

Dark Tourism: A Preliminary Study of Barpak and Langtang as Seismic Memorial Sites of Nepal

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'In the minds of many tourism forms of life, we are in death' (Seaton, 1999: 132; in Muzaini, Teo, & Yeoh, 2007, p. 28)

Abstract

Dark tourism is about more than a simple fascination with death, it is also a powerful lens that allows contemporary life and death to be witnessed and relationships with broader societies and culture recognized (Stone, 2013; Allman, 2017). Information about disasters and their effects to the human being draws attention to the people whoever interested to death and disaster and play very important role to attract and motivate the visitors to those places. So far, disaster tourism is also popular as dark tourism because historical and cultural identity is devastated and violent death of a large number of people occurs in the seismic memorial sites.

Individuals who are participating in disaster tour are very much curious to see the impact of disaster. This article focuses on Dark Tourism: A Preliminary Study of Barpak and Langtang as Seismic Memorial Site of Nepal. Barpak was the epicentre of earthquake 2015 which caused huge suffering in the western and middle part of Nepal. Langtang is also the place which was doubly devastated. The earthquake struck, landslides and avalanches that destroyed the settlements. Through three data sources: document review, interview and direct observation, this article assesses theoretical understanding of the dark tourism, the society and culture of the seismic memorial sites, the motivation of the visitors, changing trend of visitors in Barpak and Langtang over pre, during and post-Earthquake 2015 and prospects and challenges of dark tourism in Barpak and Langtang. The study finds that the motivation and benefit to visit Barpak and Langtang are; black spot, history & heritage, cultural values, heritage & identity, survivors' guilt, death and dying, disaster and identity, acts of memory, people's resiliency, empathy, remembrance, education, entertainment and edutainment which are very much important in promoting dark tourism in Barpak and Langtang.

Keywords: *Dark tourism, seismic memorial sites, commercialization of grief, motivation, darventure*

Tourism is a complex phenomenon involving a wide range of people, increasingly seeking for new and unique experiences in order to satisfy the most diverse motives, reason why the world tourism landscape has been changing in the last decades (Seabra, Abrantes, & Karstenholz, 2014; in Fonseca, Seabra, & Silva, 2016, p. 1). The concept of 'pleasant diversion in pleasant places' is changing and broadening into new market demanding, more complex and even unusual (Wight, 2006; in Fonseca et al., 2006).

The questions are how dark tourism studies got introduced in the academia? What is the significance of dark tourism and how does it defer from other types of tourism? How could it be promoted in the new places where dark tourism is viable? The pupose of this study is to advance knowledge and understand the phenomenon of dark tourism.

Seaton (1996, p. 237) refers to death-related tourist activity as 'thanatourism'/ 'thanatopic tradition-contemplation of death,' by suggesting that dark tourism or thanatourism is essentially a behavioral phenomenon, defined by the tourist's motives as opposed to the particular characteristics of the attraction or destination, and thanatourism is not an absolute form ; there exists a 'continuum of intensity' dependent upon the motive(s) for visiting a site and the extent to which the interest

in death is general or person specific. Thus, visits to disaster sites such as Ground Zero are a 'purer' form of thanatourism (as long as the visitor was not related to a victim) than, say, visiting the grave of a dead relative.

Thanatourism (Seaton, 1996) or dark tourism (Lennon & Foley, 2000) will also include natural disaster tourism (Rucińska, 2016), disaster tourism (Fonseca, Seabra & Silva, 2015) and post-disaster tourism (Biran et al., 2014). Our appetite for consuming death is associated to much older fear to be killed. This, of course, raises interesting questions: Is thanatourism a cultural entertainment or a new type of repressed sadism? Why are people being captivated by the disaster and suffering of others represents one of the most striking aspects of dark tourism. Even though a countless studies have focused on mass death as a form of cultural entertainment for West in tourism and hospitality fields (Lennon & Foley, 2000; in O'Rourke, 1988; Seaton, 2000; in Korstanje, 2012, pp. 56-57).

'Dark Tourism' was first coined by Foley and Lennon (1996a, 1996b) in a special issue of the *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, their analysis relates primarily to 'the presentation and consumption of real and commodified death and disaster sites which has been expanded and exemplified in book form in Lennon and Foley (2000; in Ashworth & Isaac, 2015, p. 1). The initial focus was upon the identification of a new type of tourism destination and tourism product that was quite different from the assumed pleasure or enrichment conveyed by traditional tourism consumption. However, the work was not the first to draw attention to the phenomenon of 'darkness' in tourism. In 1989, Uzzell (1989) discussed hot interpretation of war and conflict sites (see Sharpley, 2009). In addition, Rojek (1993) discussed the emergence of 'black spots' which "refer to the commercial developments of grave sites and sites in which celebrities or large number of people have met with sudden and violent death" (p.136; in Raine, 2013, p. 249). Another early reflection on dark tourism includes Seaton's reference to 'thanatourism' (1996, p. 15) and Tunbridge & Asworth (1996, p. 114; in Raine, 2013, p. 243) and introducing the term 'horror tourism' (p. 129; in Raine, 2013) which they explored in terms of heritage management. In the mid-1990s, three new terms appeared in the academic tourism literature denoting dissonance at contested heritage sites, including places of atrocities, and the tourist's apparent fascination with death and tragedy: *dissonant heritage*, *thanatourism*, and *dark tourism* (Hartmann, 2018, p. 496). However, the focus on the relationship between sites associated with war, death and atrocity was included in heritage tourism context which explains 'dissonant heritage' (Tunbridge & Asworth, 1996) 'sensitive heritage' (Frew, 2012), 'contested heritage' (Naef & Ploner, 2016) and 'industrial heritage' and ghost town (Tang, 2018a).

So far as dissonance is concerned, Ashworth and Tunbridge (1996) argued that dissonance is intrinsic to all forms of heritage – whatever the scale, context, or locale. Dissonance is implicit in the commodification processes, in the creation

of place products, and in the content of messages which may in some cases lead to disinheritance. Furthermore, they discuss visitor motives and management strategies for atrocity sites, elaborating on how these motives and strategies differ between three groups: the *victims*, the *perpetrators*, and the (more or less uninvolved or innocent) *bystanders*. For their discussion they chose the example of the Nazi concentration camps in Central and Eastern Europe. In separate publications, Krakow-Kazimierz, the former Jewish neighbourhood in Krakow, which was featured in the 1993 movie *Schindler's List* (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996; in Hartmann, 2018, pp. 496-497).

As far as the meaning of dark tourism is concerned, many different scholars have defined dark tourism in different way. Early definitions of dark tourism, as mentioned by Light (2017b), defined the phenomenon as 'the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified death and disaster sites' (Foley & Lennon, 1996). Similarly, the related concept of thanatourism was defined as 'travel to a location wholly, or partially, motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death, particularly, but not exclusively, violent death' (Seaton, 1996). As many others have pointed out, these two concepts had different emphases: dark tourism was defined by a supply led perspective, while thanatourism adopted a demand-led approach (Seaton, 2009, p. 523). However, both definitions placed death -in particular, human death - squarely at the centre of this form of tourism. More recent conceptions of dark tourism (although not thanatourism), though, are rather broader. One influential definition states that dark tourism is 'the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre' (Stone, 2006, p.146). While reviewing about dark tourism, Light (2017) compiled altogether 15 definitions defined by different scholars who studied in between 1996 to 2017. Overall, Light (2017) categorized the whole definitions into five different categories: definitions based on practices (the act of visiting particular types of place), tourism at particular types of place, motivations, form of experience and heritage. Out of 15 definitions of dark tourism, 7 definitions incorporate 'disaster' (Foley & Lennon (1997, p.155; Preece & Price, 2005, p.192; Johnston, 2015, p.20; Foley & Lennon, 1996, p.198; Lennon & Foley, 1999, p. 46; Johnston & Mandelartz, 2016: v); Dann & Seaton, 2001, p.24; in Light, 2017, p.282) whereas the other eight definitions defined by Tarlow (2005, p. 48), Stone (2006, p. 146), Robb (2009, p. 51), Seaton (1996, p. 240), Best (2007, p. 38), Ashworth (2008, p. 234), Stone (2016, p. 23) have focused on other attractions of dark tourism.

