cultural attractions and activities prevailing in Kathmandu to incorporate in their product and services. Tourists can be provided with genuine and unique social interactions and experience in tour packages by the tourism company to create positive reputation, identity, and brand value of Kathmandu among the tourists(Allis, 2008; MoCTCA, 2019).

Tourism companies can educate the visitors about the local practices and customs. This sustainable socio-cultural tourism can increase the revenue, increase the chance of repeating the business, and attract new customers. At the same time, it provides better experience for the tourist and credible social outputs to the local people (Allis, 2008).

It is equally important for the companies to educate and aware their staff, local communities, and other stakeholders about the preservation and value of the local culture and

society of Kathmandu and benefits relating to socio-cultural sustainability (MoCTCA, 2019). On the job training, coaching, mentoring, lectures, group discussions, audio-visual presentations, and workshop training are effective to educate large group of people. For example, training programs regarding protection of historical sites, preserving local customs, unique cultural aspects, and overcoming problems of exploitation of children in Kathmandu (Allis, 2008).

According to MoCTCA (2019), tourism enterprises and the government should promote research and study the significance of the cultural heritage of Kathmandu, develop code of conduct for the tourists, promote local products and skills, establish local enterprises to manage heritage sites and generate income, provide incentives to the local communities for preservation and promotion of the heritage sites in Kathmandu.

Stakeholders of Sustainable Development of Tourism

A lot of stakeholders are required to achieve the sustainable development of tourism in Nepal. Different tourism stakeholders have their own interest for the development of tourism. Due to this, the approach of sustainable tourism becomes challenging. To meet the consensus all the stakeholders must realize that development of tourism to meet the need of today as well as the need of future generation will benefit all the stakeholder as a whole (Kafle, 2011).

The Government

According to the Government of Nepal, tourism drives local, regional and national development (Kruk, 2009). As discussed earlier, the government of Nepal formulates appropriate laws, policies, planning, set national objectives, strategies, and implement the sustainable tourism development. The government plans and manages the existing and new tourism products and services. It also facilitates in providing awareness, skill enhancement trainings, business opportunity and employment generation. Other role of government of Nepal is to facilitate, support trade negotiation and easy access from national and local market (Kruk, 2009). The government is also responsible to promote renewable sources of energy, reduce use of limited or non-renewable resources, promote environment friendly modes of transportation, integrate sustainable tourism development education in the curricula of schools, colleges, universities, training institutions, and open networks for research on sustainable tourism in Nepal (UNCSD NGO, 1999).

Structures and functions of Sustainable Development of Tourism

Government agencies, government line agencies and local agencies, the Nepal Tourism Board, and private business entrepreneurs are the major functional tourism agencies in Nepal. Government of Nepal is mainly responsible for the regulatory functions(Sharma & Bhattarai, 2009). It formulates favorable plans and policies and facilitates the sustainable development of tourism. According to Sharma & Bhattarai, (2009), the development function in Sustainable tourism development relies on the local government bodies such as municipalities, district development committees, and village development committees. They facilitate in developing required networks, cooperate with various stakeholders, enhances the expertise in tourism sector. Whereas, the promotion function is led by Nepal Tourism Board, which is also known as Nepal’s national tourism organization(Sharma & Bhattarai, 2009).

Nepal Tourism Board is a private-public partnership that has the promotional functions for tourism development. Five members from private enterprise and five members from government agencies of tourism industry are drawn by the Executive Committee to reflect private sector’s issue as well as policy issues related to tourism development in the NTB’s program. NTB has been proactively involved not only in promotion of tourism but also outline the policies and program of tourism(Sharma & Bhattarai, 2009). It includes tourism program for poverty alleviation and regional development. Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Program, Sustainable Tourism Network, Marketing Assistance to Nepal for Sustainable Tourism Products, Training on Project Facilitation and Management in Sustainable Tourism Development, and Training on Sustainable Tourism Marketing Linkages are some of the projects of NTB on sustainable tourism development(Sharma & Bhattarai, 2009).

Finally, private enterprises carry out the operation function. Various NGOs and INGOs such as SNV, ADB, WWF, UNDP also support different tourism agencies and activities in Nepal (Kruk, 2009).

S.N.	Structures	Roles
1	Government Agencies	Regulatory functions
2	Government and local agencies	Development functions
3	Nepal Tourism Board	Promotional functions
4	Private business entrepreneurs	Operational functions

Table 2: Structures and functions of Sustainable Development of Tourism

(Source: Kruk, 2009)

Development Organizations

Development organizations are facilitating actors which play policy-making as well as implementation role. They can donate funds for infrastructure development, community development for sustainable tourism development in Nepal. It supports government to develop tourism industry and also supports business and local communities (Kruk, 2009). Some of the projects funded by development organizations with NGOs and INGOs are Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (TRPAP), MAST Nepal, The Employment Creation and Peace Building based on Economic Development (EmPLED), Conservation and Sustainable Use of Wetlands in Nepal (CSUWN) and Great Himalayan Trail Development Programme (MoCTCA, 2019).

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)/International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs)

NGOs and INGOs in Nepal assist the government in achieving the national objectives of sustainable tourism development and partners with private sectors. It provides support, builds capacity, educational programs and awareness to the community to support the local cultures and economy. They also raise issue related to local community and plays role in protection and conservation of natural as well as cultural heritages (Kruk, 2009). They also strengthen their efforts to empower women, indigenous people, support the sustainable use of resources, initiate environmental actions, and promote consultation processes in tourism planning of Nepal (UNCSD NGO, 1999). KEEP is an NGO established to maximize the future ecological and cultural prosperity and reduce the negative impacts of tourism in Nepal (KEEP Nepal, 2019). It has conducted ecotourism project to provide awareness and education on ecological treks to preserve the ecosystem of Nepal (KEEP Nepal, 2019).

The Community

Community is the foundation for tourism planning and implementation and also acts as the tourism destination. They have the capacity to develop and promote environmental and cultural products of Nepal. They can be small business operator with local human resources. They take part in conservation and preservation of nature, and historical heritages and uplift the economy of the people (Kafle, 2011). In Kathmandu, socio-religious organizations within the Newar (indigenous inhabitants of Kathmandu) community named 'Guthis'. They are of three types such as religious, functional and social *guthis* to conduct all community work and

activities particularly for the maintenance and management of temples, heritage sites, festivals, and rituals (UNESCO, 2015).

Education and Training Institution

Formal education degree in tourism and hospitality is offered in about 37 colleges under different universities in Nepal and few overseas universities (MoCTCA, 2019). The CTEVT (Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training) under Ministry of Education for technical and vocational education is also providing hospitality, cooking training and skills necessary for providing tourism services in Nepal through its affiliated schools (MoCTCA, 2019).

The Tourist

In recent years, tourists from India and China have increased in Nepal. From 2007 to 2012, the average growth of tourists from India has increased by 26%, from China by 15% and from the rest of the world has been 36%. See *Figure 4* for more details. Thus, the overall growth of arrivals has reached up to 10% a year (MoCTCA, 2019) which indicates that Nepal's growth rate is higher than the annual average growth rate of 5% worldwide (UNWTO, 2018).

Nationality and number of tourists (000)	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Growth rate over the last five years
China	35.2	32.3	46.4	61.9	71.9	113.2	26.3
% share	7.0	6.3	7.7	8.4	8.9	12.4	
India	91.2	93.9	120.9	149.5	165.8	181	14.7
% share	18.2	18.4	20.1	20.3	20.6	23.2	
Rest of the World	336.1	347.4	390.1	464.9	495.9	503	8.4
% share	67.2	68.1	64.7	63.1	61.8	63	
Total	500.3	510.0	602.9	736.2	803.1	797	9.76
% share	100	100	100	100	100	100	

*Figure 4: Tourist number and growth in tourism arrivals from 2007 to 2012
(Adopted from Nepal Tourism Statistics, 2013, MoCTCA)*

Private Enterprises

Private enterprises take initiative role in business entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. While the government is mostly involved in formulation of policy and provides support in

infrastructure development, private sector has the main domain for tourism in Nepal (Sharma & Bhattarai, 2009). Economic activities are created by the private enterprises to further facilitate income generation and employment opportunities. They develop and promote environmental and cultural products and services. They also invest to develop variety of business entrepreneurship to develop sustainable tourism (Kruk, 2009). Private enterprises in Nepal can facilitate reduction of economic leakage, support local community, develop long term partnership with locally owned business, suppliers, operators, promote local products such as handicrafts to tourists, encourage tourists to understand and study the local culture, history, and coordinate visit to local community. Other important responsibilities are to hire and train local staff, empower women, educate staff and local community of negative environmental and cultural impacts (UNCSD NGO, 1999).

Since the focus of this study is about the implementation practice of private enterprises regarding sustainable development in Kathmandu, their roles and practices are discussed in the next section.

2.4. Practice of sustainable tourism by private enterprises

Sustainable tourism goals are achieved by involving various stakeholders. There is a risk that sustainable tourism will not occur without the proper understanding of how tourism is viewed by different involved stakeholders (Hardy & Beeton, 2001). Similarly, Gilbert, Penda & Friel, (1994) argued that sustainable tourism does not exist for the rapid development or outcome, but rather for changes in the individual actions that acknowledge the need for feeling responsible for the development of touristic area in a way that appropriate values are held by all the involved stakeholders. Le et al. (2005) in their study stated that most researchers agree that sustainable tourism programs need support from the government, local communities, visitors, tourism enterprises, and non-governmental organizations.

For coming together in order to share the importance of sustainability, there is a need for properly organized communication channels too. Zhang & Zhang (2018) believed that development in information technologies has made communication among different tourism stakeholders much easier. Tourist can directly connect with tourism enterprises, and government can provide accurate guidance for enterprises to practice sustainable tourism (Zhang & Zhang, 2018). Likewise, the involvement of local government officials, business holders in the tourism industry, local citizens in the decision making of tourism industry via communication have brought the issues of local community and environment at the fore-front

(Kilipirisa & Zardava, 2012). Along with that the principles of sustainable tourism are also conveyed to the visitors to raise awareness related to the topic (Kilipirisa & Zardava, 2012). Buhalis (2002) mentioned four major players to practice and implement sustainable tourism: local people, local authorities, visitors and service-producing tourism enterprises.

However, Dewhurst & Thomas (2003) and Liu (2003) argued that sustainable tourism often starts from a firm level. Hence, the participation of tourism enterprises is crucial for sustainable tourism programs to be successful (Rangel, 2000). This is supported by Eja, Out, Ewa & Ndomah. (2011) stating that the tourism industry cannot be handled by the government as they are responsible for laying the pillars of sustainable tourism. Therefore, enterprises must step in for the development and practice of sustainable tourism and mobilize the industry (Solvoll, Alsos & Bulanova, 2015). Sustainable development in the developing countries needs attention on social sustainability through the help of tourism enterprises that are the crucial actors for bringing together visitors, local people, and the government (Zhang & Zhang, 2018). Tourism enterprises are at the frontline of the tourism industry (Dredge, 2006), the representatives of local cultures, and the implementers of sustainable tourism policies (Zhang & Zhang, 2018). This was also supported by Lacy et al. (2002), who stated that tourism enterprises are “the lifeblood of local destination. They provide the character, culture and environment that visitors travel to experience. SMTEs are expression of local entrepreneurship and the real engine for local participation in the tourism industry”(pp 19). This brings to the conclusion that tourism enterprises have a major role in delivering desired sustainable goals (Aquino et al., 2018).

Tourism enterprises provide basic tourism products and services such as accommodation, transport, restaurants, tour packages, various attractions (Tonge & Myott, 1996). Such enterprises range from tour operators, airlines, hotels, local family business, restaurants (Lacy et. al, 2002).

The application of sustainable tourism is not restricted to the firms that operate only in the segment of green tourism or ecotourism but includes all the enterprises that practice environment and culture friendly principles. However, implementing sustainable tourism is not highly prevalent. Many enterprises do not follow it because of costly expenses. Niedziółka (2014) mentioned that businesses do not usually include environment and social cost. Sustainable tourism is not widely followed due to “lack of awareness of the problem,

the need to reduce costs and lack of conviction that the use of such practices can be reflected in an increased number of clients.” (pp 161).

Zhang and Zhang (2018) further extended their argument about the interconnected network in tourism industry putting forward that tourism enterprises that communicate regularly with tourists are more likely to think and act for protecting local culture and for providing skill training to the local people and staff. Through staff training, the tourism enterprises can mitigate the negative environmental and cultural footprints, and promote sustainable behavior (UNCSD, 1999b). Discussing about the training, Kilipirisa and Zardava (2012) argued that “properly trained staff can encourage a sense of responsibility and environmental awareness in tourists which, in turn, will lead to a longer-term and more sustainable industry” (pp 50). The staff training would be a step ahead for ensuring the implementation of sustainable tourism (Kilipirisa and Zardava, 2012).

Practicing sustainable tourism benefits the enterprises in various ways. For instance, in an article by Le et al. (2005), they found out that the adoption of sustainable practices by firms in Vietnam was associated with the strengthening of the company’s image. However, Le et al., (2005) also noted that implementing certain sustainable practices such as reducing water consumption in bathroom might also create an impression for a low-quality service for some customers. Hence, adopting sustainable practice was also taken as risk since the benefits of adopting sustainable tourism are not explicit. Practicing sustainability is expensive, too, as it requires the adoption of alternative approaches.

It was found that the course of action to implement sustainable tourism should start with the introduction of sustainable tourism to tourism enterprises with the set of codified standards (Le et. al, 2005). The natural and cultural resources are the core of tourism products and hence, tourism enterprises have the potential as well as responsibility to promote sustainable development in this industry (WTTC, WTO & Earth Council, 1996). Such enterprises have possibilities to give value to the local cultures and natural environments and to enhance the protection as WTTC & IHRA (1999) explained that “by increasing consumer commitment to sustainable development principles through tourism’s unparalleled communication channels and by providing an economic incentive to conserve natural, environments and heritage places” (pp 11). Having such huge responsibilities and possibilities, enterprises shall continuously improve their sustainability performance and must ensure that decisions made by the enterprise take into consideration the of the principle of

sustainable tourism to improve environmental management and enrich social impacts (UNCSD, 1999a). It is also increasingly acknowledged that the sustainable tourism principles and guidelines shall be included in the core of management process. For instance, WTTC, WTO & Earth Council (1996) have provided few suggestions to increase the sustainability practices in environmental aspects:

- An assessment of the impacts of the business on the environment and local community
- Involvement of all staff and designation of an individual as an actor responsible for environmental activities
- The development and publication of an environmental policy (either stand-alone or as part of a mission statement)
- Identification of overall objectives for the environmental program, and
- Definition of priority areas for action

Further to the discussion of roles and responsibility of tourism enterprises, Lacy et. al (2002) explained that the companies shall come up with initiatives to ensure that the quality of the environment and social integrity of destinations are not disturbed by tourism activities, and are improved to uplift the standards. Similarly, it is also important to integrate the enterprises' objective with sustainability goals to enhance balanced and diversified qualitative development in the destinations (Tapper, 2002). It is observed that the tourism-based companies are starting to adopt the sustainability practices and policies as a core component of their business to promote sustainable tourism (Lacy et. al, 2002). One of the examples is Tour Operators Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development which is dedicated to encouraging the members to execute the best practices of sustainable tourism in their course of action (UNEP, 2001). Another example is Travelife which certified the tourism business based on the certain criteria to improve the social, environmental and economic impacts. Moreover, the role of tourism enterprises, as Hoogerwaard & Rossi (2002) pointed out based on the three pillars of sustainability which this study is based on, is also to maintain a balance between:

- Minimizing ecological impacts (preserving why people live in a destination and the natural values that draw visitors);
- Maximizing economic benefits (spreading financial returns throughout the community and growing profitable businesses, which can, in return, invest in best practice environmental programs);

- Achieving socially and culturally responsible tourism (ensuring tourism activity is responsive to and reflects community values, including social and religious beliefs and ensuring tourism respects and appropriately presents local culture)

The case of Calista Luxury Resort in Antalya (Turkey) (Yüzbaşıoğlu, Topsakal & Celik, 2014) is one of the good examples of how sustainable tourism has been practiced by private tourism enterprise. Some of the action plans from this case are as below:

Reducing waste and recycling- The resort has different bins with different colours for various waste products so that they can recycle the wastage.

Energy efficiency and effective management- The automation system turns off the lights when guests are not in the room. Cooling and ventilation automatically turn off when the door and windows are opened.

