

Tourism Governance in the aftermath of COVID-19: A Case Study of Nepal

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Abstract

The global pandemic of COVID 19 has had a severe effect in various developing economies, including Nepal itself, as it has seriously engulfed the strongest economies of the world. The tourism industry globally has been paralyzed, and it will take long ahead to get the industry back on track. There are challenges to revive this industry and ensure its tremendous contribution to revitalizing the ailed tourism sector. To drive this situation more efficiently and tactfully, the need for good governance through its leading agencies seem to be much demanding and prevailing. Visit Nepal 2020 has been postponed by the Nepal government due to the potential risk of an outbreak of COVID -19 and almost all the government efforts have now been centralized to combat the threat of COVID-19. Both domestic and international tourism is in its complete halt, creating a massive shortfall on revenue generation in the national economy. To combat the spread of COVID-19 into the community level and thus checking the further loss of lives and property, series of lockdown at the national level were imposed restraining the public mobility,

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factories, and industries are closed for indefinitely leaving the tourism activities completely at coma. As the tourism industry globally has come to a halt now, stopping all the tourism-based activities resulting cut off of a heavy chunk of revenue, it's a high time to think over the noble strategies on what might be the forms and modality of governance in tourism sector globally.

Introduction

Tourism is an important economic sector for many countries around the world and governments are developing active and innovative policies to promote sustainable and inclusive tourism growth. The linkages between tourism and other policies are many, and policy decisions need to consider the trade-offs and complementarities (OECD, 2017).

Tourism stands on the foundation of movement and mobility of the people for learning, exposure to new places, things, and culture. The mobility as a basic condition of the tourism industry has now been compromised due to the global pandemic of COVID-19 and the same has been reflected in the Nepalese perspective as well.

Tourism industry christened as a “fickle” industry, “seasonal” industry, “peace” industry, one of the “largest” industries, and so on (Kunwar, 2010, p.12;in Ulak,2020:109). Tourism plays an important role in enhancing a nation’s business activity, income, foreign currency earnings, and the creation of jobs. Thus, the tourism industry tends to be highly sensitive to negative environmental factors such as natural disasters, epidemics, serious social conflicts, war, economic crises, and terrorism acts (Hung, et al., 2007; in Ulak,2020: 109). As a result, these kinds of events influence tourism mobility and traveler’s motivation to travel which will have lasting effects on the tourism industry. The outbreak of coronavirus also has developed a fear of travelers.

The tourism industry of Nepal has been facing many crises and obstacles since its inception. Nepal has been officially open for international tourists since 1951 (MoCTCA, 2014). There have been crises and disasters which have directly affected the tourism industry of Nepal in a different period (see table.1). The sector was hard hit by earthquake, trade blockade in the year 2015;now it is COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1: Negative events and its impacts in the tourism industry of Nepal (2015-2020)

Negative Events	Year	Tourism Decline
Catastrophic Earthquake	2015	33%
Trade Disruptions along the southern border	2015	
COVID-19 Pandemics		N/A

Source: Economic Impact, Asian Development Bank (2019)

Well awaited national campaign of visit Nepal 2020 has been postponed by the government to all focus its strengths and efforts to combat the potential risks of spreading COVID-19 and help people save their life and property. Tourism as a principal contributor of revenue into the national economy is being driven by the certain leading practices practised by both government and non-government agencies and entities. To bring the hard-hit tourism sector globally into normal and to ensure its continued contribution to the global economy, it has been the dire need of time to think its comeback from a new dimension. All the formal and informal sectors in the tourism industry need to initiate a worthy dialogue and discussion on how the paralyzed tourism sector could flourish again as normal. And as a remedy of this ailment, entry of good governance practice in tourism sector seems a must.

Literature review

Over the last three decades the notion of ‘*governance*’ has drawn attention by policy makers and scholars from different disciplines, such as political science, public administration, and economics. Even though there is no consensus on the definition of governance, relevant studies have claimed some stylized facts that reflect the term. A pioneer study among them states that governance relates to “*interdependence between organizations, resource-exchange, game-like interactions between network members and autonomy from the state*” (Rhodes, 1999:1246; in POLAT,2020).

In general sense, “governance” means the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance, and local governance. Since governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented, an analysis of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision-making and implementing the decisions made and the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement the decision (United Nations Economic and Social commission for Asia and the Pacific, n.d.).

Governance consists of the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. This includes the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them (World Bank, n.d).

Siakwah, Musavengane&Leonard(2019)noted that “Governance though not easily defined can promote effective and equitable resources use and development (Duran, 2013; p.2). According to Hall (2011) governance is associated with the act of governing, “the search to understand forms of State action to mediate social and economic development, and political problems at a time when the State itself has

changed". This change begins by inserting new stakeholders into the development process, which goes beyond government issues.

In Wan and Bramwell's (2015) perspective, governance involves both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders who work collectively toward a common goal or social order. The role of coordinating new challenges is attributed to the State.

Valente, Dredge, and Lohmann (2015) define governance as a process that guarantees greater transparency, accountability, efficacy, efficiency, participation, and legitimacy which can be reached through public-private agreements.

The concept of tourism governance is not new, despite a lack of consensus on how to define it, which is perhaps why it is often mistaken for the government. It emerged in the 1970s during the governability crisis to understand whether the new administrative structures, through their processes, could establish consensus and solve conflicts (Coutinho & Nóbrega, 2019, p. 56).

Governance is a concept that should be understood as a process involving coordination, collaboration, and the cooperation of stakeholders, to ensure the multiplier effects from the social and environmental development of tourism in the local economy (Siakwah, Musavengane, & Leonard, 2019).

Governance is the set of tasks such as decision making, enforcement of decisions, communication of rules, and measurement of performance that allow these functions of a system to proceed (Laws, Agrusa, Scott, & Richins, 2011).