Changing definitions of dark tourism and thanatourism based on disaster

Definitions based on practices (the act of visiting particular types of place)	
Dark tourism: "the visitation to any site associated with death, disaster and tragedy in the twentieth century for remembrance, education or entertainment"	Foley & Lennon (1997:155)

Dark tourism: “travel to sites associated with death, disaster, acts of violence, tragedy, scenes of death and crimes against humanity”	Preece & Price (2005:192)
Thanatourism: “a form of travel where tourists encounter places associated with death, disaster and the macabre”	Johnston (2015:20)
Definitions based on tourism at particular types of place	
Dark tourism: “the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified death and disaster sites”	Foley & Lennon (1996:198)
Dark tourism: “Tourism associated with sites of death, disaster, and depravity”	Lennon & Foley (1999: 46)
Thanatourism: “a form of tourism where tourists visit sites primarily associated with death and disaster”	Johnston & Mandelartz (2016: v)
Definitions based on heritage	
Thanatourism: “heritage staged around attractions and sites associated with death, acts of violence, scenes of disaster and crimes against humanity”	Dann & Seaton (2001:24)

Source: Light (2017, p.282)

Generally, there are two distinct bases for analysis is evident in the emergent work of dark tourism. On one hand, Seaton explores dark tourism or thanatourism as a behavioral phenomenon, pointing to the existence of ‘dark tourist’ or ‘thanatourist’. Thus, for Seaton, thanatourism is a form of tourism consumption. On the other hand, significant attention is paid to dark sites or attractions- the objects of dark tourism consumption- in general, and their definition, interpretation and management in particular. In either case, however, little attempt is made to delve beneath the surface of these issues, to explore differing approaches to and meanings of dark tourism’s demand and supply. Seaton and Lennon (2004; in Farmaki; 2013, p. 282) identified two main motives related to dark tourism:

- Schadenfreude (i.e. the pleasure of seeing others’ misfortune and;
- Thanatopsis (i.e. the contemplation of death). Originally, the term was coined by William Cullen Bryant (1948) to describe a nostalgia to see life through the eyes of death. It signalled the need to recycle life through death and vice versa. In other terms, we are not born to live, we are dying while growing. The neologism comes from the Greek word *thanatos*, which means death (Korstanje, 2017, p. 59).

Dark tourism is widely used as a portmanteau expression to encompass the use of heritage sites with a controversial history and sites associated with death, disaster, and

the seemingly macabre (Lennon & Foley, 2000; in Tang, 2018, p.424). Tourism scholars have endeavored to define and describe death-related tourist activity as ‘thanatourism’ (Dann, 1994; Seaton, 1996), ‘black-spot tourism’ (Rokek, 1993), ‘morbid tourism’ (Blom, 2000), ‘grief tourism’ (Trotta, 2006) and ‘atrocious tourism’ (Ashworth, 2002), phoenix tourism (Causevic & Lynch, 2011), natural disaster tourism (Miller, 2008; in Ashworth & Isaac, 2015, p.3), disaster tourism (Antick, 2013), hot-spot tourism (Pelton, 2003; in Ashworth & Isaac, 2015, p.3), holocaust tourism (Buntman, 2008), prison tourism (Strange & Kempa, 2003; In Fonseca, Seabra & Silva, 2016), cemetery tourism (Abranja, 2012; in Fonseca, Seabra & Silva, 2016), ghost tourism (Davies, 2007; in Fonseca, Seabra & Silva, 2016), battlefield tourism (Henderson, 1997; in Seaton, 2012, p.522), conflict tourism (Ryan & Kohli, 2004) (involving visits to places which are under threat) and produce a typology comprising plantation tourism, suicide tourism and doomsday tourism (Trotta, 2006; in Simone-Charteris, Boyd & Burns, 2013, p.63). This study is based on two seismic sites of Nepal under the theme of dark tourism.

Moreover, increasing academic attention has been paid over the last two decades to the phenomenon of dark tourism in general (e.g. Johnston & Mandelartz 2015; Lennon & Foley 2000; Sharpley & Stone 2009; Stone 2013; in Sharpley & Wright, 2018, p. 337), including disasters (Coats and Ferguson 2013; Gould & Lewis 2007; in Sharpley & Wright, 2018, p. 337) and motives for participating in dark tourism in particular (e.g., Isaac & Çakmak 2014; Raine 2013; Seaton 1996; in Sharpley & Wright, 2018, p. 337). However, few attempts have been made to explore the role of the media, specially the news media, in dark tourism and, specially, tourism to places of disaster (Sharpley & Wright, 2018, p. 337).

There is a growth in number of visitors to dark tourism sites in recent years. For example, in 2010, nearly 8,00,000 tourists visited the Jewish Museum Berlin, a record since its opening in 2001 (Plocki & Plagemann, 2011; in Isaac & Çakmak, 2014, p.164), while the Anne Frank House and Alcatraz Prison (Rheenen, 2011; in Isaac & Çakmak, 2014) have received more than one million visitors annually. Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia has more than four million visitors, and perhaps the most iconic dark tourism site, the Auschwitz Concentration Camp reached another record number of visitors in 2011, with almost 1, 400,000 (Auschwitz- Birkenau Memorial and Museum, 2011; in Isaac & Çakmak, 2013, pp.164-165).

In developing a typology of dark tourism consumption, Sharpley(2005) draws upon Holt’s (1995) earlier typology of consumption practice in which four ‘metaphors’ of consumption are proposed:

- Dark tourism as experience: may be consumed in order to give phenomenological meaning to tourist’s own social existence by visiting

war cemeteries/memorials; paler fantasy; battlefields and other war related museums or attractions.

- Dark tourism as play: Representing ‘paler’ experiences, consumption as play focuses upon the shared, communal consumption of dark tourism sites or experiences. Death of an individual or group of people is initial driver for collective celebration, remembrance or mourning. Thus, dark tourism becomes pilgrimage, or journey followed by the experience of ‘communitas’.
- Dark tourism as integration: Two shades of dark tourism as integration. On the one hand with evident links to the notion of consumption as fantasy, tourists may integrate themselves into the object of consumption, the fascination not being in death itself but in broader context within which death occurs. On the other hand, the darkest form is where tourists seek to integrate themselves with death, either through witnessing violent or untimely deaths (travelling, for example to the scene of disasters or murders) or, in the extreme perhaps, travelling in the knowledge or expectation of death.
- Dark tourism as classification: In the context of dark tourism, status may be sought through undertaking forms of travel that are dangerous for the tourist. This form of consumption falls towards the paler end of dark tourism continuum and demonstrates that fascination with death may often not be the principal factor driving such experiences. If, as Sharpley (2005) proposes, there exists a ‘continuum of purpose’ of supply of dark tourism attractions, varying from ‘accidental’ supply to supply that is directly intended to exploit, for profit or otherwise, people’s ‘thanatopsis’.

Four Shades of Dark Tourism: A Typological Model

Sharpely (2009) attempted to offer a more holistic view of dark tourism by incorporating supply and demand factors. Specifically, he establishes a link between the site’s attributes and experience sought by tourists and proposed four shades of dark tourism:

- Black tourism, describing a pure dark experience;
- Pale tourism , referring to minimal interest in death;
- Grey tourism demand, describing visitation to dark sites motivated by fascination;
- Grey tourism supply, which refers to sites developed to exploit death by attracting tourists with little inherent interest in the sites.

Some prominent instances are Miles (2002), distinguishing between dark, darker and darkest sites, and Stone (2006) proposed spectrum, ranging from lightest to darkest sites. Yet this approach has been criticised as leading to an increasing dilution

and fuzziness of the notion of dark tourism as it arbitrarily combines markedly diverse visitor experiences (Sharpeley, 2009).