Freshwater management- Tap Aerator used in the resort saves 45% of the clean water.

Waste Water Management- Using environmentally friendly products, the resort saves a lot of water and uses rainwater for gardening.

Hazardous Materials- “Calista Luxury Resort Hotel use ozone system. This system is based on disinfection without using steam energy at a warm temperature by consuming less energy and water and only ozone chemical without leaving any residues.” (pp 974).

Transportation- The guests are encouraged to use public transportation outside and buggy cars inside the premises of the resort, which do not pollute the environment.

Land Management- the resort has used additional lands for eco-garden and growing crops that are benefiting the ecosystem around it. It has also built the habitat for 213 species of birds.

Cooperation of employees, local people and tourists- The staff are provided with the training to interact with the local community and visitors to make them aware and encourage them to participate in activities that create an impact in nature and livelihood so that sustainability is ensured.

The above were instances of the private enterprises' roles being played in the context of sustainable tourism although most of the activities are focused only in the environmental aspect and none to economic and cultural aspects. The sustainability actions taken by the enterprises are voluntary efforts. Font et. al (2016) referred such actions as pro-sustainability

behavior emphasizing that these could range from water and energy-saving measures to purposefully buying local products, providing labor opportunity to the local community or promoting and preserving cultural heritages. This behavior mostly comes from the owners/managers having good grasp of sustainability concepts (Fassin, Van & Buelens, 2011). In most cases, the tourism enterprises are managed by the owners or the managers of whose decision making is the extension of personality and characteristics that shape the culture and values of the firm to act towards sustainability (Russo & Tencati, 2009; Fassin et al., 2011). The success of the decision to work alongside the concept of sustainability is based on the perception of managers to make the destination better place to visit which is grounded in their own circumstances (Carlsen, Morrison & Weber, 2008). The owners/managers involve in the sustainable practice without economic gain because of the way of valuing the world they live in (Sampaio, Thomas & Font, 2012). Further to this, Matten & Moon (2008) argued that the managers and owners intentionally engage in the sustainability activities because they act in the sustainable behavior via their lifestyle choices.

The above reviews were about the role and potential of tourism enterprises for sustainable tourism. It is also fundamental to understand how they are practicing it. In their findings, Font et al., (2016) found out the various ways in which the tourism enterprises around the Europe practice sustainable tourism. In the environmental aspect, firms claimed to use the environmental friendly products, and motivated customers to be careful about environmental impacts both in property and in the nature, eco savings and waste recycling. Likewise, it was also studied that the firms were supporting local community development, promoting gender equality, and protecting culture and language. In the same way, those enterprises were also encouraging to purchase and consume local products and choosing local staffs in every possible way. In the similar manner, Siti-Naibha, George Wahid, Amran, Abustan & Mahadi (2011) wrote that tourism enterprises particularly hotels tend to emphasis on sustainable environmental practices which are cost-effective like waste, water and energy-efficient operation. Extending the discussion of sustainable practice of hotels, it is believed that hotels are a big consumer of water and are big producer of garbage both of which if not managed properly have potential to harm environment (Musavengane & Steyn, 2013). Some of the hazardous waste from the hotels are cleaning chemicals, frying oil, mineral oil, flammable gas, and solvent residues (Piranu & Arafat, 2014). Whereas non-hazardous wastes are but not limited to, paper, plastic, household wastes, metal, glass, and organic waste (Musavengane, 2019). Such wastages when disposed with no segregation could damage the

essence of sustainable tourism. Wyngaard & de Lange (2013) called for the incorporation of environmental impact assessment (EIA) in the possible phases of the hotel business. Musavengane (2019) has given the example of a hotel implementing sustainable tourism by installing aerators and flow restrictors on showers and replacing table cloths with linen serviettes.

Similarly, further examples cited in the study of Musavengane (2019) include adoption of Activity Based Costing, which helped Thai hotels to reduce the waste by 45% (Boonyakiat, 2012), adoption of food tracking system in the USA helped customers to reduce food wastage by 80% (LeanPath, 2013), and reduction of the plate size in Norway cut the food waste by 20% (Kallbekken & Sælen, 2013). Emphasizing these examples, Musavengane (2019) concluded that waste management is a crucial element for practicing sustainable tourism benefiting both hotelier and the environment.

After all the great roles that tourism enterprise possess, there are not as many tourism enterprises working toward sustainable tourism as it should be. Tourism enterprises are slow in considering sustainable practices in their daily course of operation (Chen, 2016) and are mostly commercial to disallow themselves to consider social, environmental and economic aspect of doing business (Atlinay et al., 2016 cited from Aquino, Lück & Sch`änzel, 2018). Some researchers have even argued that the enterprises practice sustainable tourism in order to be competitive and profitable. Pollock (2015) and Tamajón & Font (2013) provided reasons to this expressing that firms with social mission attracts new segments of customer resulting in higher profits.

It has been noticeable that new forms of tourism business are approaching that fully or partially adopt the practice of sustainable tourism of which few examples are ecotourism, cultural tourism, social tourism, and community tourism (Aquino et al., 2018). Such different tourisms have the common goal that is somehow related to the sustainable tourism. Whatever the reason is, it is apparent that the tourism enterprises are necessity and an opportunity to coup with the injustice of tourism (Pollock, 2015) toward environment, society, and people. It is from tourism enterprises that potential of tourism is recognized changing the dimension how the tourism industry shall work for different destinations (Aquino et al., 2018). It is necessary to study in what ways these enterprises are working to implement the sustainable tourism so the different possibilities to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism are understood and such study about the tourism enterprises, in the

context of Nepal, was found in very few number even though the sustainability in tourism is being pushed by the public sector. The negative impacts of tourism are perceptible in Kathmandu. How have these been addressed by the private firms working in tourism industry? There are many tourism enterprises in Kathmandu and some of them are implementing sustainability and the study of how they are implementing sustainable tourism is necessary to comprehend the possible ways of tackling the problems caused by overtourism in Kathmandu. There is a research gap in this part of the academics and this thesis intends to, in some extent, fill in this gap providing the information on how sustainable tourism is implemented by the tourism enterprises in Kathmandu.

The discussion of the previous studies and literature are summed up in the *Table 3*.

Key Concept	Main points
Sustainability in tourism needs high priority	Sustainable tourism leads to the better situation that is not only the solution for conventional tourism but also is beneficial to all the actors of ecosystem and society.
Sustainable tourism has interconnected aspects	The three pillars (economic, environmental and socio-cultural) of sustainable tourism are interconnected and their elements are overlap with one another.
Sustainable tourism is for long term	Sustainable tourism has numerous benefits in all aspects which are for the longer term. The benefits are shared by the future generation too.
Tourism has both negative and positive impacts in Nepal and Kathmandu	Tourism has led to many negative impacts in terms of economic (unjust distribution), environmental (wastage and pollution), socio-cultural (mass migration). The positive impacts of tourism in Nepal in terms of economic (e.g. Job prosperity), environmental (e.g. Maintenance of national parks) and socio-cultural (e.g. Community welfare).
Sustainability in Nepalese tourism over years	Over time, Nepalese tourism is taking place to cover up the different themes of sustainability through different development plans, policies and projects. The dimensions of sustainable tourism have been prioritized in different forms such as poverty alleviation, women empowerment, ecotourism, etc.
Sustainable tourism in Kathmandu is urgent	Lot of efforts are undertaken to improvise the tourism of Kathmandu to make it sustainable
Sustainable tourism in Kathmandu is practiced in various approaches	Many approaches are applied to gear up the tourism in Kathmandu for attaining sustainability
Sustainable tourism is shared by all the different institutions and actors	For attaining sustainability in tourism, all the stakeholders should be integrated. These stakeholders have their own roles in order to fulfill the sustainability goals. These actors are government, community, tourism enterprises, visitor,

Key Concept	Main points
	INGO/NGO.
Private tourism enterprises represent the tourism of the country.	The role of private enterprises is vital in practicing sustainable tourism as they sell tourism products. The tourism enterprises comprise hotels, restaurants, tour operator, transportation, entertainment. Such enterprises are crucial as they are the implementers of policies and plans of sustainable tourism.
Private enterprises practice sustainable tourism from all economic, environmental and social measures.	The practice of sustainable tourism by tourism enterprises is taking place through reducing the wastages, saving energy, recycling the resources, buying local products, promoting local, supporting community development, protecting culture, providing job to the local, distributing fairly.

Table 3: Sum up table of previous studies and literature

The next section describes how this study was done in order to answer the research question. It illustrates the methods that were followed to response the problem definition.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Philosophical Foundation

The different approaches adopted for qualitative research is helpful to have an understanding of the philosophical debates that form the basis for the development of the research. The philosophical foundation applied in the research clarifies the kind of data required, how it is obtained and interpreted (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson. 2013). In this section, various philosophical approaches are explained and evaluated.

The issue of conducting studies or research of the social world raises a number of philosophical questions. Some of the questions relate to ontology and epistemology (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2014). According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2013), ontology is the philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality. The primary ontological debate is concerned whether the reality that exists independently of human beliefs and interpretation. In another term, research has been shaped by two ontological positions in relation to these issues .i.e. realism and relativism (Ritchie et al., 2014).

Easterby-Smith et al. (2013) explain “Realism is a traditional position that claims that the world is concrete and external, and that science can only progress through observations that have a direct correspondence to the phenomena being investigated” (pp. 198). Simply, it emphasizes that there is an external reality existing independently of people’s beliefs or understanding of it (Ritchie et al., 2014). Another position along the continuum of realism is internal realism which is based on a view that there is a single reality that can be assessed only by gathering indirect evidence of what is going on in the fundamental physical process (Easterby-Smith et al. 2013). According to Latour & Woolgar (1979), the position of relativism suggests that scientific ideas evolve through debate and discussion created by people. He continued that people have different views and their ability to gain acceptance from others may depend on their status and past reputation.

A research paradigm is based on philosophies and assumptions of the world and nature of the knowledge and identifies how research should be conducted (Collis & Hussey, 2003). This influences the research results that are based on several views of private enterprises about how sustainable tourism is implemented in Kathmandu. The experience of ways of implementing sustainable tourism can be different which are personal truths of different private enterprises. Acknowledging this, the relativism of ontology philosophy is selected in this research paper. The study heavily relies on the personal opinions of different

private enterprises' experiences. The protagonists of this research hold different views about sustainable tourism and thus, the 'truth' of a particular result is reached through discussion and agreement between them (Easterby-Smith et al. 2013). The ways of working toward sustainable tourism of different private enterprises vary in a different context. Relativism claims that what is true for one individual or social group may not be true for another and that every effort to adjudicate between context-dependent standards of truth and falsity is bound to be futile (Easterby-Smith et al. 2013).

Epistemology underlines the way of knowing and learning about the world and deals with issues as how the reality can be learned and what forms the basis of the knowledge (Ritchie et al., 2014). Similar to ontology, there are two competing views about how research should be conducted. The first position is positivism, which believes real knowledge exists and significant that is based on observed facts (Comte, 1853; Easterby-Smith et al. 2013). The statement links with ontological assumption that reality is external and objective and with epistemological assumption that real and significant knowledge is based on observations of this external reality. Thus, positivism principles are ontologically linked to realism (Easterby-Smith et al. 2013).

On the contrary, social constructionism views reality as socially constructed and given meaning by the people. It focuses on gathering rich data from people through experience sharing (Easterby-Smith et al. 2013).

This research is structured with social constructionism of epistemology. As truth is not objective and is socially constructed giving different meanings by different participants (Easterby-Smith et al. 2013), the study of the implementation of sustainable tourism is also constructed with various points of view of private enterprises involved in tourism sector. The researchers of this study are a part of what is being studied and have to interact with the private enterprises that are being researched. The research is not about gathering facts and measuring how often certain pattern occurs (Easterby-Smith et al., 2013), but to appreciate the meaning managers working in private enterprises place about the implementation of sustainable tourism upon their experience. The research focuses to understand and appreciate the thoughts, experience the managers have and how well they communicate. As the research is based on social constructionism, it aims to identify the practices, strategies and action plans of sustainable tourism adopted by the enterprises. By this, the researchers aim to find out how the enterprises differ from each other and how the managers implement the governmental

policies differently in their action plans. The approach involves researchers to talk to the focal person about the importance of aspects to implementing sustainable tourism and attempt to seek successful stories of sustainable tourism in Kathmandu that they have experienced.

3.2. Qualitative Approach

This chapter explains the applied techniques of research to identify the findings in line with the research question. It provides the reasons for selecting research designs, data collection process and suitable way of analyzing the collected data. This chapter aims to explain and justify the research methods that are applied.

There are two main research approaches. Researchers have different belief in terms of assumptions about the reality. Qualitative research reflects individual phenomenological perspective whereas quantitative research emphasize on a common reality on which people agree (Newman & Ridenour, 1998). Reality is a social construct in qualitative research in which multiple realities exist and different individuals have various valid interpretations. The differences in the research approaches are based on the opinion of what reality is and whether it can be understood through objective or subjective methods(Newman & Ridenour, 1998). Qualitative approach is generally used to observe and interpret reality explaining what was experienced to develop a theory (Newman & Ridenour, 1998).

The key feature of qualitative research is concerned with explanatory research questions like ‘why’ or ‘how’. Thus, it can be applied to the research as it describes on words rather than numbers (Ritchie et al., 2014). Qualitative research is used to understand the principles of sustainable tourism implemented in Kathmandu by the private enterprises while operating their business. Qualitative research applies specific data-generation methods. This research will follow the method of collecting data in the form of questionnaire and semi-structured interview of the private enterprises involved in the tourism industry. This research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of sustainable tourism practices implemented by the research participants by learning about their experiences and perspectives.

The research follows a systematic approach to solve the problem of the research by studying the numerous steps in depth. Researchers must be well known with different research techniques and methods while implementing them in the research. Different research approaches and techniques would be explained and their implementation in the research.

3.3. Research Design

A research design explains what, how and from where the data is to be collected which will be analyzed with the aim of answering the research question. The thesis intends to explore how social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable tourism are implemented in Kathmandu by the private enterprises. As discussed earlier, the paper is based on social constructionism to explore the views and meanings people shares that are supported by their experiences. Subsequently, one of the research designs preferred for the study is case study (Easterby-Smith et al. 2013). Although case study method comes from the positivist position, the research is structured in ways consistent with relativist and social constructionist perspective.

According to Yin (2014), case study is the preferred method when the main research question place 'how' or 'why' questions, also when the researcher has little control over the events and the study is based on contemporary phenomenon.

This thesis aims to answer the following descriptive research question:

'How is sustainable tourism implemented by the private tourism enterprises in Kathmandu?'

This research is likely to provide rich descriptions or insightful explanation when case study method is used whereas alternative methods are appropriate when in producing a particular outcome and seek how often something has happened (Yin, 2014).

Another reason for selecting case study method is it allows the researcher to keep the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events in its real-world context (Yin, 2014). It supports the collection of data in natural settings, compared with other methods that depend on derived data (Bromley, 1986). This research explores how and why the managers working in private tourism enterprises implement sustainable tourism, understands everyday work supporting sustainable tourism and the dynamics of a collective bargaining negotiation with severe consequences(Yin, 2012).

Case study analyses real-life systems that are studied with an empirical view over time. The method is widely used in qualitative research though it is not completely understood. Due to its complex characteristics, validation of the research findings can be difficult (Baskarada, 2014).Yin (2009) considers validity, replicability and reliability are

appropriate criteria and suggests case study method can be developed to enhance its ability to meet those criteria while for other researchers like Stake (1995), these criteria are barely mentioned. The case study studies its own unit of analysis as well as large group of units meaning it has a double function. However, this method is advantageous to study, evaluate and develop theories and involvement if used rightly (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Robert Yin's theories in case studies are significantly acknowledged in the research. According to Yin (2012), a case study provides the same level of validity as other methods providing clear picture of the behavior of people or groups in a real-life context. He suggests a case study should have a clear research design which include the main question of the research, the unit of analysis, the linkage between data and purpose of the study and procedures of interpretation of data (Easterby-Smith et al. 2013).