Governance in the tourism sector is especially important because it is not a single industry but instead "cuts across different fields of experience and administrative frontiers". Tourism, therefore, faces the difficulty of ensuring collaboration between a variety of stakeholders and of working within complex existing governance arrangements. Tourism requires collaboration not only between the levels of governance but also across public, private, and local community institutions (World Tourism Organization & Griffith University, 2017).

Wan and Bramwell's (2015) perspective, as cited by Coutinho & Nobrega (2019), governance involves both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders who work collectively toward a common goal or social order. The role of coordinating new challenges is attributed to the State.

Concretely, "good governance" with its ingredients has been a cornerstone for sustainable development. In this context; scholars, policymakers and authorities have overwhelmingly focused on governance relevant policy tools both empirically and theoretically (Kaufmann and Kraay; 2007:2 in POLAT, 2020).

Governance has now been rebranded as "good governance" nowadays. It has become quite a more trendy term, especially for the development agencies both from

home and abroad. More precisely, it's used to indicate and gauge the success and failure of government in terms of decision making, its implementation, and the level of public satisfaction through the development efforts carried out by the government.

Good governance is a process of taking and implementing government decisions effectively. It is a process or mechanism through which political, economic, and administrative authority is exercised well in the conduct of public affairs. The concept of good governance emerged in the late 1980s to address governments' failures in development policies, including failure to alleviate poverty, combat corruption, and respect human rights. Both good governance and human rights are based on the common principles of participation, accountability, inclusiveness, transparency, rule of law, and responsibility (Regmi, 2020).

Governance is a multi-faceted concept and along with its multi-scalar nature in tourism, this helps to explain the plurality of approaches that have been taken in understanding, firstly, the nature of governance in tourism, and, secondly, how to govern the tourism industry effectively. Governance is not simply the act of governing, or the activities associated solely with formal institutions of governance such as national and local government, national tourism offices, and destination management organizations. Rather, the governance of tourism involves an increasingly networked set of inter-relationships between actors in the public, private and third sectors and should bring together tourists, host communities, businesses and the traditional institutions of the state with an interest in tourism, to achieve the sustainable management of tourism within and between destinations. Effective governance is a fundamental condition for the sustainable development of tourist destinations (Antonio & Kennell, 2019).

All these definitions share a tendency to understand governance as either a process that is inherent to the government or a way to govern. However, Velasco Gonzalez (2013) understands governance to be a decision-making organizational procedure that includes more than just government actions.

Although tourism destination governance has been a subject of academic inquiry for some time now, in practice, governance is still a challenge for many tourism destinations around the world. Adaptive co-management (ACM) is a dynamic approach to governance whereby institutional arrangements and ecological knowledge are continually revised through a process of 'learning-by-doing'. Founded on the active participation and collaboration of diverse stakeholder groups, ACM has been used extensively in the governance of natural resource contexts and so may offer valuable synergies for tourism governance; particularly the governance of tourism in protected areas (Adaptive co-management: A novel approach to tourism destination governance?, 2018).

“In order to develop and apply policies for tourism in destinations, there is usually a requirement for knowledge, thought, the application of power, resources and rules, and also coordination and cooperation among numerous actors. Together, these are key features of governance (Bramwell, 2011, p.459-477; in Dangi & Petrick; 2021).

As cited in (Coutinho & Nóbrega,2019), (Hall, 2011; Velasco Gonzalez, 2013; Nóbrega & Figueiredo, 2014; Wan & Bramwell, 2015; Valente, Dredge & Lohmann, 2015; Qian et al., 2016; Tretin, 2016), opine that in addition to building consensus in conflict situations, tourism governance also brings benefits such as efficiency, efficacy, fairness, transparency, accountability, cooperation, and legitimacy, given that it involves collective decision-making through political democracy with social participation represented by diverse interests. These benefits have been widely discussed and have formed the basis of political, social, and business discourses.

(Coutinho & Nóbrega,2019; in Castells, 2000) comes up as governance provides a series of benefits based on cooperation, it is not exempt from power relations, i.e., the essence of State organized society Tourism.

Dangi&Petrick(2021) propose for making tourism governance more proactive, collaborative, and facilitative to better address the issues of justice, ethics, and equity and to contribute to sustainable tourism development due to the vulnerability of the sustainable tourism paradigm amongst the setting of open-market economy and liberal democracy like in the United States.

The literature points out that the term tourism governance is related to how to govern, which implies resizing command and control by the State, which then begins to include new stakeholders in the decision-making process through new decision-making structures, mechanisms, and procedures regarding tourism planning and operations (Coutinho & Nóbrega, 2019, p. 63).

Discrepancies between national government structures and local government perspectives often tend to create a space for the dominance of local, private interests rather than on strategies that lead to socially fair development which takes into account the needs of residents.(Antonio & Kennell, 2019).

World Trade Organization (2013) highlights that successful tourism depends on having destinations that are attractive and welcoming. Government and management requirements for achieving the aim include having in place:

- policies that are relevant and coherent across government, in the overall areas of sustainable development, tourism, and the environment;
- clear and supportive governance structures at all levels that involve and benefit from the engagement of the private sector and other stakeholders;
- sound planning and integrated management of coasts, including coastal tourism;

- effective processes to assess and influence new tourism development;
- tourism operations that pursue sound environmental management practices and seek benefit local communities;
- tourism-related actions to improve the attractiveness and conservation of coastal environments
- actions to deliver more benefits to local communities from tourism.

Purpose and method of study

The main purpose of this study is to study the governance aspects considered in the tourism industry, basically for its sustainability. Having studied the governance in a general sense, later it has been focused on the global tourism sector and on the line to what extent it's being practiced in Nepalese perspective.

The study is exploratory that follows a qualitative method of analysis. The study is based on secondary data through desk research. The data are extracted from published journals, articles, and renowned media coverage sources.

As it is a desk research, the first-hand experience of governance is lacking but still, it will highlight the loops and gaps of governance in the tourism sector to pave the way for future endeavors, for both public and private sectors.

This article will evolve a discussion to even consider the rethink and revision of existing strategies, plans and policies, and the structural setting of the organizations being involved in the tourism sector.