Seven Dark Suppliers

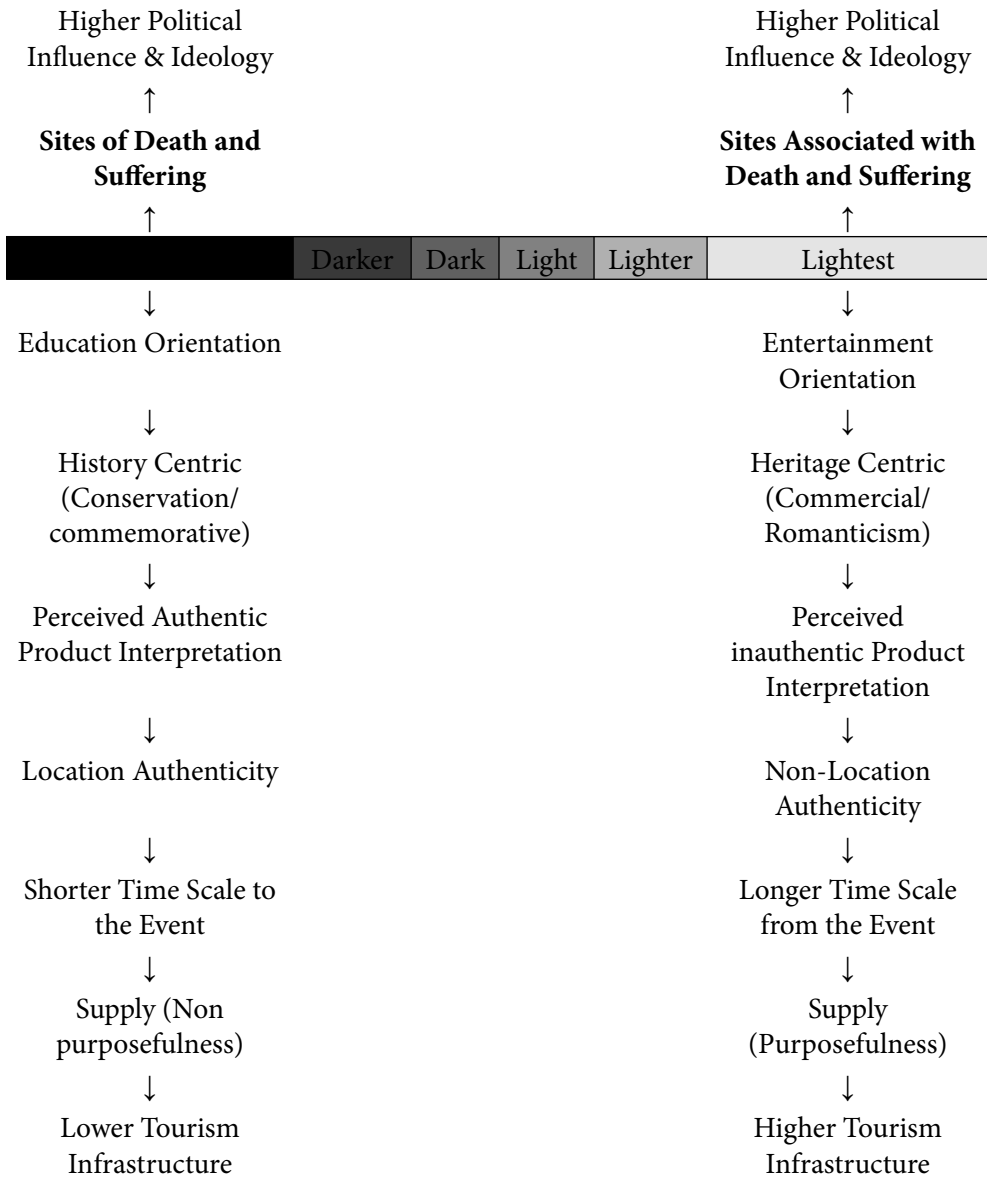
Stone's (2006) seven typological products enrooted in the curiosity of death which transmit a set of different messages to society: a) dark-fun factories (entertainment based on simulated suffering of others), b) dark exhibitions (learning opportunities), c) dark dungeons (penal codes and reinforcement of law), d) dark resting places (romantised sites of commemoration), e) dark shrines (secondary or peripheral sites of remembrance for victims), f) dark conflict sites (commoditization of battles and wars), g) dark camps of genocide (sites where genocide has been practiced). Every typology of dark sites encompasses a specific discourse transmitted once and once again to a wider range of tourists who manifest variety in their expectances.

According to Biran et al. (2011), dark tourism motivations could be grouped into four factors, namely: 1. "see it to believe it" (participants' interest in seeing the site out of a need to believe that such atrocities really happened); 2. "Learning and understanding" (participants interest in being educated about Second World War and the atrocities that took place in Auschwitz); 3. "famous death tourist attractions" (general interest in sites of death, willingness to see the real site, and feel empathy with the victims); 4. "emotional heritage experience" (the desire to connect to his/her heritage and have an emotional experience). Preece and Price (2001; in Ryan & Kohli, 2006,p.214) in a study of Port Arthur, proposed, based in interviews with visitors, three main themes of visitation, these beings a) learning ; b) historical interest and c) a fascination with the abnormal or bizarre.

Dark-light Spectrum Scale

The spectrum identifies different categories of visitors identified at the burial grounds, ranging from "darkest" to "lightest" tourists (Raine, 2013, p. 242). Stone (2006, p.146) points out that certain sites may be darker than others due to their characteristics, perceptions and product traits. Using his model each dark tourism product can be described and analyzed. According to darkest-lightest framework of supply (Stone), the continuum represents different levels of contact with the dark provided by dark tourism sites. On the left side of the image we can see the darkest tourism that concerns the site where death and suffering have actually occurred like Auschwitz (Poland) the world's most dark destination, symbolizing the genocide of thousands of Jews at this level the main goal to educate tourists about the place/event. On the right side of the color scale we are able to see the lightest tourism which is performed at sites merely associated with death, and therefore need to possess excellent touristic infrastructure created with the intention of being attractions and entertain the tourists, one example is the Dracula Park (Fonseca et al., 2016).

Figure: Dark-light spectrum scale



Source: Stone, 2006, p. 150

Based on Stone's spectrum scale, cemeteries lie on the darker end of the spectrum. They are sights of death, giving educational, history-centric information and interpretations of the past. Furthermore, they are unstaged, authentic sites with no

purposeful supply, providing low-level infrastructure. However, there is much more to cemeteries than darkness as many cemeteries around the world prove.

Motivation

Curiosity is an important push travel motivation for thanatourism. According to Crompton (1979), curiosity is a synonym of novelty, and a search for new experience, which results from actually seeing something rather than simply vicariously knowing about it. A sense of “ought to see” initiates the selection of a destination. Likewise, curiosity about the hidden features of punishment and extraordinary disasters pushes people to travel and pulls the curious from around the world to dark sites (Strange & Kempa, 2003). Blom (2000) suggests four similar motivations to visit dark sites:

- tourists seek to experience something different than happens in their everyday lives;
- there is competitive demand in the tourism market to create new and unique attractions;
- tourists are searching for “catharsis” (p. 34), which can be achieved by confronting unpleasant events to which we have no personal or individual connection; and
- the media exposes us to new places and people we would not be aware of under other circumstances, thus generating interest in visiting such sites (Raine, 2013,p. 243).

Authenticity

In the study of dark tourism, Sharpley and Stone (2009) follow MacCannell's concept and they write ... the tourist as pilgrim seeking to challenge the discontinuity of modernity is fundamental to understanding the need for an emotive, affective or authentic component in dark heritage interpretation. The consumption of dark tourism sites or attractions may be driven by the need not only to remember or commemorate the death/ suffering of others, but also to confront and contextualize it within the individual tourist's own social world. Thus, Sharpley and Stone emphasis to show the link between the consumption of experience of the site and its subsequent contribution to identity creation. As considered elsewhere, the consumption of goods and services in general, and of tourism experiences in particular, is related to their social significance (Munt, 1994; in Sharpley& Stone, 2009, p. 117).

Interpretation

‘Interpretation is an essential component of visitor experiences at attractions’ (Moscardo & Ballantyne, 2008, p. 237; in Sharpley & Stone, 2009, p. 113). It provides the link between an attraction and its visitors it is the process by which a place,

an event, history, a building, a collection of items or more generally what may be referred to as heritage is accorded meaning which is then communicated by one means or another to the visitor. Interpretation plays a key role in this process, acting as a 'filter' to emotional responses to a dark site or attraction. On the one hand, appropriate interpretation may enhance the visitor experience and fulfil the need for understanding and meaning. On the other hand, interpretation that misleads, trivializes, commercializes the experiences may act as a barrier.