The case study is based on exploratory and explanatory research. An exploratory design can be used when an in-depth study of a research question is not prepared (Teegavarapu, Summers & Mocko, 2008). It helps to better understand the insight and increase the knowledge of certain issues required for the investigation (Teegavarapu et al., 2008). The research method explores the research topic in-depth and tackles new problems for a subject matter on which there is not much research has been conducted (Boru, 2018). The research aims to explore the role of private enterprises in the implementation of sustainable tourism policies, strategy and objectives in Kathmandu. Explanatory research explains and provides descriptive information by asking 'why' and 'how' questions. It provides evidence to support an explanation by seeking for causes and reasons (Boru, 2018).

Literature Search

A literature review provides basic understanding about the development of a topic to be researched over time and identifies the gaps (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). After identifying the gap, researcher continues to review the literature together with re-evaluating, revising the research questions and identifying the framework for the research. Subsequently, catalogue of keywords are increased to search for new literature and its findings (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015).

After reviewing the literature in the research, numerical data and theoretical information were collected through various books, journals, thesis dissertations, and articles were studied and reports were collected from Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, Nepal Tourism Board, MAST Nepal, etc. For further support to the study, data regarding the employment generated in Nepal, arrival of tourists, foreign earning revenue from tourism sector was collected from resources like Tourism Employment Survey 2014, Nepal Tourism Statistics, 2017 and 2018. The nature of the information is mostly qualitative in nature. The literature related to the sustainable tourism development in Kathmandu and role of private enterprises in it were prepared with extensive use of secondary data. The data collected from the review of literature and interview were analyzed properly to answer the research question and objectives and form summary and recommendation regarding sustainable tourism in Kathmandu. Numerous keywords such as sustainable tourism, Kathmandu, private enterprises, stakeholders, tourism development, etc were used to search for relevant data required for the study. These keywords were used for advanced search using Boolean operators to explain the depth of search results (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). For example, used 'Sustainable tourism AND Kathmandu' to attain articles containing both and specific results; responsible OR sustainable was used for articles with similar concepts; 'private enterprises NOT public, to filter not relevant results; sustainable tourism in «Kathmandu» to limit the search to Kathmandu only.

Unit of analysis

Unit of analysis provides the basis for any sample and is the main entity that the researcher analyzes in the study and different summary descriptions and explanations can be created (Trochim, 2006). Additionally, unit may include individuals, groups, organizations, countries. The unit of analysis of the research involves sustainable strategies, programs, policies and action plans that the private enterprises have implemented. The selection of unit of analysis affects the usefulness of the data, type of analysis and opportunity of drawing wider assumptions(Ritchie et al., 2014).

Case study can be hard for researchers to report the findings in a particular way that are easily understood by the readers(Gustafsson, 2017). The researcher must have an idea about how the readers are able to understand the case study. This enables readers to implement the study in their own situation (Stake, 1995).

Multiple Case Study

The researcher also needs to consider if it is beneficial to use single or multiple case study. Multiple case study is used in the research to study involving multiple private enterprises. The significance of this case study lies in understanding the similarities and differences

between the cases .i.e. private enterprises. According to Yin (2003), analysis of data within situations and across situations is possible in multiple case study providing similar or contract results. Whereas, single case study performs analysis on a single case over a predefined limited timeframe. The effective single case study method questions old theories and explores new ones formulating a deep understanding of the subject matter (Dyer, Wilkins&Eisenhardt, 1991).

Tourism enterprises in Kathmandu are responsible for the operational functions for the development of tourism and implement sustainable tourism (Kruk, 2009). Therefore, it is important to study these enterprises to know about the essentials of sustainable tourism in Kathmandu because they invest in development of sustainable tourism(Kruk, 2009) and has the main domain in tourism(Sharma & Bhattarai, 2009). Within case analysis provides rich and important information required to understand the individual case. The method is used to explore the nature of the case, the component and how the information is interpreted (Ayres, Kavanaugh & Knafel, 2003). Within case analysis is used to identify the sustainable tourism policies and practices implemented by each case, to know internal information of the enterprises such as knowledge and awareness among the employees and their contribution in mitigation of negative impacts of tourism.

Similarities and differences of the private enterprises in Kathmandu with regards to their sustainable tourism practices, action plans are studied in the research. Comparison of the similarities and difference in the implementing sustainable tourism policies and strategies that are the unit of analysis can be facilitated through cross-case analysis (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008). According to Stretton, 1969, cross-case analysis can be useful in generating new alternatives, construct ideas, and contribute to the findings of the case. It seeks to answer the similarities and differences between the cases, provide further clarity of the concepts and make unique findings (Stretton, 1969). In the research, cross-case analysis is used to identify that all cases are well known about sustainable tourism and common sustainable practices, policies. It also identifies the differences between the cases such as only few tourism enterprises work in partnership to develop sustainable tourism.

Characteristics of the selected private tourism enterprises

While many private enterprises in tourism sector are present, it is important to select the appropriate enterprises that fulfill the objective of the research question.Studying about all the private enterprises in tourism industry requires big efforts in term of time, money and

complications in attaining information. Therefore, the researcher must select the private enterprises based on certain criteria. The criterion for selecting a particular enterprise is mainly based on the policies, strategies that they formulate, their action plans, objectives for the economic development of the community, preserve and protect the natural and cultural heritage sites, partnership with stakeholders working for development of sustainable tourism. The other important criterion for the enterprise is to be operating its sustainable tourism activities in Kathmandu. For example, travel agency operating various tours around heritage sites, trekking and tour in other places of Kathmandu and implementing various policies for the protection and conservation of environmental, cultural, historical and social assets of Kathmandu are selected. The enterprises that have adopted policies, strategies, programs for sustainable development of tourism in Kathmandu are explored by visiting their official websites in which their work towards sustainable development of tourism is transparent to the readers. The selection is also based on the sustainable products and services provided to the tourists, a number of years operated in the sector, their expertise, and their cooperation and partnership with other stakeholders responsible for sustainable tourism in Kathmandu. Reviews from their clients, data or reports on their achievements in sustainable tourism also play a crucial role in the selection process.

To attain the quality information regarding the selected enterprises, the focal person for sustainable tourism in the organization such as founders, managers were contacted. Knowledge and skill of the interviewee in sustainable tourism is significant for the selection. Out of 12 relevant enterprises selected for the research, 7 were interviewed. *Table 4* shows the details of those enterprises.

Furthermore, the interviewees are preferred on the basis on their role and involvement in decision making when it comes to sustainable tourism. They can be experts, founders or key managers of the enterprise having a key function in sustainable activities.

S.N.	Enterprise Name	Interviewee's Designation	Main Activities	Website	Total time of Interview in minutes	Interview conducted (Modes of Communication and Language)
1	Traditional Comfort	Residence Manager	Accommodation services	www.traditionalcomfort.com	28 minutes	Skype (Nepali)
2	SASANE Sisterhood Trekking and Travel	Founder/Managing Director	Tour Operation (Mainly trekking)	www.sasanesisterhoodtrek.com	57 minutes	Skype (Nepali)
3	Tiger Tops	Managing Director	Accommodation Services, Wildlife Safari and sightseeing	www.tigertops.com	34 minutes	Whatsapp (Nepali)
4	Pure Nepal	Founder	Tour Operation (Mainly trekking)	www.purenepal.com	42 minutes	Skype
5	Mandap travels/ Beyond Border Ethical Adventure	Focal person for Ethical Tourism/ Tour Leader	Tour Operation	www.mandaptravels.com www.ethicaladventuresnepal.com	57 minutes	Whatsapp (English)
6	Dream Nepal Travel and Tours	Founder	Tour Operation (Cultural Tour)	www.dreamnepal.com.np	41 minutes	Viber (Nepali)
7	The Explore Nepal Group (Kantipur temple House, Bhojan Griha and Explore Nepal)	Sustainability Manager/ Marketing Manager	Accommodation Service, restaurant and tour operation	www.theexplorenepal.com www.kantipurtemplehouse.com www.bhojagriha.com	38 minutes	Whatsapp (English)

Table 4: List of selected Private Enterprises

3.4. Data Collection

The purpose of data collection is to identify the main findings and illustrate how the findings are received from the evidence to the reader. So, findings are based on the data gathered for the research (Polkinghorne, 2005).

Secondary Data

Yin (2014) suggests documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observations and physical artifacts as the main sources commonly used for the case study method. The researchers must use as many reasonable sources as possible which defines the research problem to prepare a good case study. Some principles of data collection in case study methods are to use multiple sources of evidence; create a case study database; increase the reliability of information by linking the interview question, case study database collected and findings of the research; and use of data from electronic sources carefully (Yin, 2014).

Further, secondary data sources are often easily available on the internet through websites and data banks and can include information of specific company, market, customer, products, etc (Easterby-Smith et al, 2013). The data saves time and effort for the researcher. However, every source of information should be evaluated by the researcher (Easterby-Smith et al, 2013). In order to understand the current practice of sustainable tourism, it is necessary to understand see when and how the policies were formulated by the government and how the government motivates private sectors to implement such policies in their action. Secondary details are useful to make sure that the data is good enough to create quality research and enhance the dimension of understanding of subject matter (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015). *Table 5* provides a list of secondary data used in this study.

Title	Author
Building Nepal's Private Sector Capacity for Sustainable Tourism Operations: A Collection of Best Practices and Resulting Business Benefits	The Marketing Assistance to Nepal for Sustainable Tourism Products (MAST-Nepal)
Sustainable Development Goals	The United Nations

Table 5: List of Secondary Data

Following the implication of social constructionism, this study required data that enhance the examination of experience and perspectives about sustainable tourism being implemented by the private enterprises in Kathmandu. Hence, an in-depth semi-structured interview was selected in order to gather data from private enterprises. A semi-structured interview is helpful to understand the construction of respondents' opinions and beliefs and their world in regard to certain issues (Easterby-Smith et al., 2013).

Primary data collection process

The preparation of the interview was carried through an interview guide to be concise with the objective of the study while collecting data. Thus, several contents of interview questions were amended that was found inappropriate. A few questions were not concise with the research question. The final interview questions were then developed, which are presented in *Appendix 4: Semi-Structured Interview Guide*.

The interview questions were selected to collect information not available in books or in internet sources (Brace, 2008). The interview aimed to collect few but quality information from of the private enterprises which implemented sustainable tourism policies and action plan in Kathmandu. The selected enterprises were initially contacted through email informing about the research, it's topic and requesting their suitable time for the interview. After receiving a response, interviews were planned with the focal person responsible for sustainable tourism according to the convenience and availability of the interviewees. Among the selected interviewees, three interviewees were the founder of the enterprises while rests were employed in the managerial and decision-making position. Some enterprises failed to respond, and few could not arrange a time for an interview due to their busy schedules. Thus, an interview was conducted via Internet with an appointment of the interviewee as the researchers could not travel to Nepal during data collection process.

During the interview, the interviewees were informed about the purpose of the study, and reasons for selecting the enterprises. The interview was recorded with their permission for transcribing the interviews. The interviewees were insured that the information would be used for academic purpose only. The questions of the interview were simple but important to gather as much information regarding their experiences, practices of sustainable tourism in Kathmandu without obstructing the interviewee by the researchers with their own thoughts and opinions. Listening and interpreting the information provided by the interviewees were considered important for the process. The researchers were responsible to clarify and

elaborate the questions to the interviewees to avoid confusion and ambiguity. A few questions were sub-divided where comprehensive information was required.

The interview questions were divided into two parts. The first part of the interview included the general background of interviewees and their organization. The questions in this part were designed to make respondents answer spontaneously icebreaking the situation and establishing comfortable conversation and arrangements. General questions sought to answer their experience, an idea on sustainable tourism in Kathmandu, information flow of sustainability internally, the inclusion of sustainability as one of their major objectives.

The second part of the interview contained the questions that were direct to the research question and they were descriptive so that interviewees could respond with detailed or elaborated answers. The questions in this section were about the action plans, strategy to practice sustainable tourism, sustainable products and services offered; influence the behavior of tourists to act sustainably. Other questions include major themes of economic, social, culture and environment aspects of sustainable tourism practiced by the enterprises, their view on the role of private enterprises and their future plans in sustainable tourism.

Regarding the number of interviewees, Lopez & Whitehead (2013), suggests that the qualitative study should include 5 to 12 participants on average for interview. Thus, the research includes interviews of 7 participants whose dimensions of the work in sustainable tourism are diverse. After receiving data from the interview, data was analyzed.

Interview via internet saved time and effort as the researchers were not able to travel to Nepal for data collection. On the other hand, the researchers could not see the emotions of the interviewee as it was only an audio call. As the researchers were not physically present for the interview, the facial expressions of the interviewee and workplace could not be observed.

3.5. Reliability and Validity

Golafshani (2003), states that any qualitative researcher should be concerned about validity and reliability while designing a study, analyzing results and judging the quality of the study. For validity and reliability, the researcher should assess the instrument to use for data collection (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006).

Reliability of the research depends upon being systematic, careful and truthful (Robson, 2002 as cited in Boru, 2018). The research is carefully conducted with correct formation of interview questions, made connection with the interviewees and focused on the research question to achieve reliability in collecting the data (Silverman, 1993; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

For constructionist research design, Golden-Biddle & Locke (2007) identify three key criteria: authenticity, plausibility, and criticality for the validity of the research. Authenticity represents the knowledge of the researcher of what was taking place; plausibility is the ability of the researcher to link into other researchers' or readers' ongoing concern or interest; and criticality encourages readers to question their assumptions and offer something new (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007).

Finally, the results of constructionist research should be believable, and use methods that are transparent. The research explains how researchers gained contact with the private enterprises, processes of the selection of informants, processes used for collection of data, creation and record of data, the process of transforming data into tentative ideas and explanation and view of the researcher about the research (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015).

Validity or trustworthiness of the research is based on the credible and valid results (Johnson 1997, pp 283) which leads to generalizability suggested by Stenbacka (2001). The selected enterprises have adopted sustainable tourism policy, strategy and action plan of the tourism enterprises to some extent and thus, it can be generalized that all the selected cases work for sustainable tourism development.

3.6. Data Analysis Technique

The information obtained from the interviews were read thoroughly to connect the patterns among the data. The details of the answers in different questions were gathered to see the connections in all the interviews. The details were put together so that the similarities were formed that were relevant to answer the research question. The coding process was followed to analyze the data by breaking them down into codes to put the data back in a meaningful way (Creswell, 2015, pp 156). According to Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014), codes are the labels that give symbolic meaning to the descriptive information collected during the research (pp 71). The specific codes were given to each similarity that gave the same meaning. Those codes were generated in order to be in line with literature reviews too.

The different codes were gathered to categorize them into different themes see *Appendix 5: Code Book*. The themes that had a general answer for the subject matter of a research question of this study were developed. Hence, the codes were assigned to the general themes which would aid in examining the data.

The findings from all the cases were put separately. The themes for the codes were as per the three pillars of sustainable tourism: economic, environment, and socio-culture. The other themes were created in order to fit in the codes that were not relevant to the three pillars but relatable to answer the research question. The codes like *staff_train*, *info_share* were assigned to the theme Capacity Building.

The codes can be argued as the elements of sustainability as illustrated in the figure 1. These codes are the elements of sustainable tourism in the cases of tourism enterprises' activities to practice sustainable tourism in Kathmandu. Similarly, these codes are not mutually exclusive. Often the data of these codes are overlapped and interconnected with one another. The codes gave the meaning that would answer the research question of this study. The findings and the analysis of the results from the interviews are elaborated in the next section. Some codes were not used during the discussion as those were not required to answer the research question.

The findings are presented and the data are analyzed to answer the research question in the next section.

4. Findings and Analysis

In this section, first, the secondary data have been presented in order to give an overview of the phenomena that the result of this study is expected to give reasoning. The next is the findings from primary data case wise. The analysis of the primary data is discussed to draw the conclusion.

4.1. Secondary Data

As discussed in section 2.2, sustainable tourism has been developed and included in the tourism development plans and policies of Nepal. Hence, the dimensions of sustainable tourism have been developed over the years. However, it was not found in an adequate manner about the policies of sustainable tourism developed by the Government of Nepal. Especially, the policies or the guidelines for the tourism enterprises regarding sustainable tourism were not found. National Strategic Tourism Plan 2015-2024 mentions several essentialities of sustainable tourism in Nepal. It mentions several governmental goals regarding sustainable development through tourism. The sustainable tourism policies are presented in general terms rather. However, tourism enterprises are not bound to implement any of those policies about sustainable tourism. It is absolutely optional to follow sustainable practices for tourism enterprises. The reason to practice sustainable tourism is voluntarily or one's interest.