Indicators of governance

The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) project reports aggregate and individual governance indicators for over 200 countries and territories over the period 1996–2018, for six dimensions of governance:

- Voice and Accountability
- Political Stability and Absence of Violence
- Government Effectiveness
- Regulatory Quality
- Rule of Law
- Control of Corruption

These aggregate indicators combine the views of a large number of enterprises, citizens, and expert survey respondents in industrial and developing countries. They are based on over 30 individual data sources produced by a variety of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and private sector firms (World Bank, n.d).

Even though there was limited set of empirical indicators of governance initially, the growing interest in gauging governance by policy-relevant indicators has intended scholars to analyze more purified and policy-relevant governance indicators (Kaufmann and Kraay, 2007:2; in POLAT, 2020).

UNDP(2007; in POLAT,2020)conceptualizes governance indicators based on what is being measured, namely; input/rights/commitment/dejure, process/responsibility/defacto, and output/outcome/enjoyment/performance/de facto. Indicators in the first group reflect to commitments by the countries, the second group covers indicators “whether parties were taking action to fulfil their responsibilities and commitments” and the third group comprises of “data about the number of people enjoying their rights and figures about those who are not enjoying their rights” UNDP (2007:10; in POLAT, 2020).

Among policy-relevant governance indicators, the WGI are commonly used and associate 6 dimensions of governance, namely: Voice and accountability (VA), Political stability and absence of violence (PV), Government effectiveness (GE), Regulatory quality (RQ), Rule of law (RL) and Control of corruption (CC). These indicators are constructed corresponding to three areas, such as the process by which governments are selected, monitored, and replaced (VA and PV), The capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound world policies (GE and RL) and The respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them (Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi, 2010:4; in POLAT,2020).

Governance & sustainable tourism

Governance has been considered by the experts as one of the basic requirements for tourism destinations if to enhance sustainable tourism fruitfully.

Sustainability seemed to emerge as a central theme and a guiding principle for development for governments, businesses, and other private organizations, following the WECD initiative. The notion of sustainability, however, had existence in both theory and practice long before this event. (Bramwell, 2011,p.459-477; in Dangi& Petrick;2021).

The role of the central government in developing cohesive, effective tourism policy is vital, but governments face numerous challenges in crafting this policy (Tourism trends and policy priorities, 2016) This is due in part to the fragmented nature of tourism which requires multiple central government ministries and different levels of government to undertake various roles in response to political, social, environmental, and technological trends affecting tourism For example, governments are involved in tourism in a variety of capacities

including, marketing and promotion; border security; the regulation of markets such as aviation; planning regulations; controlling or managing tourism attractions such as national parks; skills development; and funding the development of roads and other infrastructure. Besides, in many countries, there is an added level of complexity in that the full competence for tourism does not reside with the central government. As such, there is often a significant role to be played in tourism governance at the subnational level (OECD, 2017, p. 3).

“Destinations wanting to promote sustainable tourism are more likely to be successful when there is effective governance. Normally, this involves having good mechanisms for the coordination of collective action (Butler, 2010; (Bramwell, 2011, p. 461).(Hall, 2008; in Bramwell, 2011) opines one difficulty for the governance of sustainable tourism is that its concerns cut across sectors and span diverse policy domains, such as planning, transport, climate change, employment, and regional development. Sustainable tourism policies need to be integrated with wider economic, social, and environmental policy considerations within an overall sustainable development framework.

The development of effective tourism policy is a challenging task for several reasons. Tourism is an “open” industry and subject to political, social, environmental, and technological trends to which it must respond. Due to its fragmented nature, it requires coordination of government, at the national and sub-national level, as well as private sector businesses that both compete and co-operate with one another. Tourism services are primarily provided by micro, small, and medium-size suppliers, although some sectors, such as aviation, are dominated by large businesses operating on a global scale. Besides, governments are involved in tourism in a variety of capacities including, border security; the regulation of markets such as aviation; controlling or managing tourism attractions such as national parks; and funding the development of roads and other infrastructure. Coutinho&Nóbrega(2019) as cited in Castells (2000)suggests although tourism governance provides a series of benefits based on cooperation, it is not exempt of power relations, i.e., the essence of State organized society. Tourism, therefore, imposes numerous challenges, given its idiosyncrasies, because on the one hand there are profit-seeking private interests involved, and on the other hand, it requires shared actions, especially within and among tourist destinations (Velasco Gonzalez, 2013).

Recent governance practices in the tourism industry

Governments at all levels have an important role to play in the delivery of the tourism product, and they need to work in close partnership with the private sector. To sustain tourism growth and the associated benefits, governments must ensure that the right policies and delivery structures are in place. Many countries now have multi-

year policies and plan to develop the tourism sector and to give strategic direction and focus to government policy at the national and sub-national levels.

Governance has been observed as a trendy terminology over its evolution and now has been moved towards “good governance” following wider advocacy in recent days by the international development agencies, especially by United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and World Bank. They are much focused and concerned about coordination, participation, transparency, inclusiveness, accountability, and responsibility in terms of resource utilization. And the unique combination of these all constitute, what they have been calling as good governance.

Effective governance practices include i) a clear definition of the roles and functions of the various levels of government in tourism; ii) the engagement of the tourism industry and civil society in the policy decision-making process; iii) the adopting effective engagement mechanisms to bring together the various actors (e.g. tourism strategies, contracts, joint committees), and ensure they have the appropriate tools and resources for implementation and monitoring (OECD, 2017, p. 4).