Emotion

Emotion can be defined as felt short-lived responses to external stimuli (Reeve, 2008; in Asworth & Isaac, 2015, p. 4). Emotions are ubiquitous in tourism (Aho, 2001; in Prayag, Hosany, Muskat, & Chiappa, 2015, p. 1), play a central role in defining memorable experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011), and are the most relevant component of affect to the travel industry (Mitas et al., 2012; in Prayag et al., 2015, p. 1). According to Tarlow (2005), there are four basic emotions which interact on a dark tourist psychological state: insecurity, gratitude, humility and superiority.

Ethical Dilemma of Dark Tourism

Significant debate surrounds on whether is it ethical to develop, promote or offer the dark sites for touristic consumption or not i.e. viewing platform at Ground Zero, enabling voyeuristic visitors to stand alongside those mourning the loss of loved ones (Lisle, 2004). The rights of those whose death is commoditized through dark tourism represent an important ethical dimension deserving consideration. Dark tourism in some cases, result in the transformation of violence into one more attraction, wedged in between more typical tourist activities. When atrocity becomes a recreational attraction, visitors are themselves inflicting further violence as they search out unique and authentic experiences. Ethically one must question whether tours undertaken in the name of social justice or global awareness are actually experienced as such or whether they might instead work to mask the recreational, voyeuristic allure of violence. At times dark tourism can produce "recreational grief" (West, 2004, p.11; in Robb, 2009, p.55) a form of grief in which mourning the deaths or afflictions of others becomes an enjoyable past time. In terms of supply- there has been increasing number of people keen to promote or profit from 'dark' events as tourist attractions. At the same time, there is evidence of greater willingness on the part of tourist to visit dark attractions.

Criticism of Dark Tourism

Writing about "Reconceptualization dark tourism, Biran and Poria (2012) point out that the "dark" adjective need not necessarily directly equate with death. Dark tourism can be and umbrella term. It can link to the viewing of suffering, to dark play, to schadenfreude, and to mediation upon mortality- often through the sublime (Skinner, 2018, p.141).

Although dark tourism research prompts important discussions about the intersections of touring and death, Sharpley (2005: 216) rightly notes that ‘dark tourism literature remains eclectic and theoretically fragile, raising more questions than its answers.’ Likewise, Keil (2005: 481; in Bowman & Pezzullo, 2009, p. 188) argues that ‘[the dark tourism] phenomenon has so far been inadequately described, and lacks a theoretical relationship to wider studies of violence and by-standing.’ Even so, many who have questioned the term thus far have exacerbated the problem by trying to identify different ‘shades’ of or umbrella terms for ‘darkness’ without challenging the term itself (e.g. Miles, 2002; Strange & Kempa, 2003; Sharpley, 2005: 224–26; Stone, 2006; Bowman & Pezzullo, 2009, p. 188). Lennon & Foley (2000: 11) offer no explanation for their choice of terms and state that they ‘do not wish to enter into any philosophical debates’ over its use. However, the negative valence of the term is unmistakable in western cultures: ‘dark’ is understood as a place devoid of light.

Disaster Tourism

In course of studying disaster tourism, first and foremost one should understand the meaning of disaster. According to Oliver-Smith and Hoffman (2002, p.4), “A disaster is process/ event combining a potentially destructive agent/force from the natural, modified, or built environment and a population in a socially and economically produced condition of vulnerability resulting in a perceived disruption of the customary relative satisfactions of individual and social needs for physical survival, social order and meaning”.

Information about disasters and their effects draws human attention and also play an important informative and education role. Individuals who participate in this type of tours are typically curious to see the results of the disasters and often travel as part of an organized group (Fonseca et al., 2016, p.2). One of the oldest disaster tourism sites are Pompeii and Herculaneum, where tourist can learn about the history and aspects of the Vesuvius’ volcanic activity and experience the unique attraction of seeing casts of human remains preserved in volcanic ash (Ruchinska & Lechowicz, 2014; in Fonseca et al., 2016, p. 2).

Although disaster tourism may be considered as a particular form of dark tourism, it is ‘analytically distinct’ (Rojek 1997, p. 63; in Sharpley & Wright, 2018,339) from it in a number of ways. First, disaster tourism sites are typically temporary; they attract ‘disaster tourists’ who come to witness the consequence of the event only for as long as those consequences are in evidence. Once that evidence has been removed, a site can no longer be conceptualized as a disaster tourism destination (Sharpley & Wright, 2018, 339).

‘Disaster tourism’ is becoming an increasingly pervasive feature within the contemporary dark touristic consumption (Antick 2013; Faulkner and Vikulov 2001;

Chew & Jahari, 2014). However, consumption of dark tourism attraction related to seismic memorials is highly controversial; and the continuing popularity of and fascination with such sites remains a subject of dark touristic debate within social, cultural, historical, and political contexts (Lennon & Foley 2000; Sharpley & Stone 2009; in Tang, 2018, p.423). Yet, less discourse has been given to the critical issue of dark sites related to seismic hazards, a subset of the totality of dark tourist attractions. In recent years many memorial sites regarding seismic hazards including earthquake, tsunami, and volcanic eruption have been established, and at least the epicenter of major earthquake have been marked, such as San Francisco Fire Dept. Museum in America, after the Great San Francisco Earthquake of 1906; Hokudan Earthquake Memorial Park on the west coast of Awaji Island in Japan, following the Kobe Earthquake of 1995; Wenchuan Earthquake Memorial Museum in China, following its 2008 earthquake; and Baan Nam Khem Memorial Park, Thailand, after the Sumatra-Andaman Earthquake and Tsunami of 2004. Visits to such memorials and museums represent a distinct type of contemporary tourism (Hartmann, 2014; in Tang, 2018, p.424). Tang's (2018) study highlights "a series of conceptual themes and debates that have emerged from the literature. This includes an appraisal of the following aspects: creation of seismic memorial sites as a contested phenomenon; consumption of seismic legacy as an ethical dilemma; perception of travel risks mediated with destination image; multi-dimensional experiences interpreted from the visit to seismic attractions. It concludes by discussing the future research and thematic directions of dark tourism to such sites within social, cultural, historical, and political contexts" (p. 424).

The natural disaster tourism can be classified as the dark tourism. Places visited are directly related to the natural events and their consequences. A part of them can also be classified as the thanatourism because of historical and cultural issues and as the blackspot-because of the violent death of a large number of people (the tsunami in 2004 and the earthquake in Haiti 300,000 people died in each case). For this, Rucińska (2016, p.1459) applied the term 'dark tourism' due to the fact that visiting these places is closely related to the location of extreme natural phenomena, not human activity (as was in the case of: the Ground Zero in New York in 2001, the JFK trail Dallas in 1964, Tunnel of the Pont de l'Alma and Memorial in Paris where the Princess of Wales, Diana died in 1997 and others as Robben Island prison, where the leader Nelson Mandela incarcerated, Auschwitz-Birkenau, located in Poland, Roman and British gladiatorial games).

They are Biran et al. (2014) who studied on the post-disaster scenario of earthquake of Sichuan, 2008 focusing on disaster, destination recovery, dark tourism, motivation and intention. There is another study on 1996 Mount Everest climbing disaster which was carried out by Kayes (2015) focusing disaster sense-making,

errors and accidents, organizational and experiential learning and teams and groups. This study is based on organizational structure and accidents rather than focusing on the ethos of dark tourism. It is Miller (2008), who studied on hurricane Katrina in United States of America in which the author analysed on landscaping, natural disasters, regeneration and tourism. Methodologically this study has been carried out through her own auto-ethnographic journey. Rucińska's (2016) study on natural disaster tourism sheds light on very important theoretical models which not only talks about natural disaster tourism but also theoretical analysed on dark tourism in relation with different natural hazards. This study is a source of following various analytical tools for understanding disaster induced tourism. Thanatourism has become the key concept in this study. Pottorff and Neal (1994) have also studied on post-disaster tourism in Miami, San Francisco one of the famous tourist destinations, which was badly affected by hurricanes and earthquakes. The authors' research was not only based on destination's impacts on tourism but also they showed that if the industry prepares well, some aspect of the industry will be economic winners following a disaster.