The seventeen goals for sustainable development were also studied in order to find out if the tourism enterprises in Kathmandu have been implementing sustainable tourism according to such goals. This would make the findings stronger to answer the research question of this study. Sustainable development goals are given in the Appendix. The later subsection discusses the findings with these goals.

Another secondary data for this study is a publication entitled 'Building Nepal's Private Sector Capacity for Sustainable Tourism Operations: A Collection of Best Practices and Resulting Business Benefits' that provides case studies from the MAST-Nepal project. The Marketing Assistance to Nepal for Sustainable Tourism Products (MAST-Nepal) Project was funded by the European Commission and implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), SNV Nepal (Netherlands Development Organization) and Nepal Tourism Board. It was the first project in Nepal implemented from August 2006 to June 2008 (Druzca, 2010). It was designed for the capacity building of the tourism enterprises on the concepts of sustainable tourism and develop action plans to deliver sustainable tourism

products. The private enterprises participated on the project received extensive training in developing and marketing sustainable tourism products, developing actions plans to introduce sustainable practices in their business operations, enabling them to connect with the global sustainable tourism market, and providing insights of best practices in marketing to increase their business operations (Allis, 2008).

This publication contains the cases of several tourism enterprises practicing sustainable tourism in Nepal. The findings of this secondary data have not been used for drawing the conclusion of this study. Rather these are for the broad insight on sustainable tourism implementation. These are in a summarized form without mentioning the name of enterprises. The data are mixed together to present them based on the three pillars of sustainable tourism that this thesis has considered.

Environmental Sustainability

Resorts in Nepal have implemented green mobility options such as bicycles, electric scooters, cars, horses and bull-drawn carts to transport their guests for sightseeing. It has reduced greenhouse gas emissions and provided a marketing advantage for the resorts. The selection of green mobility options has created income-earning opportunities for the community.

Further, the safety and quality of green mobility transport are the priorities of the resorts. Similarly, some resorts in Kathmandu reduced greenhouse gas emission by investing in EE (Energy Efficiency) and replacing existing incandescent lighting technology with new energy-efficient light bulbs. This resulted in positive economic returns as the electricity bill was reduced and the money saved was reinvested in the resort. A resort invested 480 Euros in installing new energy-efficient bulbs and resulted in 15 percent savings in the electricity bill compared to the bill from a previous lighting system.

Companies in the tourism sector responded to the cost associated with fossil fuel consumption by opting for renewable sources of energy. The solar hot water system was installed by the resorts and hotels to offer better service to the clients and avoided costly investment on an electrical grid. This has saved direct economic cost as well as the indirect environment and social costs.

Similarly, plastic water bottles disposal has reduced in a resort in Kathmandu as they implemented ‘refill your own water bottle’ policy and briefed the incoming clients on their efforts to reduce plastic consumption and encourage using reusable water bottles. Prior to this, the resort performed a water audit and found that plastic bottles generated huge waste in

the resort. Therefore, the company purchased a water dispenser for guests and staff to minimize the environmental impact by reducing its waste volume. The resort has been receiving a positive responses from clients on their waste management efforts.

For environment conservation awareness, various private companies organized a free training event for trekking tourism companies in Nepal to aware them about the vulnerability of the mountain ecosystem in Nepal. They were trained about proper waste management protocols and visited ICIMOD demonstration sites. It helped participants understand that some of the business practices can devalue the destination on which their company depends upon and learned measures to protect and conserve the environment. (Allis, 2008).

Economic Sustainability

Travel Operator in Kathmandu was found to be dedicated in empowering women and promoting gender diversity in tourism. They realized the importance of developing skills among Nepalese women to increase their confidence, qualification and opportunity to achieve qualified jobs. They arranged free biannual training for women which lasted for 4 weeks and later women were offered on-the-job training in the tour operators. The training was provided on general subjects such as communication in English, Nepal geography and history, map reading, first aid, and hospitality. It has provided employment opportunities for women in the tourism sector. In addition, a tourism company hired women as fulltime salary staff and as trekking guides to meet the increased product demand. They were provided with on-the-job training to increase their skills in the tourism sector. By doing this, the company has increased their services to women clients who prefer female guides and increased the capacity and skill of women for generating income.

Similarly, for local community development and providing better service to the clients, women organic farming initiative was launched by the resort in Kathmandu. The initiative has resulted in a fresh supply of produce to the clients, save cost on transportation of food supplies from the market and support local women of the community. Previously, the resort has also provided literacy classes for the local women organization. Thus, the resort contacted the same organization to start the organic farming initiative. The local women were trained in organic farming methods and farming started in a plot of land leased by the women. The women sold the produce to the resort and were encouraged to sell in the community as well to strengthen the financial capability of the organization. The group also

received briquette making training from the resort where women made charcoal briquette to sell them to the resort, to local market and use it themselves.

To increase service to the clients, a resort decided to add entertainment options and selected a local community group for cultural performance. For this, the resort hired professional choreographer to train the local community in traditional Nepalese dance techniques creating jobs for the local community. Through this action, the resort not only provided additional service to their clients but also linked the local community with the tourist to earn from a new source income.

Likewise, an adventure tour specialized in bird watching expedition hired a qualified local member of the community for the guiding groups on the tour. The company trained members of local community and hired a potential and interested candidate. On-the-job training was provided to the selected candidate to further enhance his knowledge on conducting sustainable tours. As a result, the clients received quality tours by a highly trained staff member with local knowledge. It also provided employment opportunities and earning potential to the local member of the community.

Hotels and resorts have been selecting local vendors for the supplies of foods and other materials to save money, time and transportation cost. They adopted a local tender policy where they placed a public notice to request for local bids on various products required for the hotels. Therefore, few local community groups submitted the bid and were selected for the supply of products (Allis, 2008).

Socio-Cultural Sustainability

A proper code of conduct for porters was adopted in the policy by trekking agencies. Their codes included appropriate clothing, shelter, sleeping bags, food, life insurance, medical care for the porters. Furthermore, code regarding weight restrictions on load to the porter .i.e. maximum of 20 kgs was implemented. These policies provided a clear understanding between the employer and employees. It also helped to strengthen teamwork and trust and by considering the health and safety of the porters, the companies were able to improve their trekking activities.

Likewise, internal training for the guides regarding the conservation measures, cultural and historic importance of the World heritages sites were provided by tour operators in Kathmandu. These guides were able to increase awareness of the tourists and sustainable trips to these sites help the company to play its part in preserving them. The value of the

product provided by the agency also enhanced as the tours were led by well-trained guides with significant knowledge of historical and cultural sites of Kathmandu. The agency hoped to increase awareness about the diminishing state of the heritages sites and increase funding initiatives to preserve the sites. With the success of the action, the agency has contacted other agencies, hotels, restaurants, and communities to arrange such training initiatives in the future.

A company formed a Sustainable Action Group (SAG) to enhance their sustainable actions in the company. The group consisted of interested employees and aimed to meet every 3 months to monitor and develop sustainability within the business operations. Discussions and recommendations were retained to implement, monitor and evaluate the actions. The group in their initial phase was able to manage and reduce plastic waste, develop and improve links with the local producers. This initiative helped to gain a competitive advantage in the growing tourism market and protect the welfare of their surroundings.

In the same way, other few tour operators in Kathmandu collected the best sustainable practices in their operation and published a training manual. They compiled their policies and easy guidelines in implementing more sustainable practices. They further organized training for hotels and restaurants to build capacity for sustainable action. The training involved managers in the tourism industry who were the policymakers and it facilitated in the translation of the positive training outcomes throughout the company. After the training, the companies would adopt sound waste management practices, promoting equal distribution of earning among local communities, conserve cultural heritage, and restore historical buildings to protect the tourism industry.

Scholarships to the children from disadvantaged families or indigenous groups were provided by a trekking company of Kathmandu. They contacted some schools to notify the grant of the scholarship support to the children. As a part of their scholarship program, they donated school uniforms, school supplies, paid for their tuition fees and purchased musical instruments for the school. They also offered to pay 50 percent of the annual salary of an additional teacher required in the school. It has provided strong reputation for the company in the community as well as helped the children with achieving learning opportunities and the possibility of achieving income-generating jobs in the future. They are transparent in their donation and included all community stakeholders in financial discussions to reduce the chance of fraud. (Allis, 2008).

4.2. Primary Data

While there were less number of enterprises found working for the sustainable tourism implementation in Kathmandu, there were a couple of enterprises whose working area is both outside and inside Kathmandu valley. The collected data from the private tourism enterprises are presented as separate cases beginning with their respective brief profiles.

Case 1: Traditional Comfort

Traditional Comfort aims to balance the Nepali tradition with modern comfort following Newari design and architecture feature in the hotel. It has used wood carvings and decorative tile works which are handcrafted by the local craftspeople of Kathmandu. They employ local artisans in the design and construction of the hotel and employ responsible environmental practices such as the installation of a solar system for LED lights, for water heating, preserve water, reduce unnecessary detergent use (Traditional Comfort, 2016).

The interviewee said that sustainability is in hype in Kathmandu and it is getting popular. However, it was told that sustainable tourism is not fully implemented in Kathmandu as the practice of sustainable tourism is only done in the surface level. The informant said *“Things are being followed as per trend only. Sustainability should be the optimum utilization of resources to handover to future generation. We can see the examples like replacing plastic straws and bottles, but the hoteliers have still not adapted the core idea of sustainability.”*

The informant talked about seasonal tourism when asked about the challenges of tourism in Kathmandu. The operation of the business during the off-season has been challenging especially for the hoteliers. It was answered that sustainability could relief such challenge to some extent. The informant answered *“Speaking from my experience sustainability tends to rise tourism business during off-season too. It gives business competitive advantages. The activities like preserving wildlife, reducing plastic usage, promoting local products and culture, hiring local employees give the edge to be competitive in the market.”*

To the question about employees’ awareness or knowledge about sustainable tourism, the interview was affirmative. It was even found to have a separate department for sustainable tourism to share information and to have the discussion (or meeting) among

staffs. The staff training was also found to educate the staffs about the importance of sustainable tourism. The enterprise partnered with the recycling company for the staff training to act more on sustainable issues. Likewise, it was also told that the activities in the hotel is also a part of information sharing among staffs. It was answered “..*The small thing like this have been implementing which is sort of information sharing to our staffs of every department. Our staffs also segregate the garbage into degradable and non-degradable. I take this as information sharing among departments and staffs too.*”

The organizational goal of the hotel was also found to have directed toward sustainable tourism which is in form of especially reflecting enriched culture of Kathmandu. Apart from that it was also found to have sustainability policies and internal policies. To support the answer, the informant said “*We have all the policies written and now we have a separate department that does not only work on sustainability, but also measures the impact. The theme of this department is to promote sustainable tourism....*” After the goal it was asked about the action plan to implement sustainable tourism in response to which the informant answered that their action plan was the focus on people, community and environment. Hiring local people, working for the benefits of community and preventing negative impacts on environment were some of the actions it has been doing. The hotel was going to be partnered with the UN for measuring its carbon emission.

For the economic sustainability, it was found that the hotel was primarily hiring local people creating job prospect in the locality. Similarly, it also has community for the homestays to strength the financial condition of the community. In the building which is built in Newari style, all the handicraft was used from the local handmade. In order to promote economic growth, food for hotel has been bought from the local vendors mentioned.

In the interview, it was found that in order to encourage the sustainable tourism behavior of the guests, the hotel has replaced the plastic straws to metal straws. In addition to this, the hotel charges very high price for the plastic bottled mineral water in order to discourage the use of plastics by its guests. It was told that the water is served in non-disposable bottles. “*We have a separate filtration plant for purifying the water too. They can refill the water as much as they can so that they do not need to buy the plastic bottle. However, we sell plastic bottle mineral water because some of the guests are very sensitive toward drinking water. Due to the psychological factor, they only want mineral water. But we sell this in very high price*” said the informant. To implement environmental sustainability,

the hotel was found to prevent negative impacts. The interviewee said *“Now we are working toward offsetting the emission if we have to plant more trees around. We are in discussion with the UN.”* The lights used in the hotel were told from solar energy and the only electric equipment requiring high voltage are used from the main electric switch.

For the socio-cultural purpose, the hotel was found to promote the local culture. *“And the whole hotel is based on Newari Style which promotes the traditional Newari culture,”* said the interviewee. Additionally, the local arts were said to be used in the building to promote local art. To enable to community welfare, the enterprise also trained community homestays. This also made sure that the local tradition is promoted.

Case 2: SASANE Sisterhood Trekking and Travel

With the slogan *“Sustainable Tourism transforms lives of female trafficking survivors”*. SASANE Sisterhood Trekking and Tours aims to conduct responsible tourism by training female human trafficking survivors to work as trekking guides for the tours in the rural mountain of Nepal (SASANE, 2019). It has provided the survivors with opportunities and marketable skills with the objective to help them sustainably reintegrate into society. SASANE Sisterhood Trekking and Travel is a profit organization and subsidiary of the non-profit organization namely SASANE which helps in the rehabilitation of female victims of human trafficking, ensures their legal rights and empowers them. SASANE Sisterhood Trekking and Travel operate treks in lesser-traveled areas of Nepal involving tourists in the traditional culture and customs of the rural villages. In Kathmandu, it conducts a day tour around the popular religious heritage sites, Kathmandu’s oldest neighborhoods, and involves tourists in cooking activities informing about human trafficking in Nepal (SASANE, 2019).

The interviewee said that sustainable tourism is getting popular in Kathmandu. The informant further added *“But at the same time, it is expensive to practice the sustainable tourism. So, not many organization follow this. But yes, people are getting more aware that environmental and social problems can be solved by the business as well.”* The interviewee mentioned about the unprofessionalism in the homestays when asked about the challenges of tourism in Kathmandu. It was found that the homestays in the villages are usually lower than the standard. *“We set all the standards for them, about the food, water, bed rooms, cleaning. We explain them the guests view these things very important. We even go there to check before certain days of the tour. We want to make them stay at homestay because the earnings stay in the community, not the fancy hotel. However, the owners of such homestays do not*

take it seriously and they do not comply with all the standards taking them easily and thinking that guests would adjust". The informant from this enterprise also talked about the diminishing culture. The cultures in the remote village were said to be losing its values. "We do have vast varieties of culture and every one of them is unique. The musical instruments, scripts, dances and dresses could have been good attraction for tourists. But these are getting minor priority in the remote villages. The cultures in major cities are exposed in mass but what about the remote villages that are not so far from the capital city itself?"

It was also found from the interview that the staffs are familiar with the importance of sustainable tourism in Kathmandu. Staff training to emphasize the positive impacts was found to be a vital measure. The entire idea of the enterprise is to employ the trafficked female which is in culture of the organization and all the staffs know how important the sustainable tourism is. Apart from it, the interview said *"Some of the staffs' requirement while hiring is the knowledge about sustainable tourism. And we do pay them more just because they go in line with our activities."*

The enterprise also has organizational goals out of which is about the sustainable tourism. The goals were infact written while registering the firm. It was further noted from the interview that the other initiatives of sustainable tourism started later which was not written initially. *"The things get evolved and we become innovative to practice different sides of sustainable tourism"* said an interviewee.

Most of the action plans of the enterprise were found to come from the guidelines and policies it has. It was told that all the things to do and things not to do were clearly specified for the staffs. Such policies were also applied for the travelers. *"For example, we request them to ask for the permission to take the pictures of people if they want. The rules for dumping the trash of the tour is also specified."*

For the economic empowerment, the enterprise was found to employ the local female in its tour operating areas. Likewise, the tour operator chose homestays for providing accommodation services during the trip. The informant also said, *"We provide 30% of profit to our guides to boost their financial strength, 20% goes to the community in various forms....."* Further to this, the enterprise has provided a loan without interest to the local for operating homestay.