Effective governance practices must reflect the changing business and policy environment, and the evolving roles and competencies of government tourism organizations. Developments in the macro policy environment favor a more collaborative approach, encouraging policy development in conjunction with the tourism industry, as well as an emphasis on regional or local level decision-making (OECD, 2012). Governance in the tourism sector is especially important because it is not a single industry but instead “cuts across different fields of experience and administrative frontiers (World Tourism Organization, 2013). Tourism, therefore, faces the difficulty of ensuring collaboration between a variety of stakeholders and of working within complex existing governance arrangements. Tourism requires collaboration not only between the levels of governance but also across public, private, and local community institutions. In China, national government policy is that local government should create and implement rural tourism policies for local communities, plan and provide technical support for innovative programs. Government policy encourages financial organizations to increase loans to villages and gives priority to developing products for leisure tourism in annual land-use planning. It also requires improvement in transportation, water and electricity, pollution reduction, and wireless network infrastructure. It has also implemented a digital management system to guide and provide information broadcasts to visitors, as well as real-time collection and monitoring of visitor flows. In 2005 and 2006, Jiangxiang Village benefited from a special fund created by the Changshu Government for the construction of general infrastructure (UNWTO & Griffith University, 2017, p. 50).

With its rich natural and cultural heritage, the Philippine Government has identified tourism as “as an engine of socio-economic growth and cultural affirmation to generate investment, foreign exchange and employment and to continue to mould an enhanced sense of national pride for all Filipinos”¹. The Republic Act 9593 mandates the Philippine Department of Tourism to plan, coordinate, and regulate the development and promotion of the tourism industry development at the national level. Nevertheless, the local government unit has a strategic role in planning and managing tourism development in their areas of jurisdiction.

The Tourism Act emphasizes that national and local governments have shared responsibilities in tourism development planning, collection of tourism statistics, and accreditation of tourism-related enterprises. The Department of Tourism is responsible for national tourism policy and planning, international and domestic marketing, the accreditation of tourism enterprises, and maintaining a national databank of tourism statistics and information. The Department supports the local government units in building their capacity for tourism activities.

On the other hand, the local government units under the Local Government Code 2 of 1991 continue to be responsible for issuing business licenses for the operation of tourist enterprises, the inclusion of tourism in their Comprehensive Land Use Plans (CLUPs) and zoning ordinances, ensuring safety and security in partnership with the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other agencies, and undertaking promotions activities designed to attract tourists to their area (UNWTO & Griffith University, 2017). In Brazil, the approach to tourism governance has been based on structuring and organizing tourism in a given region by grouping municipalities together, thus reinforcing articulation through networks. With this, institutions have now begun to organize into inter-organizational networks as a result of the rationality of a new social, cultural, and political dynamics of a given region (Coutinho & Nóbrega, 2019).

Approaches to tourism governance

Tourism governance is all about keeping plans and policies in place and implementing those policies for the better cause of ensuring considerable contribution by the tourism sector on the national and global economy. It additionally ensures the coordinated efforts of the governing bodies established and run for the smooth functioning of the tourism industry. Tourism governance, by virtue, is not a quantifiable aspect rather statistics indicating the appropriate functioning of the sector would all be possible by the tourism governance itself.

Developing a multi-actor system that includes public-private partnerships and greater horizontal and vertical coordination of relevant government bodies requires consideration of the accepted elements of good governance, both at the central and sub-national levels. Governance can also be improved through both institutional and

human capacity building, ensuring institutions have a well-defined objective and clear mandates, and effective leadership and political support. Mechanisms to improve co-ordination between central and sub-national governments include the development of tourism strategies, the use of contracts, and the creation of joint committees. At an industry level, governments are encouraging the development of a single peak tourism industry association to facilitate more co-ordinated industry representation. Mechanisms to manage the interface with industry include the establishment of representative associations and Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) that provide a forum for co-operation and policy debate (OECD, 2012, p. 13).

Most tourism plans addressing sustainability adopt a triple bottom line approach, incorporating economic, social, and environmental elements. However, no matter how economically positive, socially acceptable, or environmentally friendly tourism plans may be, the support from organizations at all levels is critical for their implementation (McCool, Butler, Buckley, Weaver & Wheeler, 2013).

Although tourism destination governance has been a subject of academic inquiry for some time now, in practice, governance is still a challenge for many tourism destinations around the world.

Adaptive co-management (ACM) model

ACM is a dynamic approach to governance whereby institutional arrangements and ecological knowledge are continually revised through a process of 'learning-by-doing'. Founded on the active participation and collaboration of diverse stakeholder groups, ACM has been used extensively in the governance of natural resource contexts and so may offer valuable synergies for tourism governance; particularly the governance of tourism in protected areas (Islam, Ruhanen, & Ritchie, 2018).

Private-public partnership (PPP) model

The development of tourism in emerging economies have been shaped by many factors among which Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) play a key role as they bring together government agencies and the public sector with representatives of the whole tourism value chain under the same goals of promoting socioeconomic development, sustainability, job creation and international competitiveness through tourism (WTO, 2015 in Badal, 2020).

PPPs bring together stakeholders with different objectives and skills, and resources in a formal or informal voluntary partnership to improve the attractiveness of a regional destination, its productivity, associated market efficiency, and the overall management of tourism. PPPs target improvement in many aspects necessary for successful tourism such as transportation, events, accommodation, attractions,

business skills and resource protection. Hence, PPPs are important, and often vital, elements in the establishment of tourism based initiatives and the improvement of the market competitiveness of destinations.

An alternative institution, a public-private partnership, is often used in a tourism destination to provide governance arrangements for certain tasks; usually such things as destination marketing and promotion through cross-sectoral collaboration. Organizations of this type may be called a DMO (Destination Marketing Organization or Destination Management Organization depending on its main tasks) (UNWTO & Griffith University, 2017, p. 38).

The whole of government approach

Governments at all levels have an important role to play in the delivery of the tourism product, and they need to work in close partnership with the private sector. In order to sustain tourism growth and the associated benefits, governments must ensure that the right policies and delivery structures are in place. Many countries now have multi-year policies and plans to develop the tourism sector and to give strategic direction and focus to government policy at national and subnational level (OECD, 2017).

Many countries consider an integrated whole-of-government approach to tourism as an essential component of a supportive government framework. These integrated approaches increase the policy coherence and the effectiveness of public and public/private actions in tourism. (OECD, 2017).