Seismic Event

Seismology (from Ancient Greek σεισμός (seismós) meaning "earthquake" and (-λογία) meaning "study of") is the scientific study of earthquakes and the propagation of elastic waves through the Earth or through other planet-like bodies. The field also includes studies of earthquake environmental effects, such as tsunamis as well as diverse seismic sources such as volcanic, tectonic, oceanic, atmospheric, and artificial processes (such as explosions). Of the various types of natural dangers, earthquakes are one of the most serious and unpreventable (Vare-Jones, 1995; in Tsai & Chen, 2010, p.470). Earthquakes are caused when faults rupture or break across a fault plane, a 3D surface that can lie completely beneath the ground, or can cut across the Earth's surface. The place where the rupture starts at depth is known as focus, from where seismic waves spread across the fault surface at speeds of approximately three kilometers per second (Bolt, 2004; in Orchiston, 2012, p.64). The point vertically above the focus on the surface is known as epicenter. Damage is caused by ground shaking and surface rupture, with indirect effects including landslides, lateral spread and liquefaction (Orchiston, 2012, p.64). An earthquake is a sudden and unpredictable movement of the Earth's crust caused by the release of strain that has accumulated over a long time. An earthquake belongs to the most devastating natural disasters. Earthquakes may cause many deaths, injuries and extensive property damage. Earthquakes often trigger avalanches, rock falls and tsunamis (Park & Reisinger, 2010, p.6). The occurrence of earthquakes in Christchurch, 2010; Sichuan, 2008; La' Aquila, 2009; Kobe, 1995; Taiwan, 1999; Turkey, 1999; Chile, 2010; Haiti, 2010; Mexico, 1985; Yogyakarta, 2006; El Salvador, 2001). They clearly demonstrate the catastrophic impact of earthquakes

on tourism. Following the occurrence of a disastrous earthquake, tourist related organizations and destinations are placed in a particularly difficult position, faced with the challenges of declining numbers of visitors and falling revenues.

Nepal's Gorkha Earthquake 2015

Nepal experienced a disastrous earthquake (7.8 magnitude) on 25 April, 2015 which severely hampered the tourism industry (see in detail Kunwar, 2015; Kunwar & Limbu, 2015; in Kunwar, 2016, p.13). Nepal Gorkha earthquake was triggered on 25th April 2015 at 11:56 am local time, on 7.8 Richter Scale has been found to be one of the fatal disasters in Nepal (The US Geological Survey, 2015). Following the classification of the size of the earthquake by Nepal's Department of Mining and Geology, the Gorkha earthquake is a strong earthquake. The epicenter was in Bardiya district of Nepal – about 80km north-west of Kathmandu valley. The quake lasted approximately 50 seconds affecting 32 districts out of which 14 districts being heavily affected. According to Nepal's Department of Mining and Geology, a total of 447 earthquakes having 4 or more Richter Scales occurred in between April 25, 2015, and April 22, 2016. After this the initial strong earthquake, hundreds of aftershocks occurred in Kathmandu valley and surrounding hills and mountains areas. There were 4 strong aftershocks (6-6.9 Richter Scale), 51 moderate aftershocks (5-5.9 Richter Scale) and 391 light aftershocks (4-4.9 Richter Scale). Around 773,093 private houses were completely damaged and 298,998 houses were partially damaged (Subedi, 2018). The earthquake triggered avalanches on Mount Everest and in the Langtang valley. Tens of thousands of other structures, including schools, health facilities and public government buildings, were also impacted. Several important historical sites collapsed including monuments that comprised the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) cultural heritage site. According to World Bank assessment, it tentatively listed total economic damage solely in Nepal at USD5.1 billion and valued additional economic losses (including business interruption and specific sector losses) at nearly USD1.9 billion. This value is equivalent to more than one-third of Nepal's entire Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The disaster triggered major humanitarian response from the Government of Nepal and non-government organizations. In June of 2015 seven weeks after the earthquake, the international community pledged \$US 4.1 billion dollars in reconstruction assistance to Nepal at a major donor conference held in Kathmandu. The majority of this aid was for the housing sector, and delivered in a centralized fashion through the newly created National Reconstruction Authority (NRA). The NRA, with technical assistance from international donors, devised what has been referred to as a plan for "owner-driven" reconstruction whereby households deemed eligible through a house-by-house damage assessment would receive \$2,000 in several tranches (Soden & Lord, 2018).

Earthquake in Barpak and Langtang

Earthquake and ensuing aftershocks, avalanches and landslides triggered in the aftermath killed over 9,000 people and over 1 million rendered homeless. However, the disaster preparation was only centralized in the capital city Kathmandu. The situation was largely a rural disaster (Soden & Lord, 2018), Nepal earthquake devastated many rural villages and triggered avalanches and landslides around the country. The difficult topography in the hills and mountains further complicated the access to the disaster response efforts of government and non-government organizations. Search and rescue operations were derailed.

The sites that are studied in this paper are the rural seismic sites. The epicenter Barpak in Gorkha district of Nepal – about 80km north-west of Kathmandu valley and the Langtang Valley in the Rasuwa district of Nepal is a region in the Himalayas in central Nepal which is located about 60km to the north of the Kathmandu valley are both rural seismic sites severely impacted by the Nepal earthquake 2015.

Barpak is a village situated in the northern part of the Gorkha district of Nepal, in the Sulikot Rural Municipality ward number one and two. It is inhabited by Gurungs, Ghales and Dalit. There is a graveled road from Abu Khaireney running on the bank of Daraudi River to Barpak which extended to Laprak, Gumda and upto the Manasalu base camp. The village was badly affected by an earthquake on 25 April 2015. The lifestyle is agricultural. However, a remarkable proportion of the total population is employed outside the farm/home, mostly in public services and the army (namely the British, Indian and Nepalese regiments). Remittances sent by these servicemen help significantly in the local economy of Barpak. There are many locally operated businesses such as provisions shops, pharmacies, lodges, cafes and taverns. Barpak is 45 km north of the District headquarters, 187 km west of Kathmandu, the capital city, and 139 km north-east of Pokhara, the other major city of Nepal. Barpak is at an altitude of 1,900 m above sea level on the way to Manasalu Conservation Area (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013). Barpak is in ward no 1 and 2 of Sulikot Rural Municipality.

Being close to the epicenter and lodged on a steep hillside, the village was extremely hard hit by the April 2015 Nepal earthquake. Less than 10 of 1,200 homes remain standing (Kaphle, 2015). The devastation of the earthquake caused the huge suffering in Barpak as a result it is becoming the new place to be researched and the place to visit by the people whoever related to the disaster. There were 72 casualties and hundreds of injuries. There is the process of reconstruction after the earthquake so far but the debate is still there that whether the rebuilding would be on the sloppy shaped with clustered stone roof or other so the main traditional clustered roofs are being

eliminated by the modern type of houses. Gorkha tourism requires a strategy that will help manage crises and rapid recovery from the damages and losses (Ghimire, 2016).

Barpak came to the world's notice in April 2015 when it was one of the three villages close to the epicenter of the calamitous earthquake in Nepal when hundreds of people died and 1,400 of its 1,450 houses were razed to the ground leaving most of its 11,000 residents homeless (Gordon, 2018).

Langtang was doubly devastated. Gorkha earthquake triggered landslides and avalanche came down throughout the valley. A massive co-seismic avalanche that began on the southern slopes of Langtang Lirung (7,234 m) destroyed the entire village of Langtang and released half the force of the Hiroshima atomic bomb, caused the single most concentrated loss of life anywhere in Nepal (Kargel et al., 2016). More than half the community's population of 400 were killed. 2015 (Lord & Galen, 2017). As in many villages in Nepal, settlements in Langtang Valley suffered substantial to catastrophic damage. The blast destroyed the settlements. The tremendous force of the avalanche and earthquake broke free a large deposit of debris, rock and ice about 1000 m above Langtang Village, which landed on top of the village. Enormous avalanche and the air-snow blast badly damaged houses and blew some rooftops to the other side of the valley. The settlements Singdum and Mundu were affected by similar blasts and debris. The shaking also dislodged five different snow fields and hanging glaciers sitting two thousand meters above the village. A resulting landslide swept down the steep mountainside, picking up rock, ice, and snow along the way, until, fatefully, it took out the main settlement. At the main settlement, the massive debris field lies as a marker to the destruction and loss. A memorial has been placed where the village used to sit—a ring of white prayers symbolizing death, loss, and memory. Facing a need for total reconstruction on land that bears little resemblance to its former state, community members retreated to the east of the landslide and started working to rebuild homes, teahouses, and shops.