Likewise, this tour operator is also implementing sustainable tourism protecting the environment. The firewood is not used under its tour. It has collaborated with WWF for the

anti-poaching programs. *“In some villages that we operate our tour, we discourage the villagers activities in the river and ponds. In certain times, we also involve travelers to clean the solid waste. They happily do that.”*

The primary socio-cultural sustainability this enterprise is implementing is women empowerment of trafficked survivor females who are local to the destination. *“They have a better idea or understanding of their villages to guide the tourists. In this way, the girls are not only empowered financially but also are strong mentally to fight back the negative social norms of the villages and represent their villages in the tourism platform.”* It was found that this enterprise has also been engaging in several community welfares through tourism such as working against child marriage, gender dominance, sexual violence, encouraging travelers to conduct health camp, to teach in the local schools to educate about hygiene. Furthermore, the informant informed *“We invest in the welfare of community like school, library, organizing the events like children day, women day, anti-trafficking, water pipeline. Plus, we have built more than 200 toilets in the villages...”* It was found that the enterprise is promoting the local lifestyle through homestays and exhibiting the local traditions. *“we accommodate our guests in the homestays where the guests can see the local lifestyle, meet people there and hear their voices, eat local dishes. We involve guest in the organic farming as well. This is a great way to show the guests about the lifestyle and showing local community.”* This ensures the local culture are exposed and benefited from the tourism.

The interviewee said that the role of private enterprises is important to promote the local things here and contribute much more in the community and environment. It was also said that the newer destination shall be discovered as there are lot of things to explore in Nepal. The future plan of sustainable tourism is also about operating in the new destinations which shall be socially backward areas.

Case 3: Tiger Tops

Tiger Tops has been working in responsible tourism for the past 50 years in providing the service of wildlife sightseeing and accommodation facilities in its own lodges. With the head office centrally located in Kathmandu, it aims to transport their guests to remote and beautiful parts of Nepal to let them experience the nature. It partners with The International Trust for Nature Conservation (ITNC) to conserve the place where wildlife is threatened by human activities. For community development, it has supported 1000s children surrounding their

working communities by providing scholarships, textbooks, uniforms and staff training. It uses local products and provides employment to local people (Tiger Tops, 2018).

The interviewee said sustainable tourism is in upward trend though there is still long way to go saying *“Everyone likes the idea of sustainable tourism, everyone likes the word. It’s a buzz word in a moment. But not many people understand what it actually means. And I think there are very few companies that takes sustainable tourism seriously. There’s lot of people say sustainable tourism is important to them but actually they don’t do much about it.”*

It was said that the lack of infrastructure to support the tourism products is the challenge for the tourism in Kathmandu. Likewise, another challenge he said was about the perception toward destination *“We have an issue of perception globally of the type of tourists that come to Nepal is low-end backpackers. Whereas, there are experiences, all the product ranges for all the clients.”*

It was found that staffs knew well about the importance of sustainable tourism. The staffs were integral part of the enterprise and the turnover rate was very low. *“Our staffs understand that our model is for the long term and we are not just here for the quick money. We are investing in the environment, conservation, protecting the wildlife and most importantly we are investing in the communities where our lodges are operating in. I think our staffs understand greatly about what we are trying to do.”* said the interviewee.

“The entire concept of Tiger Tops is sustainable tourism. Our whole effort is for the conservation and community enhancement.” was the answer when the informant was asked about direction of organizational goals toward sustainable tourism.

The staff training was found as an important part of action plan to implement the sustainable tourism. Moreover, it was also answered as *“The creation of awareness among people is top strategy for us after all it is human activities that are causing all the problems in the world right now. And it us who can solve this problem.”*

This lodge is also indulged in wildlife sight-seeing. And hence, they have been working for wildlife conservation too. Tiger monitoring, crocodile breeding, partner with Vulture Restaurant (for feeding vulture) are some of its major programs. Elephant Safari is also done but walking alongside elephants, not riding them to end the elephant back safaris. *“Our product is basically wildlife. In order to sustain them over the long term, we need to*

protect them. If there are no tigers or rhinos left, we have no products and our business fails. So, we invest lot of money in protecting jungles and animals of Nepal. We have charity for breeding programs for vulture and rhinos, we feed the vulture in order to save their population, tiger monitoring programs, we do anti-poaching, we work with army and Nepal Government to protect the national parks. We also work with the community so that people understands protecting wildlife is important” The food served by the lodge is all organically farmed and grown in their own farm to make sure its operation has low environmental footprints. The lodges were also mentioned to have installed solar energy.

The local hiring is the main theme of this enterprise to maintain the economically sustainable tourism. *“We do not hire from any other region apart from the places we operate in. That means, the money earned stays in the community. Community from whole benefits from us. Someone who lives in Kathmandu takes the salary and gives it to the family and Kathmandu local economy grows from us. So, hiring is really important part of our business.”*

Similarly, for the socio-cultural aspect, this enterprise was found to be active in community enhancement. Through social charitable initiatives, it is doing community welfare programs. The informant said *“We have been providing scholarship, funds for library, textbooks to ensure that education is reached in all levels of the society. We have also Partnered with Swiss Air School to provide free education for the children from disadvantaged background.”* On top of that this enterprise was also found encouraging the local tradition and adapting local art and design in its lodges that were built by local craftsmen in local style with locally sourced materials. *“We respect, support and preserve the culture, traditions of local tribes and engages villagers in partnerships for social and economic empowerment”* said the informant.

The interviewee said it was private enterprises who should be implementing the sustainable tourism which is a niche industry. It was also further said that the public sector has bigger projects about tourism in overall and it is upto private firms to enhance the sustainability in tourism. About the future plan of the enterprise, the interviewee answered to upgrade the lodges with technologies that are in line with sustainable tourism. The answer ended with the statement *“I would like to use state of art technology in my building methods. For example, solar panel which is more efficient and lot cheaper. There are lot of heating*

and cooling system now available in the market. Air conditioning is really bad for environment. There are other ways of heating and cooling that are more sustainable way”.

Case 4: Pure Nepal

It is a Nepalese-Dutch tour operator in Kathmandu which aims to combine sustainability with every aspect of the travel and tour operating. It conducts small scale tours for the tourists and introduces them to the customs and tradition allowing the guest and local people to know each other. The tourists can take part in the festival celebrations and rituals providing richer experience for them by providing more knowledge and understanding of Nepali culture and traditions. It conducts tours without damaging or polluting the nature. Pure Nepal trains the local people for obtaining employment, ensures good working conditions for the guides and porters, organize homestays, pay appropriate wages for the staff. It is also affiliated with Diyo Nepal Foundation which works to improve the Dhading district of Nepal. In Kathmandu, it conducts tours in the heritages sites and in old neighborhoods, offers visit to original Nepalese felt atelier which provides income for the working women (Pure Nepal, 2018).

The informant from this enterprise said that the sustainable tourism is not followed widely in general. He further said many people are trying to follow it, but they have not been able to. Further, he added *“The government has also not provided proper guideline to act on it”*.

The tourism challenge is about preserving the values of trekking which is disturbed by the access of road. Addressing this challenge, the informant said *“..the easy routes have decreased the value of trekking in general. It seems like tour not trekking. The access of road has destroyed the value of trekking. It is good that the road is built from which the local can benefit from. But it should not cross the path of trekking route. The time of reaching the destination is shorter because of the road access. The sustainable tourism is about the satisfaction of travelers. I do not think tourists are satisfied with the vehicles in their trekking route”*.

The employees of this enterprise were also said to be well informed about the sustainable tourism in Kathmandu. The information is shared among them to highlight the better circumstances. It was said that the staffs are conscious about their actions go in line with sustainable practice.

Similarly, staff training was said to be the first thing for action plans to execute the sustainable tourism practice. Emphasizing about the staff, the informant said *“Ultimately, they are the one who will be implementing the concept of sustainable in our company. So that’s our strategy. We just trained them, teach them by doing and sometimes verbally as well”*.

To enhance the local economy, the enterprise was found to encourage the homestays which are operated by the local people during their trip. The interview said financial assistance is provided from the trekking packages, but it was not mentioned of what kinds.

For the environmental sustainability, the interviewee said that team bring back everything with themselves after the trip. To encourage for the responsible travel, the guests are asked not to carry any plastic bags and bottles. *“We provide them handy bags for collecting solid waste. There are no proper facilities to throw away the waste even in Kathmandu. But we make sure to remind the guests to collect their trash and dispose them afterwards.”* The guests were informed about collecting trash and dump in appropriate sites after their tour/trip. In order to reduce unnecessary consumption, a tour operator mentioned that they try to put different group of tourists in the same vehicle and provide them steel (or metal) bottle which would be reused for other travelers later. One different answer from this interview was reducing paper for the official work and using email and digital forms rather.

The cultural promotion and community enhancement are the main activities of this enterprise regarding the socio-cultural aspect. The local food is served to the travelers and the culture are exhibited under its travel package. It was found that the enterprise has initiated health camp and knowledge sharing events like women empowerment, hygiene, and education. Further to this, the informant said *“We are in close partnership with DiyoFoudnation which is basically inspired after village tourism. We work closely to enhance the community. Through this, many children have been sponsored, tailoring training for women. We uplift the youth in various training.”*

The interviewee said that the private enterprises are the implementers of the policies even though there are no proper policies from the government. It was also said that the private sectors can transform the way tourism is in a current mode. *“We can address the problem of environment and society as well in the longer term. We should be ethical toward the mother earth and the culture we have. We should not take these for granted but should appreciate these.”*

Case 5: Mandap travels/ Beyond Border Ethical Adventure

Mandap travels operate cultural theme trips and respect the principles of solidarity, ethical and environmental tourism. It encourages encounters between the tourists and the local people to share and facilitate mutual understanding and respect. They perform cultural tours in Kathmandu world heritage sites, tours to participate in festivals of Nepal (Mandap Travel, 2019). Beyond Borders is formed as a social enterprise to support the local people and develop sustainable tourism in Nepal. It partners with various organizations to support projects to run several schools, library in few districts of Nepal, help treat and rehabilitate underprivileged children with disability. They follow guidelines to improve the conditions of all their staff, guidelines for employees and tourists to minimize the negative impact of tourism. They are also a member of ECPAT's code which aims to protect children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism (Beyond Borders Nepal, 2019).

The interviewee told not many enterprising are following sustainable tourism even though the word sustainable is associated with their name. She said, "*some portray themselves as ethical or sustainable but appeared to have used this for marketing or communication tool only.*" Air and water pollution, infrastructure development and fewer destinations were mentioned as the challenges for the tourism in Kathmandu.

The staffs were informed about the importance of sustainable tourism and about the policies of the company. Training is also done to ensure the actions in the field are compatible with the sustainable tourism practice. Hence, the staffs are made aware about the sustainable tourism.

The informant said the enterprise aimed for working towards sustainable tourism by giving examples of firm's activities. The organizational goal, therefore, is directed towards sustainable tourism.

The economic empowerment of the community is done from the homestays. "*Different community run homestay in a particular area, we try to go for the community who are in need of the financial support or for indigenous community.*"

The enterprise was found to discourage the plastic usage. Furthermore, to reduce the ecological footprint, the informant said "*We encourage using organic soaps and shampoos*

easily available in Kathmandu for reducing pollutants; choose rechargeable batteries to reduce environmental impact and use environmental friendly flashlights without batteries.” Collection of own waste is another measure to ensure the environmental sustainability. The enterprise was found to following the policy of “Take nothing but photos-leave nothing but footprints.”

The enterprise was found mainly working for child welfare, especially against child sex tourism. Emphasizing its effort, the informant said “*We educate about prevention of sexual exploitation of children to all staff as well as partners. For instance, we educate our partner hotels and lodges not to allow any guest with Nepali children to check in. If some frauds or incidents are occurred or reported, the contract is terminated immediately. Information to travelers and awareness about sexual exploitation of children is provided and requests to report any suspicion.*” It also discourages volunteering when children are involved. More was said about the child welfare “*We also support HRDC (Hospital & Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children) working in treating and rehabilitate underprivileged children all over Nepal. We are member of ECPAT the code to work against child sex tourism.*” The informant also said the travelers were discouraged to donate to beggars (rather donate to needy institutions) and to take pictures without permission and encouraged not to get any sort of direct or indirect services from any restaurants or transportation with child labour. The women empowerment was also mentioned by engaging female staffs. Likewise, it supports communities in rural areas for education and poverty alleviation. The details were not given however. This tour operator also mentioned about implementation of International Porter Protection Group standard to ensure good working condition. Partnership with other international and natural organization was also found in the data collection of this enterprise.

Case 6: Dream Nepal

Dream Nepal aims to improve the quality and range of tourist activities available in Nepal. It promotes responsible tourism to conserve the environment and improve the lives of local people through tourism. It provides tours around the cultural heritages sites in Kathmandu; explore the cultural pattern of Hindu and Buddhist communities, traditions and celebrations in Kathmandu, village hike around Kathmandu (Dream Nepal, 2019).

The challenge of tourism in Kathmandu is to retain the travelers for longer days. The informant said that the newer activities and destinations in Kathmandu is unexplored and hence, it is challenging to make stay the travelers for several days.

The informant said that the employees are familiar with the importance of sustainable tourism in Kathmandu. It was found that the concept of sustainable tourism started from the beginning and that has been the culture for long. Hence employees are actually part of it. Apart from that the staffs are found to provide with training to sharp them to act on the sustainable issues.

As mentioned earlier, the sustainable tourism was part of the organization from the initial phase. Therefore, the organizational goal was found to be directed with sustainable tourism. The informant mentioned their activities in summarized form to this question “*We select most sustainable transport, trained drivers, hire local and trained guides and helpers, purchase local products and services when possible, promote homestay and community tourism, raise awareness for sustainable tourism, provide training to guides, provide information to tourist beforehand to minimize negative impact during the visit, encourage local products, discover new destination and actively consult communities for development, discourage products made from endangered animals, tourist are provided with general information about the environment, wildlife and culture of destination.*”

The staff training was yet again found to be a primary action plan to implement sustainable tourism.

The local hiring is the part of an economic sustainability for this enterprise. Similarly, promoting local vendors is another activity under its economic initiatives. Homestay is also promoted under its tour package which hence, supports the local community financially.

The cultural shows are encouraged to participate by the tour operator. This is how it is promoting the local culture apart from its cultural tour. The community is given training for the running homestays and for meeting the standards. The community participation is also another measure it undertakes to improve the positive impact of sustainable tourism. For improving the interaction of host and travelers, this tourism enterprise was found to influence the behavior of travelers saying “*.....communicate knowledge, experience, not to give anything directly to children, asking permission before taking photographs, respect the local people and community....*”

Case 7: The Explore Nepal Group

For architectural and social sustainability, the Explore Nepal Group has built heritage buildings and other projects such as Kantipur Temple House and BhojanGriha in Kathmandu. Kantipur Temple House is an eco-hotel which tries to protect the environment and cultural

heritage of Kathmandu. It uses traditional architecture and construction methods for building and maintenance, purchase local produce, use solar system, adopts no plastic philosophy, in-house waste management system, provides employment to the local people, volunteers on clean ups of heritage sites, reduce excessive energy consumption (Kantipur Temple, 2019).

BhojanGrihan is a unique heritage restaurant which offers local and organic Nepali food with traditional dance and music, sells organic farm products like fruits, vegetables, staple diets and handmade products. The building of the restaurant is renovated to its traditional architecture and design showcasing cultural and architectural heritage (BhojanGriha, 2019). The Explore Nepal offers unique and exciting adventures in Nepal while being environmentally friendly and socially responsible (Explore Nepal, 2019).

The informant said that the sustainable tourism is popular, and many companies claimed to practice it while these firms are not actually doing much about it. Hence, sustainable tourism is limited only in the name and not in action.

The challenges the interviewee mentioned about the tourism in Kathmandu was replacing old buildings with the new ones. The informant said *“lot of us seek out tourists to see the local market or local buildings. But then if you see business complex coming to replace these old heritage buildings, what’s the point of coming here. You can see complexes in any part of the world.”* It was also said that the international hotel chains are practicing unsustainable pattern of operation.

It was found that the staffs knew about the importance of sustainable tourism in Kathmandu as the all the enterprises of this group is committed towards the sustainable tourism. The informant gave few examples of their activities to present the organizational culture. And this was from where the staffs put values to the sustainable practices. *“We talk with them about our concept and train them well.....The idea is how can we can install these values in our staffs as well....Basically, we teach and keep telling our staff our main concept...”*

It was clear from the data that the organizational goals were directed toward sustainable tourism directly. All the three enterprises were formed for making positive impacts through tourism and for preserving local cultural values. In support to this, the informant answered *“Our goal is to promote local things all the time. Not just promote but also preserve. Our goal is also that we try to support the community that we are in. We have, for example, declared plastic free zone in different premises.....How we can keep tourism*

going on for the long time in Nepal while benefiting local economy, local heritage and art at the same time conserving environment. That's basically our goal..”