For whole-of-government policy approaches to be effective, they should recognize the importance of strong government-industry-civil society dialogue in the development, implementation, and monitoring phases. Developing a multi-actor system, that includes the private sector and civil society and greater horizontal and vertical coordination of relevant government bodies, requires consideration of the accepted elements of good governance, both at the central and subnational levels (OECD, 2017).

COVID-19 vs global tourism industry

The tourism sector is currently one of the hardest-hit by the outbreak of COVID-19, with impacts on both travel supply and demand. This represents an added downside risk in the context of a weaker world economy geopolitical, social and trade tensions, as well as uneven performance among major outbound travel markets. As of today, UNWTO estimates that in 2020 global international tourist arrivals could decline between 20-30%, down from an estimated growth of 3% to 4% forecast in early January 2020.

- This could translate into a loss of US\$ 30 to 50 billion in spending by international visitors (international tourism receipts).

- Estimates for other world regions are currently premature given the rapidly evolving situation.

(Tourism & COVID -19, 2020)

Within the last three months, the COVID-19 has gone global and turned into a 'pandemic' affecting around 200 countries. With no vaccine in place, the one-third of humanity is under lockdown, as it is the only measure of prevention available to the world and is assumed to go for as long as six months in many countries. This might prevent the virus, but it certainly would have a disastrous impact on the global economy.

The world economy is facing "severe" economic damage from the coronavirus pandemic that could be even more costly than the '2009 Financial Crisis'. The lockdown has been followed by a huge 'fall in demand' in the economy. This means that consumers are not consuming goods in the same capacity even though the products are available in the global economy. This trend is most visible in the travel and tourism industry. The first policies that came into place were that of the travel ban. Similar dynamics apply to other industries as well. This is the reason why economists have been contemplating whether the COVID-19 pandemic could lead to a global recession on the scale of the 2009 Financial Crisis or the 1930 Great Depression. To explain the gravity of the issue, some key figures related to the speculated global economy are given in the table below.

Impact on the global economy

Forecasted Global GDP Due to COVID 19 in 2020 – 2.4%
Monetary GDP Loss in Best Case COVID 19 Scenario – 76.69bn USD
Forecasted GDP Loss in the U.S. in a Global Pandemic Scenario – 2.4%

Impact on trade and tourism

Projected global tourism revenue in 2020 – 568.58 bn USD
Projected tourism revenue in Asia in 2020 – 164.7m USD
Loss in global business travel revenue due to COVID 19 - -810.7bn USD
Global change in flight frequency as of March 23, 2020 - -23.7%

Source: Statista, 2020

Up to 75 million jobs are at immediate risk in global Travel & Tourism due to the coronavirus pandemic, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).

The alarming figure, based on research from WTTC, shows a punishing Travel & Tourism GDP loss to the world economy of up to US\$2.1 trillion in 2020. The latest projection of a 50% increase in jobs at risk, in less than two weeks, represents a

significant and worrying trend, with an astounding one million jobs being lost every day in the Travel & Tourism sector, due to the sweeping effect of the coronavirus pandemic (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020).

The analysis by WTTC, which represents the global Travel & Tourism private sector, also exposes the depth of the crisis for individual regions. Asia-Pacific is expected to be most heavily impacted with up to 49 million jobs at risk throughout the region, representing a loss of nearly US\$800 billion to Travel & Tourism GDP. The latest figures also suggest that in Europe, up to 10 million jobs in Travel & Tourism are at risk, totaling a loss of nearly US\$552 billion. Travel & Tourism contributes to 10.4% of Global GDP, is directly responsible for generating one in 10 of the world's jobs, and for eight successive years, has outpaced the growth of the global economy (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020).

Effects of COVID-19 in Nepalese tourism sector

The tourism Industry of Nepal was gradually shifting from passive-impetus to active impetus. The hope of growth in the industry was high as there are many hotels and restaurant projects under-construction have been halted. However, Mega projects like Gautam Buddha International Airport in Lumbini, Pokhara Regional International Airport, Tribhuvan International Airport Capacity building, Fast-track road to Nijgadh, are under construction phase to cater to the tourism industry of Nepal. The government of Nepal has to cancel the very ambitious "Visit Nepal 2020" Campaign temporarily which was inaugurated in January 2020 as a national event targeting 2 million tourists by 2020, almost 100% increase compared to 2018. According to Asian Development Bank (ADB) Report (2019), the tourism industry has a distinctive place in Nepal's economy and the industry earns on an average of 25% of the total foreign exchange and provides direct employment to more than 200,000 people. The average direct tourism contribution to the national economy has hovered at 3.9% in the GDP from 2008-2018" (ADB, 2019). Nepal's economy has started suffering as a pinch from the initial phase of the outbreak of the virus. Nepal's tourism-based economy is being severely impacted due to travel restrictions imposed by Nepal and other countries, and airlines canceling flights (Subba, 2020 in Ulak 2020). China is the second-highest source of tourists in Nepal, and the Chinese have stopped traveling as China Government restricted traveling who contributed 20% to the hotel occupancy, have dwindled and travelers from other countries have also cut short their plan since the wake of an outbreak. The sector contributes 14.37 percent to the economy, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics (Shrestha, 2020 cited in Ulak,2020).

Similarly, Nepal has also been affected adversely by the pandemic, and its preliminary impact recorded 14.37% loss to Nepalese economy as a repercussion of

travel restrictions and flight cancellations (Shrestha, 2020). Nepal's tourism industry generated NRs. 240.7 billion in 2018 that stood at 7.9 percent GDP (Prasain, 2019 cited in Ulak,2020).