Impact of Earthquake in Tourism

The negative repercussions of the disaster are likely to be translated into a reduced number of tourist arrivals over the next few years, reduction in tourist spending per day from US\$43 to US\$35 (as per industry sources), which would significantly affect revenues. Other nations that have experienced similar disasters have generally taken several years to recover fully with regard to tourist arrivals. It is estimated that the overall impact of the earthquakes on the Nepali tourism industry would be a reduction of about 40 percent on average over the next 12 months, and a 20 percent reduction in the next 12 to 24 months (NPC, 2015b).

Summary of Damages and Losses in Tourism Sector

Subsector	Disaster Effects (NPR Million)			Share of Disaster Effects	
	Damages	Losses	Total	Private	Public
Hotels and others	16,295	-	16,295	16,295	-
Homestays	1,720	495	1,720	1,720	-
Eco-lodges	415	-	415	415	-
Trekking trails	426	5,711	6,137	-	6,137
Your operators	7	4,924	6,137	-	-
Tourism revenues	-	47,013	47,013	47,013	-
Air transport revenues	-	4,720	4,720	4,720	-
Restaurant revenues	-	11	11	11	-
Total	18,863	62,379	81,242	75,105	6,137

Source: NPC, 2015b

Review of Literature

Though the term dark denotes devoid of light, dark tourism as a new tourism product tends to provide awareness, education and entertainment on several cases of history and heritage, tourism and tragedies. Overall the prime focus of dark tourism is grief after death caused by fatality of 'Others' (Seaton, 2009). Therefore, scholars of various disciplines, in course of studying dark tourism brought many different concepts such as "sensation sites" (Rojek, 1997), "repressed sadism" (Korstanje, 2017), "sadist spectacle" (Blom, 2000), "darktainment" (Roberts, 2018), "deathscapes" (Maddrell & Sidaway, 2012; in Yan et al., 2016, p. 110) "memorialscape" (Fridrich, Stone, & Ruksha, 2018), "backpackers" (Podoshen, 2013), "recreational grief" (West, 2004; in Robb, 2009, p.54), "mortality mediation" (Stone & Sharpley 2012; Walter, 2009), "thanacapitalism" (Korstanje, 2017), "everyday dark" (Hepburn, 2017). Multidisciplinary and Postdisciplinary approaches have become major methodological concern in dark tourism studies. Until 2016, Light (2017) has shown that 58 out of 139 studies followed qualitative research methodology in the study of dark tourism. Much of the literatures on dark tourism invariably defines the phenomenon in the context of post-modernism.

So far as dark tourism in the context of Nepal is concerned, the area which remained untouched for so long despite of the immense possibility. The discourse of dark tourism only started after 2015 earthquake although Hepburn (2012) had

already published article on dark tourism in the context of Nepal. The paper entitled “Shades of darkness: Silence, risks, and fear among tourists and Nepalese during Nepal’s civil war” published in *Writing the Dark Side of Travel* edited by J. Skinner.

The work of Hepburn’s chapter published in Hooper and Lennon’s edited book entitled *Dark Tourism: Practice and Interpretation* (2017). Her chapter, “Everyday darkness and catastrophic events: Riding Nepal’s buses through peace, war, and an earthquake” highlights the concept of “everyday darkness in Nepal” and mentions that although there are better and worse deaths, everyone dies. And although we all experience different kinds and degrees of suffering, no one dies without their share of it. This is everyday darkness. The very idea of dark tourism is premised on selective attention to instances of events that are, in fact, ubiquitous.

Besides having all above-mentioned definitions and dark products introduced by different scholars based on dark tourism research all over the world, Nepal remains a unique dark tourism’s potential supplier which has been indicated by Hepburn (2012, 2017). While reviewing Hepburn’s study which she carried out in 2012 is based on Nepal which has been reviewed by Light (2017). According to him, the conceptualisation draws on the notion of “tourism in darkness (Hepburn, 2012, p. 122) in which she argued that places of “sociopolitical danger” represent dark (or forbidden destinations) so that visits to such places constitute a form of dark tourism (Buda & McIntosh, 2013, p. 217). Where we understand that how Nepal is important from the view point of dark tourism consumption. Hepburn’s study suggests that Nepal’s landscape itself is an attraction for dark tourists even though all above mentioned different products cannot be ignored. Hepburn’s chapter tends to be a stepping stone to popularize the scope of dark tourism in Nepal and promote Nepal as a dark tourism destination. This study also shows that the tourists travelling Nepal are not only the dark tourists but also, they are adventurers who enjoy harsh realities i.e. infrastructural challenges. Nepal is that destination where the tourists will get extraordinary experiences. Recently, Rana and Bhandari (2018) published one article on Guerilla Trail from Baglung to Rolpa which deals with various aspects of darker side of travel. In course of reviewing the literatures related to dark tourism, the reviewers came across the study carried out by Robb (2009), in which she has discussed on “favela tourism” citing Scheper-Hughes’s “everyday violence” (1992:ch.6), although this concept doesn’t fully support the concept of “everyday darkness in Nepal” highlighted in the study of Hepburn (2017) it surely helped the reviewers to gain perspectives on dark tourism in a better way. At a cursory reading of this chapter, the bibliophiles might confuse this reading as a discouragement to those who are interested in travelling to Nepal, but if someone goes into the literal theme of this chapter, the realistic scenario of Nepal can be understood and a new horizon to the prospect of dark tourism in Nepal is identified. Although the text

seems descriptive, it is a great source of theoretical knowledge for academics and practical implications for visitors.

It is Kunwar (2015, 2016) who published two articles on disaster related tourism in the post-earthquake context of Nepal where he proposed to develop dark tourism as an alternative product in Langtang of Nepal, through his article entitled “tourism and earthquake: a case study of Nepal and Turkey” (Kunwar & Limbu, 2015) and “tourism and natural disaster: a study of Nepal’s earthquake-2015” (2016).

It is Kužnik (2015) who proposed Nepal as a disaster tourism destination along with other different dark tourism destinations in his article “typology of dark tourism heritage with its implications on Slovenian future dark tourism products”.

In the late 2015, Lord and Murton (2017) worked together with the people of Langtang locally known as Langtangpas and foreign volunteers on a collaborative effort called the Langtang Memory Project in the post-disaster phase. The project aimed to create a ‘living archive’ of Langtangpa culture and heritage and supported Langtangpas to tell their tales before and after the avalanche. The projects as part of a larger commitment to polyvocality in the wake of disaster—providing space for at-risk communities to describe their own conditions of vulnerability and narrate their own process of recovery (Schuller 2014;Liboiron 2015; Gergan 2016; in Lord & Murton, 2017,p.96). Although the paper does not specify dark tourism, it discusses several components of anthropology of disaster that coincides with dark tourism.

Soden and Lord (2018) presented the gaps in post-disaster scenario as *silences* created by misalignments between the narrative of loss produced by the technology supporting the government damage assessment and the lived experience and expressed ideas of the Langtang community. Building on Harley’s concept of ‘cartographic silencing’ (Harley & Laxton,2002; in Soden & Lord, 2018,p.161) they highlighted the silences related to 1) ongoing landslide danger; 2) every day and collective practices of repair; 3) trauma suffered by the earthquake survivors, and; 4) the rapidly changing vision of ‘the good life’ underway in the Valley (Soden & Lord, 2018, p.161). This paper helped the researchers to get an overview of post-disaster seismic sites and several situations that arise in the post-disaster context including the questions on disaster preparedness, resilience of community, acts of memory and post-disaster tourism which has become important source of interpreting the prospects of dark tourism in the seismic sites.