The building of a restaurant is 150 years old and the interviewee said that this is an example to a government to show that the old heritage shall be preserved instead of destroying for modern buildings. The renovation of old buildings to keep them functioning was told as one of the strategies not just to promote the culture but also protect it. The food served in the restaurant is authentic Nepalese cuisine. That is how, the informant said, they are placing their action plans. The interviewee also talked about their plastic free policy in their premises and other environmental measures. Basically, this group's action plans were found to be through all economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects of sustainable tourism.

The local hiring was found as its measure to deliver the economic sustainability in the community. In order to support the local vendors or industries, it was told that the purchasing is done locally. *“We use Nepalese products in our hotel as much as possible, from bedsheets to architectures we have are from the local vendors.... We also support local cottage industry buying large amount of local materials...”* It was observed from the data that this group is involved in providing training for homestay, farming and skill developments to produce prosperity in the local community.

One of the environmental measures of this group is not using plastic in any form inside the office premises. Further to highlight this, the interview gave the example of getting milk from dairy instead of buying the plastic packet milk. The water bottles are given to the travelers during the tour in so that they do not need to buy the mineral water. An interviewee mentioned that the guests were requested to use water purifying drop instead of buying several mineral water bottles during the trekking. Another thing is to protect environment is recycling and waste minimization. A hotel and a restaurant have been turning degradable waste into composte fertilizer in-house. It was found that the group works with the recycling company to recycle the paper and plastic coming out from the premises. *“We are kind of trying to be zero waste company. We recycle most of our waste. Recycling is the second step. First we reduce our waste.”* Furthermore, the hotel under this group was found to save energy as well as half of the electric source was claimed to be from solar. The informant also mentioned that neither television nor air conditioner is installed in the hotel in order to save energy. The hotel has been serving organic food not just to the guests but also to the staffs in

order to give importance of organic farming. This hotel's umbrella group has been training farmers for organic farming. It was mentioned that this group has filed a case in Supreme court to ban plastic bags in Kathmandu. Relatedly, this group is also working with youth forums to suggest the alternative for the proposed Nijgadh International Airport which planned to cut down more than 2 million trees. The informant said, *"Yes we need another international airport but at the same time we do not need to wipe out elephant corridor there. We are quite active in such issues."*

The group is also active in preserving the local heritages and culture of Kathmandu. The buildings of a hotel and a restaurant were built and decorated exhibiting local cultures and art. The interviewee said *"By actually renovating these old building, this is our strategy to showcase that tourism is actually keeping old things alive. In Kantipur temple House also, all the buildings are woodwork."* The restaurant has been showcasing the cultural dances in its premise and the hotel host a famous musical festival called Jazzmandu every year in order to deliver the enriched cultural presentation. Talking about the musical festival, the informant said *"The fusion of Nepalese and foreign music creates great atmosphere to deliver cultural insights....The entire atmosphere is about promoting local cultures."* For the community benefit, it was said that they have been conducting community capacity building, train youth to perceive tourism in a different way. However, the specific details were not given.

The interviewee told that the private enterprises have the bigger roles to implement the government plans. The success of what kind of tourism the government want to promote depends on the implementation from the private tourism enterprises. About the future plans, the informant informed that they are planning to create more jobs through tourism. Likewise, they would like to attract the tourists that are more responsible though they are in less number than the tourist that are not responsible even though they might be many in numbers.

Key findings from all the cases

Most of them illustrated the situation of their own field regarding the challenges of tourism in Kathmandu. While it is obvious to talk about the challenges that they particularly are facing or they are familiar with, few answered this question in general. They put sustainable tourism, rightly, not as a solution but more as a practice that can ease the situation. However, they also answered sustainable tourism is popular among people but not many of them know about it and they follow regardless. They answered in a way that many are trying to follow it but not in the right path. To the question about employees' awareness or knowledge about

sustainable tourism, interviewees were affirmative, and they said their staffs knew well about sustainable tourism. By the means of capacity building like staff training and information sharing, the staffs were made aware about sustainable tourism (or what they are trying to do). From the work enterprises are doing, staffs could observe or be a part too to know about the importance of sustainable tourism. The staffs were found to be a vital part as an action plan for practicing sustainable tourism. They were given more priority for the strategy to execute sustainable tourism in their organizations. Through staff training and guideline, the enterprises are conveying what they meant to do. Every one of them answered what they have been doing different things to interpret their action plans. Basically, the action plans were found in many arrangements that would lead to the sustainable practice of tourism.

For the product and services the enterprises sell, the interviewees from accommodation business said that their buildings are environment-friendly that produce very less negative impacts and are a representation of local culture and art. Likewise, in case of tour operators, homestays for the accommodation as a part of their services was found in all the cases. To influence the behavior of travelers toward sustainable tourism, the enterprises were found to discourage plastic usage in every case. In the same way, dumping trash properly was also given a strong focus. The guests or travelers were encouraged in numerous ways that align with the essence of sustainable tourism. The enterprises were found to be involved in practicing sustainable tourism in many ways and in several agendas in Kathmandu. Some of the things were followed by all the enterprises. Local hiring, homestays, forbidding plastics, economic employment of local (or disadvantaged), partnership with other organizations to address social issues were some uniform activities under sustainable tourism practiced by the enterprises. It was also further found from the data collection that the community enhancement was another big part of their sustainable tourism practice. Local employment was done in order to empower the community economically.

When asked the interviewees about the role of private tourism enterprises for sustainable tourism, every one of them answered that the private enterprises have crucial roles. They responded by saying that a lot has to be done and can be done too to make tourism sustainable in Kathmandu. Everyone should realize the responsibilities and strive for more than economic purpose as the impacts of tourism is not going in a proper direction of sustainability. All answered by giving examples of what could be done more. Few answered that private enterprises are the implementers of sustainable policies and they can make tourism in Kathmandu achieve sustainability. The potential of private tourism enterprises was

described basically. Few answered about integrating with the government which is a must to make long-run impact.

The tourism enterprises in Kathmandu, therefore, has practiced sustainable tourism in many different and as well as common ways too. The adherence to the principle of sustainable tourism as discussed in section 2 can be found in the data collection of this study. The sustainable tourism in Kathmandu is practiced in all aspects of sustainability by the private tourism enterprises

4.3. Analysis

Before the data collection, several enterprises were found mentioning sustainable tourism but actually, they were not following any practices. Some of them were approached by visiting their websites where they mentioned about sustainable tourism but while taking interviews, it was discovered that they actually have not been practicing sustainable tourism. Hence, those interviews were dropped. From this, it could be the case that sustainable tourism is being used as propaganda to attract more tourists while it is expensive to actually involve in sustainable tourism.

Within case

Case 1: Traditional Comfort

It could be argued that the informant knew the concept about sustainable tourism and answered based on the current situation in Kathmandu. The informant gave the perspectives from a hotelier and limit to sustainable tourism in the hotel. About the challenge of tourism too, the informant talked about the hotel business and gave the view that sustainable tourism could give a competitive advantage for gaining the market share during offseason. It could be argued that sustainable tourism is in the organizational culture of this enterprise and the staffs are tentatively easier to teach about sustainable practices. Usually, the staffs are many in number in a hotel whereas it has got a separate department for sustainability issues. It is assumed that the staffs are well concern about sustainability as they get outsourced training too for acting more on sustainable issues, mainly recycling. While the separate department has impact on the sustainable culture somehow, things are carried out in other departments too which is also a form of information sharing.

As the hotel was established to promote the traditional culture of Kathmandu, it was also obvious that the enterprise's goal was relatable to sustainable tourism.

It can be argued that the enterprise has been empowering the local economically from its sustainable practices. Particularly, homestays should have been its competitors but, yet it has been developing homestays communities so that the community also gains. It was obvious to buy handicrafts from the locals because the decoration for Newari cultural is the local things.

The practice to sell plastic bottled mineral water in high price and using metal straws is a great way to discourage the products against sustainability. This, in the same way, also influences or encourages the traveler to act towards sustainable tourism. Even though the partnership with the UN to measure carbon emission seems expensive, assurance to practice environmental sustainability is strong. The enterprise has also addressed the energy crisis using solar energy for lightening purposes. For recycling purposes, separate trash for plastic, paper and degradable waste are arranged. However, it was told that the degradable waste are not processed further because of not any in-house or outsourced resources. If so, what the hotel has been doing to minimize such waste is another issue.

As the entire premise of the hotel is designed and decorated with the theme of reflecting the Newari culture, this fits well in the sustainable approach. However, it was not clear from the findings if the hotel was doing something more to promote the culture. There is no argument that the structure of the hotel is promoting the art itself, but something more than physical structure could also be the part like the food it serves, dresses the staffs wear, or cultural shows.

Case 2: SASANESisterhood Trekking and Travel

The informant rightly said that there is awareness in the general people that the business should be the part of a solution for the environmental and social problem and it is indeed expensive to practice sustainable tourism. This could be one of the reasons that sustainable tourism is not widespread though it brings lot of good things.

The informant said that there is less professionalism in the services of homestays in the remote village and the diminishing culture about the challenge of tourism. There are lot of cultures getting lost especially in remote areas. The language, musical instrument, dress etc are not seen at all in other parts of Nepal too. Even in Kathmandu, such things are observed. This is truly challenging for tourism too as Nepal has been promoting its tourism as cultural destination and at the same time, it is facing a challenge of deteriorating cultures.

It is understandable that all the staffs might not be familiar with the importance of sustainable tourism. However, the enterprise made sure to underline the importance through staff training.

The capacity building like information sharing or guidelines were significant in the action plan of its case.

One of the unique findings was that the fair distribution was observed in this case which makes comprehensive sustainable tourism practices. It is strongly argued that the enterprise has been empowering women financially who are from the remote villages that were once trafficked. The consequence of such empowerment is to fight back their past and set an example in a society.

Though this enterprise did not mention much about its environmental measures, one of the noteworthy things is not using firewood. The remote villages still use the firewood for household purposes as fossil fuel, let alone renewable sources, is not accessible easily.

Women empowerment is the most significant activity as the whole agenda of this enterprise is about empowering trafficked women survivors. Its tourism business has rightly addressed the sustainability of society that rejuvenates social issues too. It can be argued that this tourism enterprise is inspired by the notion of giving to the community with the activities that have been contributing in social build-ups like building toilets, school, library, water pipeline etc. This shows that the enterprise is meant to transform its benefits to the communities they are working in. The promotion of local culture is also made sure through homestays.

Nevertheless, the partnership of this enterprise does not apply strongly to relate with sustainable tourism practice as it collaborates with foreign companies and universities which can be said to accelerate the promotion of sustainable tourism rather than practicing.

Case 3: Tiger Tops

It is under the presumption that sustainable tourism in Kathmandu is popular in words only according to the informant from this enterprise. The sustainability sounds good to everyone but when it comes to applying it in the practice, not many firms are following it. One of the challenges given by the informant was the perception of Nepal as a destination for low-end tourist. The facts that the Government of Nepal trying to attract many tourists however the

revenue from tourism has not increased in ratio to the increase in number of tourists supports the informant's answer.

As the staff turnover rate is very low in this enterprise (the average tenure is of 15 years), the staffs are certainly an integral part of the organizational culture to implement the sustainable tourism practice. It is easier to implement the approaches with such staff that are a part of a firm for very long and sustainable tourism is presumed to be intact in this enterprise. Likewise, it is also assumed that staff is given more importance to implement sustainable tourism practices as staff was emphasized more in an interview.

This enterprise offers wildlife sightseeing and the activities, to preserve the animals and to work against poaching were observed, which is in-line with the theme of sustainable tourism since wildlife conservation is vital for its business and it proves that this enterprise was not doing the business for quick money and not taking the wildlife for granted. Organic farming in order to serve food to the guest also amplifies this argument as such environment-friendly farming compared to outsourcing is more expensive.

Since the business is an accommodation service, it is reasonable that its buildings reflect sustainability (exposing the local design and art in this case). After all its building shall be towards sustainable tourism and not just its actions. The enterprise has also undertaken several socio-cultural aspects unrelated to its business, it is strongly argued that the enterprise is giving back to the community for betterment. Likewise, the partnership or collaboration of this enterprise is significant for the implementation of sustainable tourism because this enterprise is doing most of its sustainable tourism practices through collaboration with other organizations. It explains that collaboration is also a firm way to practice sustainable tourism. Apparently, it is also engaged in other initiations of their own that aligns properly with sustainable tourism like local hiring, waste reduction, economic empowerment.

Case 4: Pure Nepal

The view on the sustainable tourism trend in Kathmandu provided by the informant of this case also strengthens the former views that sustainable tourism is not widely followed. The lack of government guidelines could also be the reason for this. The challenge provided by the informant portrays the condition in the trekking routes which is indeed degrading the quality of trekking. This informant rightly said about the satisfaction of travelers as a part of sustainable tourism. Most of the time, the satisfaction of visitors is neglected to notice.

Hence, it can be argued that while building tourism infrastructure, the satisfaction of travelers shall also be taken into consideration.

This enterprise is a tour operator and generally, such enterprises have fewer staff. Hence, it is relatively easier to teach small numbers about sustainable tourism practice. The staff training can also easily be conducted for capacity building to influence sustainable behavior. Nevertheless, the importance given to the staff suggests that staffs are an important features for implementing sustainable tourism.

It is also noticeable that this enterprise has economic contribution through arranging homestay since this one is tactically easier to arrange and equally contributing to the community.

Under the environmental aspect, it can be argued that the enterprise is following the policy of no ecological footprint. Using less paper in the office is found only in this interview. Though this is a small detail, the thing like this influences the behavior of staff to practice sustainable tourism in a larger frame too. One very interesting data in this interview was related to unsustainable consumption. None of the other interviewees mentioned the sustainable way of production/ consumption. The tour operator arranges the transportation of a different group of tourists in the same vehicle in order to ensure optimal use of resources. This tour operator is also argued to have the notion of giving back to the community as it has done several social works that are not relatable to its business. The collaboration with another organization has paved the way for this enterprise to act more on the social issues thus, making firm argument that collaboration is a different path to follow sustainable tourism.

Case 5: Mandap Travels/ Beyond Border Ethical Adventure

The answers from the informant from this case also exemplifies the situation of sustainable tourism not being implemented by many tourism enterprises.

Staff training is in the spotlight for the action plans of this enterprise. It can be argued that homestays and local hiring are its major techniques to impact positively in the economic side of sustainable tourism.

The path of practicing sustainable tourism for this tour operator is through the prevention of violation of child rights – be it sexual violence or deprivation from education. The basic but necessary part for improving sustainable tourism is an interaction with travelers and host communities. This tour operator discourages traveler to donate money to beggars (as they could be from the organized business) and children in the street of Kathmandu. Another

interaction improvement is that this enterprise discourages taking photographs of people without permission such that some could find it extremely offensive. Although these things do not rightly fit into the socio-cultural aspect, these are important elements that are found to improve the impact of sustainable tourism. The enterprise has also acknowledged the proper working condition for its porter following the international standard.

Case 6: Dream Nepal

The tourists in Kathmandu spend fewer days in general and headout for another destination. This enterprise is making its effort to find new activities to make tourists spend more days in Kathmandu and that is what the challenge for tourism in Kathmandu is. While most of the things are the same as others for its economic sustainability, the new thing this enterprise was found to give training for running homestays. It is assumed that such knowledge transfer largely benefits the community as these enterprises are familiar with the standards of accommodation services. The interaction between hosts and travelers is also an important factor for the smooth flow of sustainable tourism. That is what this enterprise has conceded by influencing the behavior or action of travelers in the community. Sustainable tourism is also about keeping tourism for a longer time. For this, newer activities or destination improvements are constantly required. Hence, it is assumed that this enterprise has understood this and been working out for this. However, the things that have been done were not mentioned in an interview. As mentioned in the introduction part of section 1, there are potentials in Kathmandu for innovative tourism products.

Case 7: The Explore Nepal Group

The informant who is also a sustainability manager of the group companies' views on sustainable tourism trends in Kathmandu is nothing less than ones that were discussed in other cases. It depicts the situation that sustainable tourism in Kathmandu is yet to be developed in the practice of the enterprises. The challenge mentioned by the informant also represents the unfortunate situation of heritages in Kathmandu. The old buildings and heritages are not renovated timely for the purpose of preserving. It can be observed that the heritages in Kathmandu are deteriorating and as a consequence, they are losing the value as forgotten heritages.