The contemporary situation of Nepal's tourism industry is significantly affected by COVID-19. Tourism is a seasonal industry (Kunwar, 2010 cited in Ulak 2020), April –March is the highest tourist season of Nepal but the industry has gone to coma because of COVID-19. The significant effect of this situation is yet to come and it requires a long time to cure. The Travel and Tourism Economic Impact (2019) report shows that the tourism industry of Nepal has been gradually expanding as the contribution of the tourism industry in GDP was a rise by NRs.45.7 billion. The total contribution of the tourism industry to GDP in 2017 was NRs. 195 billion. Nepal Rastra Bank Report in Travel and Tourism Economic Impact (2019) shows that the total foreign currency exchange for 2018 stood at around 617,263 thousand US\$ which was almost 17% higher than in the year 2017. The average daily spending of tourists in Nepal is US\$ 44 (MoCTCA, 2019). There will be tourism nostalgia while looking at the comparative growth of the tourism industry of Nepal from the year 2012- 2017(Ulak, 2020).

Nepal government had declared the year 2020 as visit Nepal year and its promotional activities were at full swing both inside the country and abroad. COVID-19 being declared as a global pandemic by WHO, its seriousness came as a shock to the rest of the world as the number of death tolls increased alarmingly at its full speed. With every new finding and sharing by WHO about the communication of COVID 19, the global tourism sector started to experience the downfall in terms of cancellation of booking for the numerous holiday destination, mountaineering expedition, and trekking and halting of tourism activities worldwide. The majority of the globe went for the lockdown, considering it as a proven tool to restrict the transmission of COVID-19. It resulted in the closure of all forms of transportation via. land, water, and air.

Nepal is starting to suffer the most abrupt and widespread cessation of economic activity due to widespread fears of a possible outbreak of this deadly respiratory pathogen that is capable of community transmission.

Service industries like tourism and hotels are being hit especially hard. Tourism was expected to drive Nepal's economic growth and contribute greatly to the high growth target of 8.5 percent that the government had set for this year, but this industry tends to have a little financial cushion. The contribution of the tourism sector to Nepal's economy stood at 7.9 percent in 2018, according to the report prepared by the World Travel and Tourism Council, which represents the private tourism industry and counts more than 200 company members.(Karki, 2020).

Although tourist arrivals saw only a slight drop to 101,400 in February, there was an 80% decrease in visitors from China. Official figures are not yet available for March and April, but the travel industry is reporting widespread cancellations. Many international conferences, sports and festival events have been postponed. Hotel occupancy rates are dropping at what should have been peak season. Trekking and mountaineering expeditions have gone ahead but there has been a 50% decline in the number of clients.

As fears about COVID-19 continue to grip the world, many countries have taken preventative measures by canceling events and gatherings. The government of Nepal has issued an appeal not to organize any large meetings, conferences, festivals, and any other events given the possible risk of a COVID-19 outbreak in the country. In response, organizers from three major events, from the film industries to sports have agreed to postpone or cancel their long-awaited programs (Shrestha, 2020).

The global pandemic has forced the Nepali government to cancel visit Nepal 2020, an ambitious campaign aimed at attracting 2 million foreign tourists to the economically disadvantaged mountainous country. When the campaign was first announced in 2018, the goal was to channel revenue generated through tourism toward Nepal's social and economic transformation as well as recouping the financial losses experienced as a result of the 2015 earthquakes. The Visit Nepal 2020 campaign had expected to boost Nepal's small economy – with a GDP of just \$30 billion GDP – by generating a predicted \$ 2 billion in tourist receipts and creating thousands of new jobs. It was to be the flagship campaign that steered Nepal's shaky but burgeoning economy away from rocky shores and into safer seas (Johnson, 2020).

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Nepal is now faced with a very different and much harsher reality. Foreign tourists will no longer be flocking in to spend large sums of cash before leaving with fond memories and a few souvenirs. Instead, Nepal stands to potentially see millions of now-unemployed nationals returning home from abroad (Johnson, 2020).

Existing tourism governance practice in Nepal

The success of each democratic movement is promoting good governance in Nepal. There has been an improvement in the rule of law, accountability, transparency, and responsibility towards people. New laws, provisions, policies, and practices have been practiced to ensure good governance in Nepal. Theoretically, Nepal has made several provisions in its constitution and laws for good governance but practically people are not enjoying as much good governance as it has been written in legal documents. Besides this, the promising point is that Nepal is heading towards accelerating the pace and strengthening the quality of good governance for its people (Dahal, 2017, p. 31).

The role of local government is that of driving sustainable development agenda within the destination. Governments should provide an environment that enables and encourages the private sector, local community, tourists and other stakeholders to respond to sustainability issues. This can be best achieved by management, drawn up in concert with others. Local government has responsibility for land use planning, development applications for tourism related land uses, and the provision of local infrastructure and public amenities (Hall, 2000 cited in Chili & Xulu, 2015). Indeed the provision and maintenance of infrastructure and facilities by local governments can have a significant influence on the image and attractiveness of a destination, the depth and diversity of the available product, and ultimately, on how tourists experience a destination (Dredge, 2001 in Chili & Xulu, 2015).

NTB has prepared a hygiene protocol as guidelines to be maintained strictly for resuming the tourism industry. Altogether, 270 travels and tour agencies, restaurants, curio shops and hotels have been closed in the past three months and around hundreds of hotels and around 10,000 tourism subsectors are facing problem to sustain their businesses amid COVID-19 crisis (Ojha, 2020 in Ulak, 2020). Newly developed “COVID-19 strategy and Hygiene Protocols for the Tourism Industry” highlights that we are now exposing ourselves to the biggest crisis we ever had in the history of tourism worldwide with “Social/physical distancing, sanitizing and staying safe at home” considering these all as new norms. It has been expected that this new normal will have very tremendous effects in global sector of outbound tourism which was at the line of 1.4 billion in 2019 and the same was estimated to stand on 2 billion by 2030. We are now struggling against new waves of life and living going through these hard moments. The competence of our response to COVID-19 is essential to our role as stewards of both our environment and our economy. For tourism destinations, a key success factor is the ability to provide a safe, predictable and secure environment for visitors (Volo, 2007; in Speakman & Sharpley, 2012, p.1 cited in Ulak, 2020). Therefore, the tourism industry tends to be highly sensitive to negative environmental factors (Hung, Tseng, & Petrick, 2007 in Ulak, 2020) like COVID-19 pandemic which has capability to persuade the mobility of tourism to immobility drastically.