Frontier experiences are often linked with winning over death. Hence, mountaineering, expeditions and all the adventure narratives in the adventure destination like Nepal should be analyzed through the lens of dark tourism i.e. death seeking behavior, tourism and tragedies, reliving death before actually dying, myths and legends of death, history and heritage, memory, remembrance, mediating between

life and death, authenticity, emotion and experience. Frontier travel experiences are described by exponents as 'quests' in almost Arthurian language, or as odysseys, evoking the heroic journey and a desire for transformation through trials, in places 'outside one's own common realm of experience' (Zurick, 1995, p. 137; in Laing & Crouch, 2009, p. 133), also it is often linked with mythical constructs. Butler (1996, p. 216; in Laing & Crouch, 2009, p. 133), for example, notes that the 'myth of the frontier has been a powerful one', and argues that it may therefore 'be an important part of its appeal as a potential tourist destination'. The highest peak of the world has chilling landmarks on the myth and morbid history that highlights the components of niche or special interest tourism called dark tourism. People die trying to reach the top of Mt. Everest. While about 5,000 people have gotten to the top and came back down to tell the tale, 300 have not and 200 bodies remain on Mt. Everest as final resting place. Recent glacial melting, caused by climate change, has made many of the bodies previously hidden by ice and snow visible again. While many bodies are quite visible and well known, others are renowned for being lost for decades (Hendricks, 2019).

Myth and legend surrounding the deaths of climbers Mallory and Irvine on Mount Everest in the 1920s was a key motivation behind the more recent expedition undertaken by David Roberts and Conrad Anker to recover their bodies. Roberts labels this a 'quest' to 'rediscover Mallory himself, the visionary lost explorer whose body Conrad Anker found, and whose fate we may at last begin to divine' (Anker & Roberts, 1999, p. 16; in Laing & Crouch, 2009, p. 133). Mallory's body takes on the guise of the Holy Grail, and even Roberts concedes that Mallory and Irvine's disappearance has been elevated, 'to the realm of the mythic' (Anker and Roberts, 1999, p. 139) due to historical conjecture as to whether they reached the summit before they died. Another climber, Thom Pollard, who discovered Mallory's body during that expedition, also expresses deep respect to a fallen 'hero' (Anker & Roberts, 1999, p. 139; in Laing & Crouch, 2009, p. 128).

Most climbers like to be left on the mountains if they died. So, it would be deemed disrespectful to just remove them unless they need to be moved from the climbing route or their families want them. George Mallory's body took 75 years to find and was given an Anglican burial in 1999. It costs a lot of money to go get a body on the highest mountain in the world, up to \$80,000 to be precise and there is the problem of actually doing it, since some attempts to retrieve bodies are forced by difficult conditions to abandon their efforts (Hendricks, 2019).

Research Methodology

This research is based on qualitative research methods. Denzin & Lincoln (2002; in Causevic & Lynch, 2011, p. 788) argue that qualitative research has evolved and asks

for more self-reflexivity which enhances trustworthiness of the research process, thus a field workers personal reflections and introspections are recognized as an important part of critical constructionism (Hosking & McNamee,2007;in Causevic & Lynch, 2011,p.788). Scarles (2010;in Causevic &Lynch, 2011,p.788) also argue that the connection between the researcher and the respondent is achieved through intersubjective negotiation. The researchers conducted field work in Barpak and Langtang in the month of December 2018 to January 2019. Basically the subject of inquiry was based on the impact of earthquake, current status of tourism and prospects of dark tourism in the post-disaster scenario. The researchers followed unstructured and semi-structured interviews which were taken to both domestic and international tourists visiting the seismic sites. Besides asking questions to those respondents, the further questions were asked to the hoteliers, non-hoteliers, local leaders, religious leaders, tourism stakeholders of the sites and park authorities and in the case of Langtang. Both emic and etic approaches were adopted by the researchers to judge the data through pros and cons method. Besides following several methodological techniques, the third researcher followed overt participant observation including non-participant observation in the field. Both the researchers have adopted diachronic and synchronic approaches to authenticate the study. Photography has been taken as a important methodological tool. Thus, the information which has been collected by the researchers is based on descriptive in its nature.

Rationale of the Study

This research tries to justify that there is a flow of tourists in post-disaster destinations where they try to satisfy their curiosity in relationship to the natural disaster that took place there (Biran et al., 2014). This research provides a bridge in the current knowledge gap that exists related to consumer behavior and dark tourism.

This study envisions to explore how disaster/dark tourism serves as a vehicle for self-reflection in respect to how the disaster tour affects the tourists and to understand the cultural adaptation taken place in the post-disaster scenario to which Miller (2008) proposed as ‘opportunity’, ‘signs of hope’ and ‘ rebirth’(Miller, 2008,p.115). It also tries to understand the contribution of tourism industry in economic revitalization of devastated area. What is the potentiality of dark tourism in Nepal? Could seismic sites of Nepal be developed as dark tourism site?

Tourism in Barpak and Langtang

Acharya and Halpenny (2013) revealed the essence of Nepalese tourism lies in naturally beautiful rural hills and mountains and its indigenous communities with their mystical lifestyle and culture. These natural and cultural attributes can be showcased best through homestays which is prevalent in the community of Barpak. Ghimire (2016) stated that Barpak is one of the stopover village routes of trekking

around Manaslu. There are so many possibilities of developing different type of tourism in Barpak as it has so much to offer to its guests. Its rich culture, warm and friendly people, breadth taking scenes of Himalaya watching Barpak, overlooking valleys of Darauti river and Treks to Dharkey Danda, Narad Pokhari or just a chill out tour around the village and many interesting festivals. So far, the data that show the actual visitors in Barpak before and after the earthquake is not found but still Barpak is the secondary route for the Manaslu trekking. The data of the visitors at the Manaslu trekking would be the little evident to analyse the international visitors at Barpak.

Langtang is located about 174km (from Kathmandu to Syarubesi-130km; from Syarubesi to Langtang-24km; and from Langtang to Kyanzin Gumba-7km) to the north of the Kathmandu and bordering Tibet. Located in Rasuwa District, it is a high-Himalayan valley, home to a community of culturally-Tibetan pastoralists that is also considered a popular trekking destination (Lim 2008). The craftsmanship, dress, traditionally-built stone houses, and the beautifully carved wooden porches reflect their rich Himalayan heritage. Prior to the earthquake, the Langtang Valley was home to around 600 people and an important site for Tibetan Buddhism. The area became a popular trekking destination and transformed to a tourism-based economy from a pastoral yak-herding community. It is a narrow valley running east to west, wedged between dramatic 6,000 to 7,000m snow-capped peaks, the highest of which is 7,227m Langtang Lirung, to the south are the Chimse Danda (ridge), crossed by the Ganja La pass (5,122 m), and Jugal Himal, culminating in Dorje Lhakpa (6,989 m). Langtang has over 70 glaciers of varying sizes, the Langtang and Ganesh Himal mountain ranges, and high-altitude lakes including Gosainkunda, Parvatikunda, Bhairavkunda, and Dudhkunda.