The importance of sustainable tourism is intensely spread among the staffs which in return has helped the enterprise to fulfill its sustainable goals. The organizational goal is mostly circled around the preservation of heritages in Kathmandu while minimizing the

negative impacts in the environment. The operation of a restaurant in 150 years old building is truly a remarkable example of an avenue that can proclaim the importance of preserving old heritages. There are numerous old buildings in Kathmandu valley which are suited for tourism attraction. As an economic entity, this group has committed itself to perform the economic responsibilities by hiring local and buying from local vendors. Though the group has its own boutique hotel, it has been training the community for the homestay which is more result-oriented to impact them economically.

One of the interesting things about the finding from this case was providing an alternative to plastic bottled mineral water. Thus, this is an example that to discourage something or some action, there shall be an alternative to switch. It is not justifiable to ask travelers not to use plastic bottles unless there is something they can switch to. Waste minimization is also a strong theme of this group which is indeed much urgent issue in Kathmandu, especially from hotels and restaurants.

This hotel under this group has also addressed somehow to the energy crisis in Nepal by not installing TV and AC in the hotel and by sourcing half of the electric energy from solar.

It cannot be strongly argued that the restaurant's theme of serving Nepalese food in the traditional buildings is promoting the culture that fits the sustainable approach. Nonetheless, other details of restaurants fill the gap to represent the culture that supports sustainable tourism. As sustainable tourism is costly to implement, the group has also been engaged in expensive pursuits such as organic farming and in-house compost facilities. Lobbying with the government also clarifies the intention of this group to enable sustainable tourism in Kathmandu.

Cross Case analysis

As every interviewee from the enterprises mentioned about sustainable tourism in their brief introduction, it is understood that sustainable tourism is an integral part of the organization. It could also be the case that they talked about sustainable tourism because they were approached for studying their sustainable tourism practices. It was indeed true that sustainable tourism is getting popular in Kathmandu. There has been hype for it but not many enterprises are following this. This scenario is clearly observed in all the interviews when they were asked about the general trend of sustainable tourism in Kathmandu. However, it

should also be the scenario of appreciation that the notion of sustainable tourism has started to spread in Kathmandu and the tourism enterprises have started to adopt it.

While it is obvious that not all employees are well-familiar with sustainable tourism from before, enterprises have made staffs know about the importance of sustainable tourism in Kathmandu. The capacity building such as staff training, or information sharing can be observed in all the interviews. This highlights the situation that even though the employees do not know about the importance of sustainable tourism, the firms made sure to convey it which is an effective way to practice sustainable tourism in the first place. Apart from capacity building, other actions were also mentioned which means that the staff is taught or informed about the importance of sustainable tourism from practicing. It means that the organizational culture of the tourism enterprises is also informing the staff well about the importance of sustainable tourism in Kathmandu.

This is even supported by the findings that the staffs were prioritized for the action plan to practice sustainable tourism. The staff training or information sharing was seen in all the interviews. It can be assumed that the staffs are emphasized because it is they who after all implement the policies and guidelines of the firm. Hence, the strategy to practice sustainable tourism shall start with educating staff. Staffs were taken as a strong mechanism to lay down the foundation of sustainable tourism in the organizational culture. Furthermore, the environmental measures such as not using firewood, not using plastic, using separate trash, leaving no footprints were observed in different interviews. Local hiring was mentioned in almost all the interviews. Community enhancement activities were also observed in different interviews which clarify that enterprises are also adapting to strategies of working for socio-cultural aspects for sustainable tourism practices. Surprisingly, few interviewees did not mention the primary action plan of their enterprises which is close to their identity. Wildlife conservation for example in case 3, cultural promotion in case 1, empowerment of trafficked female in case 2, child welfare in case 5, should have been the chief action plan for them. Nevertheless, it is assumed that such things were not mentioned as these were already informed in the previous questions in different forms, so it was not necessary from their perspective, to repeat again instead they went to answer other action plans. All the enterprises' goals were directed towards sustainable tourism. The case 4 was somehow different as the interviewee said there was no written form about sustainability in their organizational goal. It can be argued they have adopted sustainable tourism practices

later during the course of operation. Nevertheless, it can be said that through tourism, enterprises' goals are to work for sustainability in tourism.

When enterprises offer their product services, it is equally important that such offerings should carry the theme of sustainable tourism. From the findings, it can be argued that enterprises are offering various sustainable services to their guests. The accommodation business like case 1, 3, and 7 claimed their buildings represent the local culture and arts. On top of that, solar energy was said to have installed. While it might not be the strong argument that the building built in the local style is relatable to sustainable tourism; however, it certainly promotes the local culture among their guests. Additionally, it could also not be argued strongly that energy-saving techniques are executed in these accommodation facilities. However, case 7 has an energy-saving method. More energy saving methods are necessary in Kathmandu where the energy crisis has been continuing for over a decade. The degradable wastages are also largely produced from hotels and lodges. Likewise, the cleaning chemicals are also consumed by such business. But, the interviewees did not mention transforming waste into compost fertilizer (except case 7) or using green products of cleaning. The practice of using separate trash was mentioned in case 1 but the connection could not be drawn if the degradable waste are processes further.

The product for tour operators is the tour package. Encouragement of homestays was found in all interviews except case 3. Homestay is a great way to enhance the community by engaging locals in economic activities. These enterprises are encouraging or more like including homestay (by tour operators) in their package as said by them, in order to help communities to raise economic conditions. It is assumed that this leads to the occurrence of other cultural aspects like local food, local culture, local lifestyle. When the tourist stays in homestay, the local lifestyle, food, culture are exposed, and the consequence of which is the promotion of local culture. Homestays are always not guaranteed that they are run by the local people. It could also be the case that these are a professional business group. Thus, financial leakage takes place. However, it is assumed that the enterprises in this study have considered such things.

Sharing consumption is a remarkable thing to practice especially in Kathmandu where mass production and consumption prevail. Such a consumption pattern was mentioned only in case 4 by making travelers share a same vehicle. This should be encouraged more. Nonetheless, no one talked about the standard of their vehicles. The air pollution is

tremendously high and such measurement can augment an initiation to care about air pollution in Kathmandu.

The interviewees did not talk about the mutual participation of private tourism enterprises to work together to develop the culture of sustainable tourism in Kathmandu when asked about the role of tourism enterprises. Alternatively, the enterprises with good knowledge and enough resources could work with other firms to spread the notion of sustainable tourism. The organization of capacity building program like workshops, seminars are great way to deliver the awareness and importance of sustainable tourism among private tourism enterprises. It was not asked in an interview about the challenges of implementing sustainable tourism though it would have been useful data. However, the challenges could be discussed among private tourism enterprises and work together to achieve sustainable tourism. There shall be co-operation rather than competition after all this transformation is one of the essences of ecological economics. The tourism enterprises with enough resources shall take the initiation to bring together the private tourism enterprises to implement sustainable tourism in Kathmandu.

The answer about the future plan was also found to deliver more for sustainable tourism like discovering new destinations and installing newer technology to be more environment friendly. However, other answers were more like the extended version of the current practices. It is understandable that the plans might not be readily available or newer plans are not necessarily developed all the time. It was expected something more especially because of the tourism year, Visit Nepal 2020 starting from the first month of 2020.

As the enterprises were found to involve in practicing sustainable tourism through different measures, it was also, at the same time, found that they have been engaging in development work such as charity, free education, health camp, donation, farmer training, building toilets and so on. Some might argue that such activities are more like a part of CSR rather than sustainable tourism. If any business has been making donation out of its profit, can it be regarded as engagement in sustainable development? Nevertheless, the tourism enterprises have been found in practicing sustainable tourism as in the literature review which is compared and contrast in the next section.

The different attempts of different tourism enterprises in various ways can be argued as the execution of sustainable tourism in Kathmandu. The enterprises with their own

essence, as discussed above, are implementing the sustainable tourism principles in all three aspects.

Discussion with Previous Studies

Some of the answers in the interviews also talked directly and indirectly about the negative consequences of tourism in Kathmandu which is similar in few ways as Lacy et al. (2002) have given examples such as degradation of heritages, destruction of wildlife habitat, loss of scenic beauty.

The arguments from Chen (2014) and Atlinay et al. (2016) about tourism enterprises not adapting sustainable tourism widely and not considering the aspects of sustainability are supported from the uniform answer given by all the interviewees about the general trend of sustainable tourism in Kathmandu. This situation is similar to the one reasoned by Niedziółka (2014).

The emphasizes for the role of private tourism enterprises were also highlighted in the literature of Rangel (2000), Eja et al. (2011), Solvoll et al. (2015), Zhang and Zhang (2018), Dredge (2006), Lacy et al. (2002) and Aquino et al. (2018).

It was also found that the enterprises' organizational goals were integrated with sustainable tourism as suggested by Tapper (2002). Few of them also have the policies written about sustainable tourism and sustainability practices are a vital part of their organizational goal as observed by Lacy et al. (2002). Few of the enterprises were certified by TravelLife in such a manner.

As capacity building for staff was found vital for the acceleration of sustainable tourism implementation, it is also included in the figure. Though there are some other supporting factors for the implementation of sustainable tourism, capacity building for staff was found indelible.

As Killipirsa and Zardawa (2012) and Zhang and Zhang (2018) have described the importance of staff training, the tourism enterprises in Kathmandu were found placing priority for the staff training to educate employees about their intention. Every enterprise mentioned about staff training as a part of working for sustainable tourism.

The six challenges given by Pan et al. (2018) for sustainable tourism could also be applied as challenges for tourism enterprises to implement sustainable tourism in Kathmandu.

Moreover, it could be observed from the primary data that there are other challenges to overcome for implementing sustainable tourism for sustainable tourism. The challenges for practicing sustainable tourism was not asked in the interview. It could have provided useful data for this study.

Hoogerwaard and Rossi (2002) have pointed out about having balance between minimizing ecological impacts, maximizing economic benefits and achieving socially and culturally responsible tourism. The tourism enterprises in Kathmandu is argued to have fulfilled this balance. Likewise, as Yüzbaşıoğlu et al. (2014) stated, the tourism enterprises have also been offering environmental friendly products and culturally respected services. Only few of the practices as presented by Yüzbaşıoğlu et al.(2014) in the case of Calista Luxury Resort are similar to the cases studied in this thesis. It is understood that the those are only the examples of resort and no resort was studied in this study; the examples could be different for implementing sustainable tourism.

Specifically, Musavengane and Steyn (2013) discuss the practice of hotels and argue that hotels are a big consumer of water and a big producer of garbage. Though it was found in this study that hotels were managing their garbage for the recycling process, it was not found about water-saving techniques although Kathmandu faces acute shortage of water. The conclusion of Musavengane (2019) about waste management as a crucial element for implementing sustainable tourism was also found in one case of this study as a practice of sustainable tourism. The findings from this study could not support much to the discussion of Becken et al. (2003), Nepal (2008) and Tseng et al. (2018) about energy saving due to sustainable tourism. The tourism enterprises in this study did not inform much about reducing energy usage, especially fossil fuels. The use of fossil fuels for vehicles and cooking still prevails in Kathmandu. Even electricity (which is not as harmful as fossil fuel) is not used widely for cooking purposes. The hotels in this study did not mention about such practice. However, it was found about recycling, reduced waste and welfare of the local community in this study as Tseng et al. (2018) discussed.

The findings of Font et al. (2016) and this study are similar in ways like the enterprises in both studies were found supporting local community development, promoting gender equality, and protecting culture, encouraging to purchase and consume local products and choosing local staff in every possible way. The tourism enterprises in Kathmandu have

enabled local community to represent its culture, and character in many terms as Lacy et al. (2002) have mentioned.

The importance of sustainable tourism given by Niedziółka (2014) have been brought into the implementation by tourism enterprises in Kathmandu through sustainable tourism practice. To name some of them are economic profitability, local prosperity, employment opportunity and social equity under economic aspect; physical integrity (of natural resources), biological conservation, effective waste management, and clean and healthy environment under environmental aspect; welfare of community, cultural wealth preservation, and meeting needs of tourists under socio-cultural aspect. For the description of these importance, see Appendix 8.

Moreover, the overall findings from this study can also be argued as supporting data for the recommendations that Allis (2008) has listed down to integrate sustainability with tourism based on 12 principles of sustainable tourism developed by UNEP. Out of those 12 principles, one principle which is local control was not found. Nonetheless, it can also firmly be argued that the private tourism enterprises in Kathmandu have implemented sustainable tourism in those mentioned 11 ways.

It is argued that the work in general carried out by the private tourism enterprises in Kathmandu in regard to sustainable tourism matches the description given by Allis (2008) about the three pillars of sustainable tourism. Based on the three pillars, the figure by Kruk et al. (2007) about the framework of sustainable tourism could be modified from the findings of this study. This figure is given as below.

15 percent of total tourists in Nepal, as mentioned in the second paragraph of section 1, visited for pilgrim yet no interviewee informed anything about the responsible behavior in the religious sites. It was also not mentioned about the practice of measures to prevent the cultural erode that Upadhayaya and Sharma (2010) argued about the negative impacts of tourism in Nepal.

There were several practices found during the literature review for practicing sustainable tourism by private tourism enterprises. However, it was not found about enterprises directly addressing social issues like child welfare, free education, building school and library etc. as found in this study. It is true that sustainable tourism brings social prosperity but the private enterprises involving in such social agendas were not found in the literature review. Likewise, the homestays to enhance the economic prosperity of the local

community were also not found in the previous studies. This was found in every case of this study. Hence, these findings are the different ones which could be argued as a contribution of this study.

The sustainable development goals (SDG) are also found to be fulfilled through the implementation of sustainable tourism practices by private tourism enterprises in Kathmandu. Some of the goals are not met through the findings of this study. Through their tourism business, the enterprises in Kathmandu have applied several sustainable practices that are alike to what sustainable development goals attempt to yield. The degree of fulfillment is another context that needs to be evaluated separately. It could also be argued that the goals are not fully met in all the components. What is to be understood is that such goals are concluded to be met by the private tourism enterprises which are a small part of the tourism sector. These sustainable development goals are in the broader frame which needs input from multi sectors. Some of the findings of this study are beyond sustainable development goals too. The findings like child welfare, interaction improvement between host and guest, heritage protection are outside the sustainability. Nevertheless, these are equally important for the sustainability of the tourism industry. Hence, the following figure is developed as a modification of *Figure 1*.

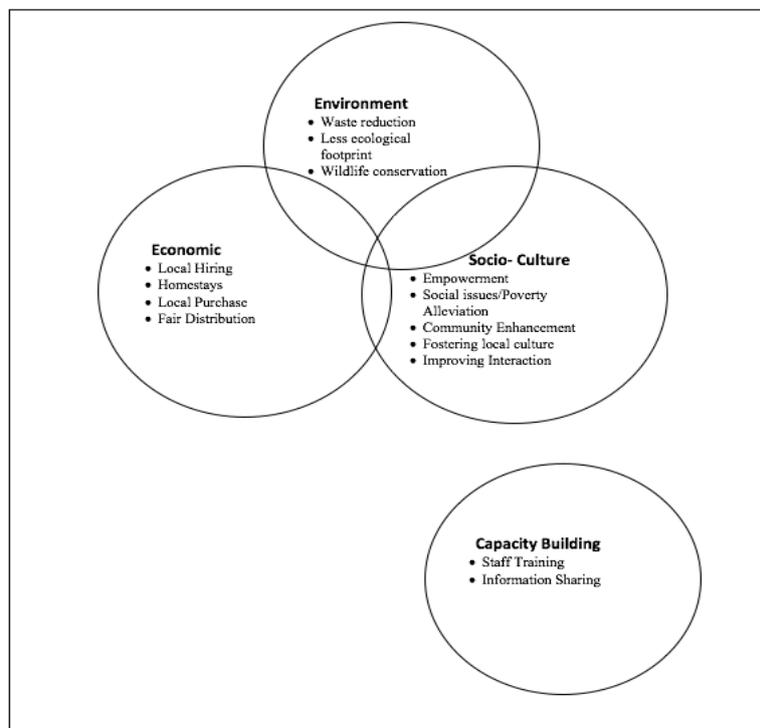


Figure 5: The interconnected and supporting framework for sustainable tourism (developed by the authors)

The figure illustrates the findings from the study of private tourism enterprises implementing sustainable tourism. The different elements are placed in the category of environment, economic and socio-culture which based on the three pillars of sustainability. As can be seen, these three aspects are interconnected with one another and they overlap with one another. Another aspect which is presented separately in the figure is Capacity Building which is taken as the supporting aspects for the three aspects of sustainability. It was found from the findings that staff training and information sharing among staff enable the sustainable practice to take place.