In Nepal, there is a provision of separate tourism ministry for policy formulation and regulation of its implementation at the federal level to overlook the entire tourism sector of the country. It has got a designated directorate and a semi-autonomous body namely, Nepal Tourism Board. As the country has moved towards its 3 tier government structure, the local level government bodies have been entrusted to formulate, devise and implement the local level tourism promotion policies. In Nepal, a dedicated tourism policy is in place. It has devised the following objectives. The objectives themselves will contribute towards the good governance in Nepalese tourism sector

- ❖ To develop tourism as an important sector of the national economy by developing linkages between tourism and other sectors.
- ❖ To diversify tourism down to rural areas so as to improve employment opportunities, foreign currency earnings, growth of national income and regional imbalances.
- ❖ To improve natural, cultural and human environments of the nation in order to develop and expand the tourism industry.
- ❖ To maintain a good image of the nation in the international community by providing quality service and a sense of security.
- ❖ To develop and promote Nepal as an attractive tourism destination.

To give a strategic direction to the tourism industry, tourism policy, national tourism strategy(2016-25) and numerous other policies and guidelines are in place. Nepal tourism board (NTB) makes coordination between government and private sector initiatives in line with the policies set by the government. To lead a national campaign like VNY and other specific years or to mark the special day with tremendous tourism importance, a special committee is formed and functionalized to devise the relevant activities and to execute them in the spirit of the Tourism strategies and policies. Still, we have a different reality here in Nepal. The tourism industry in Nepal has always worked under the assumption that things will be normal, and that tourists would continue to flock to Nepal, as long as there is growth in international travel (Nepal, 2020).

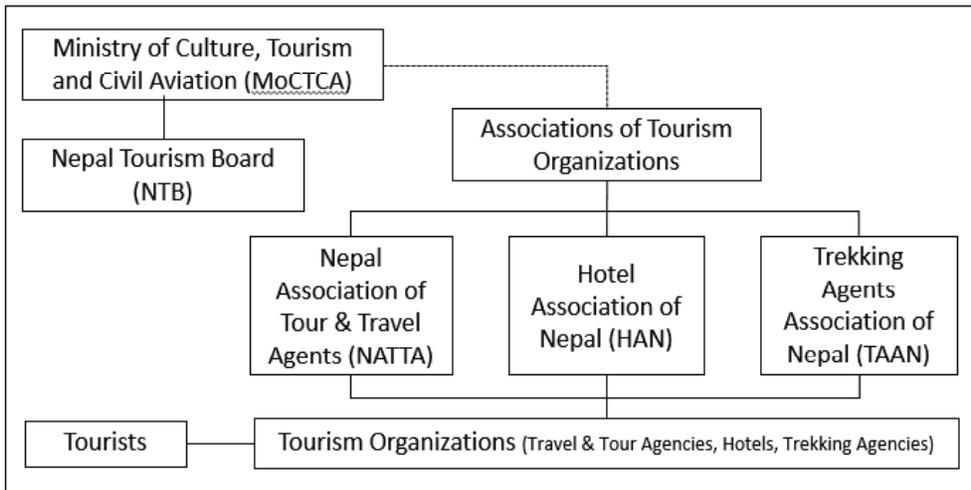
There are over 4,500 tourism organizations registered with the Tourism Department of Nepal. The major stakeholders in the tourism industry are tourism service providers, tourists, and the government. Most of the service providers in Nepal provide either tours and travel, trekking, or accommodation services to the tourists. Those tourism organizations are usually represented by either one or more associations, such as Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents (NATTA), Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) and Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN). These associations are independent, not-for-profit and representatives of specific tourism industries, for example, HAN representing all hoteliers. Figure 1 shows major stakeholders of the tourism industry in Nepal and an overall structure of how tourism organizations fall under these associations and are running their operations with guidance from those associations. Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA) is the pioneer government department for Nepal tourism and they also have an autonomous entity called Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) which is an independent government body dedicated to advertising Nepal tourism to the world.

Recently Nepal Tourism Board has developed a regulatory document

“Operational Guideline with Health Protocol for Tourism Sector” which has clearly mentioned the various precautionary measures to follow strictly in numerous tourism entities and sectors so as tourists could feel themselves safe and secure from transmission of contagious diseases like COVID-19 itself. The Protocol has detailed out the clear guidelines for the operation of hotels, restaurants, tourism offices, transportation, packaged tours and adventure activities with environment-friendly recommendations for sustainable and responsible tourism practices. It is a recent example of tourism governance in the sense that the regulations have governed the tourism sectors in terms of “Do’s and don’ts “

The protocol guidelines aim to support the industry in gaining back confidence in clients from the domestic international markets and in mitigating the crisis among professionals and industry at large.

Fig. 1. Nepal tourism governance structure



Source: Lama, Pradhan & Shrestha (2019)

Opportunities and challenges to global tourism following COVID-19

Many see the COVID-19 pandemic as a turning point for tourism, a chance to reflect on the pressing environmental and socio-economic concerns of the industry, and an opportunity to pinpoint a more desirable direction. However, for tourism to revive as a less impactful and more meaningful industry, more mindful consumers are needed to take factual benefits from the gravity of the current situation. Mindfulness as a practice of bringing a certain quality of attention to moment-by-moment experiences has become an important asset for individuals to cope with the problems of modern life. It is even seen as a significant driver of lifestyle change in Western societies, resulting in an increasing number of more conscious consumers

and mindfulness-driven products and services. The COVID-19 pandemic is a wake-up call and opportunity for the tourism industry to embrace the mindfulness movement, trusting in its capacity to reflect on the current problems and to pave a new way forward towards more compassionate and meaningful tourism for both hosts and guests (Stankov, Filimonau, & Vujičić, 2020).