5. Conclusion

The findings and the analysis of this study illustrate the phenomena of private tourism enterprises implementing sustainable tourism in Kathmandu. As found in this study, the practice of sustainable tourism has not landed properly due to which tourism growth has the potential to mark the negative consequences in Kathmandu. To avoid unfavorable situations and to stimulate beneficial circumstances, private tourism enterprises have a significant role to implement sustainable tourism. It was found private tourism enterprises in Kathmandu have implemented sustainable tourism from the three aspects of sustainability.

Private tourism enterprises in Kathmandu have made several efforts to conserve the environment, to reduce the wastage, to leave no ecological footprints, to preserve the wildlife through their tourism business. Likewise, to implement sustainable tourism, the different cases outline the activities of private tourism enterprises in Kathmandu on addressing social issues, women empowerment, gender diversity, community welfare, child welfare, promoting culture and preserving heritages and charitable initiations. From the economic aspect, private tourism enterprises in Kathmandu have been hiring locally, encouraging homestays, purchasing locally, distributing economic welfare fairly in order to supply economic prosperities.

The research question of this study is answered from the different cases presented and discussed. The course of actions in the different cases presented and discussed, serve as answers to the research question of this study. However, it is suggested not to generalize the conclusion of this study for every private tourism enterprises in Kathmandu that they implement sustainable tourism. The conclusion is drawn only from the cases studied in this thesis.

Limitation of Study

The major limitation of this study is the narrow selection of private tourism enterprises in Kathmandu. The study collected data from travel and tour operators, hotels, restaurants and a lodge. There are other tourism enterprises like rock climbing company, sight-seeing company, homestays meeting the criteria of this study. This could have added more data on the implementation of sustainable tourism. Likewise, the study was not based on any particular theory or principles of sustainable tourism. Although it intends to find out how sustainable tourism is implemented, some can argue that sustainable tourism is not any strategy or method to implement; rather it is an end goal.

The limited access to the related data is another limitation of this study. The previous studies in this subject was not found adequately in case of Kathmandu or Nepal. The tourism enterprises working for the sustainable tourism in Kathmandu were also found in the limited numbers. Hence, there was not many options for the data collection. Another limitation of this study is that the resources of the private tourism enterprises to implement sustainable tourism were not considered. It could be the case that a certain enterprise with ample financial and human resource are capable of adapting alternative approach to implement sustainable tourism. Thus, the resources of the enterprises also have crucial role which is not studied in this thesis.

Implication of Study

The study is useful for tourism enterprises to understand the ways of implementing sustainable tourism through their business. The tourism enterprises can look at the aspects of sustainable tourism that they can adhere to according to their resources to adapt the sustainable tourism. The knowledge of tourism enterprises could also broaden up regarding the practice of sustainable tourism from the inference of this study.

As tourism year, Visit Nepal 2020, is about to begin, the inflow of the tourists is expected to increase. The negative impacts of tourism are equally possible to take place in Nepal. The public sector in Nepal can also come along with relevant guidelines to encourage private (not only tourism) enterprises to act on sustainable tourism from the reference of this study. The areas through which sustainable tourism can shape up with better results and the areas in which tourism footprints can be reduced could be examined from both the public and private sectors. Most importantly, this study helps the private sectors to assess how the tourism industry could impact the environment, economic and socio-culture positively. The findings of this research can serve as examples for private sectors that their business could also be part of sustainable development. Overall, the implication of this study is that it features the role of private tourism enterprises to make the tourism industry economically viable for long run without disrupting the environment and socio-culture.

Further Research

This study is useful for further study regarding the elements of sustainability of *Figure 2*. It is suggested to conduct quantitative research to test the relationship between private tourism enterprises and sustainable aspects taking the elements of *Figure 2*.

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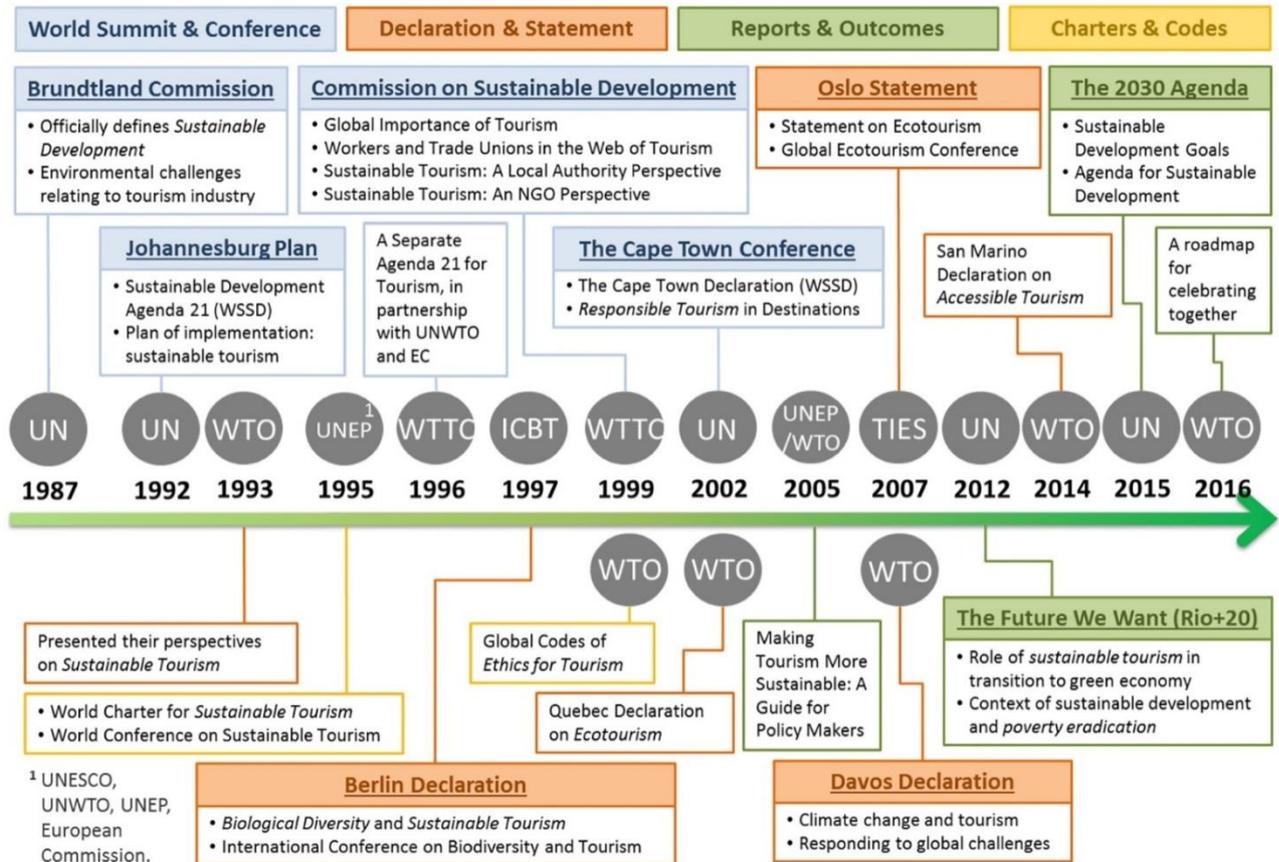
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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Roadmap of Connecting Tourism with Sustainable Development



(Source: Pan et al., 2018, pp 454)

Appendix 2: Importance of Sustainable Tourism

Aspect	Importance	Description
Economic	Economic Profitability	Sustainable tourism increases the competitiveness of the destination. Tourists are highly fascinated by the effective management and monitoring of resources involved in tourism. Sustainable tourism ensures long term feasibility of economic activities.
	Local prosperity	It maximizes the economic benefit to the local community. With the increase in the flow of tourist, their expenditure in the area also increases. People can learn various skills such as guide, hotel management, etc which increases their ability to earn income for themselves.
	Employment opportunity	Sustainable tourism can create quality and quantity of jobs of the local community. The local people can learn various skills facilitating high wage, good working environment and employment without discrimination.
	Social equity	Fair distribution of tourism socio-economic benefit is one of the major aim of sustainable tourism.
Environmental importance	Physical integrity	Sustainable tourism helps in maintain the quality of resources. It prevents natural resources from degrading their quality and prevents from ecological pollution.
	Biological conservation	Effective measures to manage and protect the environment, biodiversity and their habitat provide a suitable environment for the wildlife. It also aims to minimize the negative impacts on the biodiversity. The local communities are made aware about the protection of the wildlife and their habitat and to manage and monitor the wildlife.
	Effective waste management	With the overflow of tourism, management of waste in the destination becomes difficult. Sustainable tourism provides awareness through waste management programs. Various rules and policies are implemented for controlling the waste. It minimizes the use of rare and non-renewable resources for the development of tourism in the destination.
	Clean and healthy environment	Reduction of waste production by tourists, minimizing pollution helps to clean the environment clean and provides feasible habitat for animals and plants to grow.
Socio-cultural importance	Welfare of the community	With the increase in the flow of tourism increases the economic growth. It then leads to development of

Aspect	Importance	Description
		<p>infrastructure such as transportation, communication, etc. It reduces environmental pressure, social corruption which eventually increases the welfare of the community. For the development of tourism, the local community must have the access and control over the resources.</p>
	Cultural wealth preservation	<p>Sustainable tourism focuses on preserving the culture heritage, customs, local culture, cuisine for which the destination is popular for. It contributes to preserve the identity of the culture, values of the community.</p>
	Local control to the community	<p>The access and control of resources should be held by the community. The local community must have the authority for planning and decision making regarding tourism.</p>
	Meeting needs of tourists	<p>Tourists expect their travel to be memorable and exciting. Sustainable tourism provides safe and enjoyable experience of travelling and staying in a area where there is balance between resources and human activities.</p>

Appendix 3: Sustainable Tourism in Development Plan of Nepal

S.N.	Periodic Plan	Sustainable tourism in periodic plan	Source
1	First five-year plan 1956–61	Development of tourism Formation of Nepal Tourism Board	(Agarwal & Upadhyay, 2006)
2	Second three-year plan 1962-1965	Development of infrastructures like hotels and airports, vision of diversifying the tourism products	(Adhikari, 2011)
3	Third Five year Plan 1965–1970	Reconstruction and maintenance of temples, art, architecture and places in Kathmandu and Lumbini	(Agarwal & Upadhyay, 2006).
4	Fourth Five Year Plan 1970-1975	Formation of tourism master plan Develop qualitative tourism, develop Nepal as a distinct tourist center	(Adhikari, 2011)
5	Fifth Five Year Plan 1975-1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish basic infrastructure for promotion of tourism industry in close cooperation of government and private sectors • Encourage the use of domestic goods instead of imported goods • Provide employment opportunities by engaging indigenous skills and technology • Contribute in the national economy 	(NPC, 1975)
6	Sixth Five Year Plan 1980-1985	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of second phase of tourism master plan • Interlink between tourism and economic development • Generate employment opportunities • Acknowledged wildlife sanctuaries and national parks as tourist destination 	(Adhikari, 2011; NPC, 1980)
7	Seventh Five Year Plan 1985-1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop tourism without harming natural and cultural resources • Focus on Increase foreign exchange earnings, employment generation, expand tourism activities, increase the duration of stay of tourists, encourage domestic tourism and domestic products 	(NPC, 1986)
8	Eighth Plan 1992-1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism sector as the centre of economic activity to alleviate poverty, generate employment, expansion of industry and regional equality • Use local material and services in the tourism industry • Envision the special need for the recovery of environmental, pollution and ecological loss 	(Agarwal & Upadhyay, 2006: pp 208)
9	Ninth Five Year Plan 1997-2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification and development of new areas • Develop new and upgrade the existing tourism infrastructure 	(NPC, 1997)

S.N.	Periodic Plan	Sustainable tourism in periodic plan	Source
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of local and community in environmental conservation • Preservation of religious sites • Focused on promotion of ecotourism by developing a model tourist villages in all region, development of new trekking areas 	
10	Tenth Year Plan (2002-2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on environment friendly eco-tourism and Sustainable tourism, conduct tourism activities with direct involvement of women and communities to enhance knowledge and skill of women, indigenous group, local people, local retention of money, promote domestic tourism • Conservation and preservation of historical and cultural heritages 	(NPC 2002; Upadhayaya& Sharma, 2010)
11	Eleventh 3 year interim plan 2007/08-2009/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote rural, adventure, health and education and agro tourism • Incorporate participatory tourism development approach • Concept of home stay was introduced to incorporate wider participation of rural people • Emphasize sustainable tourism development by using tourism activities to alleviate poverty, generating employment • Introduced academic courses in Travel and Tourism 	(NPC, 2007)
12	Twelfth plan (2011-2013)	Promotion of domestic tourism as a part of sustainable tourism development	(Parajuli, 2014)
13	Thirteenth Plan (2013-2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide quality services to the tourists • Explore new tourism areas and services • Address institutional and policy level challenges to develop tourism 	(NPC, 2013)
14	Fourteenth Plan (2016-2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance public participation, diversify tourism sector • Involvement of public in sustainable management of biodiversity and watershed areas • Reconstruction and reestablishment of ecotourism areas 	(NPC, 2016)

Appendix 4: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Part 1: Introduction

This interview is a part of a research that aim to study how sustainable tourism is implemented in Kathmandu. This research is for our thesis in Master of Science in Business. For this purpose, you are selected as one of our sample. We will use your answers solely as a data for our research and not for any other purposes. We will maintain the confidentiality of your identity.

For the purpose of transcribing, we intend to record this interview so that we can revisit your answers for better analysis later. Are you comfortable with it?

Part 2: General

1. Can you please tell us about your organization in brief?
2. Could you give your opinion on general trend of sustainable tourism in Kathmandu?
3. What challenges does tourism in Kathmandu face and how can practicing sustainable tourism positively mitigate such challenges?
4. How well do you think your company or employees know the importance of sustainable tourism development in Kathmandu?
5. Is any of your organizational goal-directed toward sustainable tourism?
Is sustainable development of tourism is explicitly included in company's goal? How?

Part 3: Main Questions

6. What are your action plans to practice sustainable tourism in Kathmandu?
 - i. *any company policies that encourage sustainable tourism?*
 - ii. *Any guidelines for day-to-day work that support sustainable tourism?*
7. How do you offer your products/services with the theme of responsible tourism?
8. How do you encourage your customers/travelers for the responsible tourism?
9. How have your organization been involved in making tourism sustainable in Kathmandu?
 - i. *How do you encourage more economic benefits of tourism in Kathmandu? (like attracting more tourists in Kathmandu)*
 - ii. *How do you support the local community? Social-cultural heritage?*
 - iii. *How do you act for the preservation of the environment? To reduce the impact on environment?*
 - iv. *Have you participated with any other private organization or I/NGOs for promotion of sustainable tourism?*
10. What roles do the private sectors like your organization have in making tourism sustainable in Kathmandu?
11. Have you got any future plans to act more on sustainable tourism?

Appendix 5: Code Book

Codes	Description
Environment	
no_plastic	No usage or less usage of plastic
Recycle	recycling the wastes
sep_trash	segregating the trash or garbage
imp_meas	impact measurement
solar_energy	solar energy
proper_dump	proper dumping of the wastage
env_friend	environmental friendly
save_animal	save animal
ren_energy	renewable energy
waste_red	waste reduction
reuse_water	re use of water
org_farm	organic farming
anti_poach	anti-poaching
no_firewood	No firewood during tour
Socio-Culture	
culture_promo	promotion of culture
local_vendor	sourced from local vendor
women_empower	women empowerment
enhance_comm	community enhancement through tourism
local_art	local art
home_stays	Homestays
local_craft	local craft
local_food	local food
local_culture	local culture
Awareness	awareness among people
Charity	charity to needy people
help_society	helping society in different form
social_issue	addressing social issue
child_welfare	welfare of children
poverty_allev	poverty alleviation through tourism
Economic	
eco_empower	economic empowerment
fair_distrib	fair distribution of earnings
local_hiring	local job opportunities

Codes	Description
Capacity Buidling	
staff_meet	staff meeting
info_share	sharing information for education
staff_train	training staff
Extra Code	
Partnership	collaboration with other organization
yes_ST	organizational goal directed toward sustainable tourism