The disasters and calamities can never be welcome as they lead to irreparable loss of lives and properties. But like every coin to have its two faces, such disasters would bring some opportunities as well which in turn would be a landmark for the development and human civilization. The COVID-19 would certainly implant a high degree of sense of preparedness for any future pandemic. The whole global economy needs to be boosted from every potential corner and that would only be possible by the devotion and dedication of mankind leading to innovation and exploration of new things, sooner or later.

The virus outbreak has upended all businesses, forcing companies, small to big, to adjust the strategy and accelerate digital transformation. Almost all companies will inevitably take a hit, and some may not survive. But the ones that do survive will be more robust and well-prepared than ever for future risks or crisis. Once the market recovers, these companies will need more manpower to resume production, and we will have more opportunities than we had before the outbreak (Huang, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has halted mobility globally on an unprecedented scale, causing the neoliberal market mechanisms of global tourism to be severely disrupted. In turn, this situation is leading to the decline of certain mainstream business formats and, simultaneously, the emergence of others. Based on a review of recent crisis recovery processes, the tourism sector is likely to rebound from this sudden market shock, primarily because of various forms of government interventions. Nevertheless, although policy makers seek to strengthen the resilience of post-pandemic tourism, their subsidies and other initiatives serve to maintain a fundamentally flawed market logic. The crisis has, therefore, brought us to a fork in the road – giving us the perfect opportunity to select a new direction and move forward by adopting a more sustainable path. Specifically, COVID-19 offers public, private, and academic actors a unique opportunity to design and consolidate the transition towards a greener and more balanced tourism. Tourism scholars, for example, can take a leading role in this by redesigning their curriculum to prepare future industry leaders for a more responsible travel and tourism experience (*Goodwin, 2020; Nicolas, 2020; in Ioannides & Gyimothy, 2020, p.1*).

Since its emergence in early 2020, the rapidly-spreading COVID-19 (also referred to as Corona) pandemic has wreaked global havoc. While numerous communities have been facing lockdowns of varying lengths the economic consequences of the

virus have been devastating. The effects on the global tourism sector, not to mention thousands of destinations world wide, have been particularly harmful as our normally hyper-mobile society has ground to a halt. It is not only the major players in the tourism supply chain (e.g., airlines, cruise companies, transnational hotel chains) who have suffered unfathomable damage, which is estimated to amount to €400bn (Goodwin,2020; Nicolas, 2020 in Ioannides & Gyimothy, 2020, p.2).

Harnessing innovation and digital advances provides tourism with opportunities to improve inclusiveness, local community empowerment, and efficient resource management, amongst other objectives within the wider sustainable development agenda.

As the pandemic has been claiming the lives of the people tremendously, it has challenged human innovation and intellect to find a vaccine to combat this pandemic. And simply, it has compelled mankind to be engaged in the invention of the vaccine. To check the deadly spreading of the coronavirus, most of the countries of the world strictly imposed a nationwide lockdown for a long and thus it brought the economic transactions and activities very down resulting in negative economic growth. We have, immediately after lockdown gets lifted, to concentrate our efforts to regain the economic status that was lost due to lockdown which will give us the option to accept challenges.

The pandemic has revealed our strengths and gaps in crystal clear gauging ourselves in the scale of reality. Now we have to acknowledge our shortcomings and weaknesses and be well prepared to fight against any future pandemic, keeping our economic activities intact and less challenging for us. Moreover, it would be yet another opportunity for us to make effective plans on what could be done to help the tourism industry inject and contribute significantly to the economy even at the difficult time scenario (UNWTO, 2020). In a nutshell, during the lockdown followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we can keep ourselves engaged in the following activities because we may not have sufficient time later once the situation gets back to normal and we have to go with our regular work trend and fashion.

- ❖ Revising, revisiting and diversification of tourism governance strategies
- ❖ During the lockdown period, attention can be focused towards cleanliness and disinfection in and around hotels, restaurants, parks and other facilities
- ❖ Cleanliness Disinfections of hotel and accommodation facilities
- ❖ Further research on prospects and potentialities.

Limitation of the study

While engaged for the study on tourism governance, enormous efforts have been made in the global perspective. But the hidden motive of the study is to explore the relevant study and concerns in the Nepalese tourism sector, which are not found as

needed and expected. By this, it seems difficult to have a comparative study on tourism governance in Nepalese specific context, to draw a conclusive idea based on different time frames appears a bit challenging. Moreover, governance in a general sense seems to be exercised but there is lacking dedicated study, analysis, argumentation, and practical research focused on tourism governance.

Conclusion

Post-COVID context would come very challenging for the world economy and especially for the tourism sector. Tourism being the sector of movement and mobility, the pandemic has left the tourism industry nearly paralyzed. The nations once with an epicenter of the pandemic, have tried their revival returning to a normal state but still, it needs time for these all. Governments are planning to provide the relief packages to the hardest-hit sectors but seem challenging as not a single sector remains untouched and bothered. The tourism sector being the highest contributor to almost all the economies, in one or another way or form, the relief and resilience packages are to be designed and offered by the governments.

The private sector in coordination with the government should be engaged in redesigning the tourism package, especially to promote domestic tourism, to extend the messages for the external tourists that their countries are now safer to visit. The values, norms, and standards of governance should be developed in such a way that the tourists could feel it spontaneously. The destination packages should be revisited with added health and safety components to check and control the potential spreading of contagious diseases in the future. We can thus make an argument that tourism can potentially facilitate the attainment of SDGs if it adheres to guiding principles of justice, transparency, accountability, social capital, participation, inclusiveness, and fair power relations. For its assurance, all we need to do is to make relevant and convincing advocacy for the stringent tourism governance in both public and private forums, where applicable and when possible.

Local governments should play a crucial role to drive the agenda of sustainable development within the famous destination. It's government's role to encourage the private sector, local communities, tourists and other stakeholders to address the issues of sustainability. There should be proper nexus of communication, coordination and collaboration (3Cs) between and among the tourists, tourism entrepreneurs and policy makers so as the needs and necessity of each others could be discussed and executed easily without any chances of misunderstanding among themselves. This culture and practice will eventually yield the good governance in tourism sector.

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