Findings and Discussions

This preliminary study is influenced by Tang's (2018) article entitled "Dark Tourism to Seismic Memorial Sites" where he mentions that the treatment to the sites of earthquake has varied substantially from case to case and place to place, as evidenced by the fact that the sites have been sanctified, designated, rectified, and in some paradoxical cases—obliterated throughout the history (Foote 2003; in Tang, 2018, p.425). In some case of Haiti earthquake of 2010, where the past is too painful to carry on, the desire to forget is the initial impulse (Balaji 2011; in Tang, 2018, p. 425). In contrast, people may wish to preserve a certain discourse when a natural response to the grief of community loss occurs. Aceh Tsunami Museum in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, and Khao Lak- Lam Ru National Park in Thailand and Pacific Tsunami Museum in Chile were designed as symbolic reminders of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami disaster, as well as an educational center and an emergency disaster shelter in case the area is ever hit by a tsunami again (Steckley & Doberstein, 2011; Birkland et al., 2006; Calgaro &

Lloyd, 2008; in Tang, 2018, p. 425-426). Foote (2003; in Tang, p. 426) states that commemorative landscapes express not only power and heroism, but martyrdom, shame, and catharsis. As site of devastating earthquake, the memorial site should be equipped to deal with remembrance, with consigning the pain to the past and drawing lessons. Primary sites as Barpak and Langtang are the so-called actual sites of disasters whereas secondary sites or created sites are the memorials or the museums that are set up in other locations and they have a clear connection to a death experience or a disaster (Lennon & Foley, 2000; Wight, 2006; Wight & Lennon, 2007). There is the continuing popularity of and fascination with death and suffering that gradually change the site itself or related memorial into tourist attraction. Barpak and Langtang is no exception. As touristic packaging of death has long been a theme of the 'morbid gaze' (Blom, 2000; in Tang, 2018), many recent seismic memorial sites are becoming increasingly pervasive features within the contemporary dark touristic landscapes. The severe casualties and large magnitude result in sanctification whilst arousing extensive interests of tourist (Tang, 2018). The researchers have discussed on various dynamics of the Barpak and Langtang as a seismic memorial site in subsection that follows:

Case of Barpak

So far, the data that show the actual visitors in Barpak before and after the earthquake is not found but still Barpak is the secondary route for the Manasalu trekking. The data of the visitors at the Manasalu trekking would be the little evident to analyse the international visitors at Barpak.

No. of Tourists Visited in MCAP area

Fiscal Year	2069/70	2070/71	2071/72	2072/73	2073/74	2074/75	2075/76
No. of Tourists	4286	5331	5658	2288	5745	7203	5138
Percentage	37.68	24.38	6.13	-59.56	151.09	25.38	-28.67

Source: MCAP, Gorkha, 2019

According to the respondents it has been revealed around 20 percent of the tourists visited in MCAP come through Barpak. The flow of international tourist has been decreased just after the earthquake but domestic tourists has been increased rapidly.

Though Barpak is also the secondary route for the MCAP trekking, if the dark tourism in Barpak is promoted in the good way the tourist whoever visit MCAP, they will make a night hold in Barpak.

Chairperson of the Homestay of Barpak revealed:

three sisters home stay has been started before but after the EQ, the existence of the homestay is being challenged because of the establishment of the hotels in many numbers. Before EQ there were only six hotels in Barpak but after the disaster there are more than 35 hotels which reflects the visiting Barpak after the Earth quake has been increased.

Respondents further revealed that general capacity of the hotel in Barpak is 20-25 persons. If the whole hotels are pack in the season 700-800 tourists visit in Barpak per day which is the positive aspect of tourism of Barpak and also the excessive flow of visitors in Barpak is after the Earthquake 2015. The records in the homestay tourism in Barpak shows that in 2071 there were only 1760 tourists reached in Barpak but after EQ there are numerous increments in the visitors at Barpak that in the days of season there are more than 800 tourists visit Barpak. The season for the visitors in Barpak is Kartik to Mangshir and Falgun to Baisakh.

There are many tourist attractions which are connected directly or indirectly with death. After a natural disaster not only the close relatives of victims but also outsiders travel to the area. What kinds of factors motivate tourists to visit such places are the major concern in Barpak. If it is analysed in term of the earthquake epicenter site of Barpak as the most visited sites of the century is Tangshan Earthquake Memorial Park in Hebei, China, which was dedicated to over 240,000 victims who perished in the Tangshan Earthquake of 1976 (Tang, 2018). Only being the epicenter is not enough to promote the dark tourism in Barpak, only the people whoever interested in the earthquake and the people visited for the reconstruction is not enough. Whether the promotion of dark tourism in Barpak will count all these aspects and the models which were raised by Tang are the major concern which may give the better opportunity to develop tourism site in Barpak and to make the visitor's motivation compatible to the Barpak's attraction of dark tourism which may be beneficial to the Barpakis and the visitors as well. As Rojek (1993) coined a term black spots affiliated with the concept of dark tourism, black spots, refers to the "commercial developments of grave sites and sites in which celebrities or large numbers of peoples have met with sudden and violent deaths". Also, in Barpak 72 people died because of the earthquake 2015.

History and Heritage plays the major role Barpak is also one of the historically important places where the indigenous Ghale ethnicity resides where the houses of different specification with archaeologically importance lies and how those important habitats have been devastated by the earthquake is the major motives of visitors to visit the dark sites of disaster. Visitors motivation to visit Barpak is not only to see earthquake but also to see the uniqueness of the Barpak village.

Munt (1994) focused on post-modernist concept on tourism that society has seen a continuous move away from traditional mass tourism and package holidays to as post-modern tourism, dark tourism in Barpak is also the new phenomenon which could be promoted in such way so that the visitors could make the plan in short to visit the seismic site. Dark tourism in Barpak can provides the context for a post-modern experience.

One of the respondents noted:

instead of going to Newroad and Ason better to come to Barpak because the nature of the village is unique in Barpak and how the EQ 2072 made the devastation here and how the reconstruction has been made is the major attraction for the tourists.

Foote, 1997 focused on Cultural Values and Orientation that to grasp tourist motivation at sites of dark tourism, it is essential to understand the memorialization process of such sites. Not all sites of death, disaster, and destruction are memorialized, nor do all sites evolve into tourist destinations. Much of this commemoration is shaped by cultural values (Foote, 1997).

According to the Lama of Bouddha Gumba at Barpak:

Mortality leads to paradise while accidental deaths such as: hanging, poison will not go to paradise. According to their culture for mortality they burry the body and make *mhane* (a small Buddhist stupa) while in fatality death they burn not make burial. In case of the funeral of the deaths at the time of earthquake2015, Barpak suffered much that they are not in the condition to help each other. The family member themselves did the funeral not by making burial but by burning the dead body as they regarded the death in earthquake as accidental and they didn't made cemeteries.

In case of Barpak, because of the earthquake many rituals and the ceremonies were also omitted.

Dark tourism destinations can themselves pull visitors to their facilities, with the most common explanations being education and remembrance. Sites of death and disaster do pull people in order to learn and to remember. Some individuals might be attracted to disaster sites to see remnants of the disaster loss. Most of the respondents revealed the fact that most of the tourists come from the school and college tours which shows interest of education and remembrance of the visitors.

Survivors' Guilt as Todd (2001) describes some experience guilt because they believe they have not done enough to help out those who suffer". One of the survivors who lost four members of the family Man Bahadur Gurung- 37 who lost his Mother-

70, Neice-7, Sister in law-26 and Daughter-14 expressed the guilt that he had suffered to console to his family members now a days too. Some of the survivors are feeling guilt that at the mean time even we have lost the humanity that no houses were standing and all are suffering so they only thought of their own.

Tang (2018a) argues that the memorial site of Wenchuan Earthquake of 2008, the visits lead to a successful interpretation of both cognitive and affective experiences on site. Seismic memorial sites at Barpak will be studied in this regard that would be the good bridge between the physical as well as the cognitive meditative aspect. People's curiosity about death and disaster is insatiable; they are motivated by empathy, excitement and other psychological stimuli of varying moral worth (Uzzell, 1989).

Death and dying are natural occurrences; however, the concepts themselves are socially constructed.

...variances in cultural attitudes towards death and dying can be observed today. For many Western Christians, heaven, or the end of death, is the ultimate goal. Yet for Eastern Buddhists and Hindus, ... the arch-ordeal envisioned is not death but rather the pain of having to undergo another rebirth. It is the end of rebirths that is their goal... (Kearl, 2003, p. 3).

In Barpak the death caused by disaster are to be burnt while their actual funeral proceeding is to burry and make cemetery. The Barpakis (the inhabitants of Barpak) plan to make the memorial park where all the death of earthquake 2015 will be commemorated and memorialized. At the time of earthquake, they were not involved in the 3 days funeral ceremony but just in one days and they did in their own way that only family members engaged because they all had been suffered at that time which need to be evoked out where suffering and sentiment of the locals may affect and attract the visitors. Today, individuals continue to travel for knowledge, understanding and educational opportunities, and dark tourism sites continue to promote their educational mission. Major themes of education are: much of the understanding need travel, education seeks to prevent similar events from occurring, some sites of death and disaster draw attention from other sources much as media exposure, which may not be the authentic one as of seeing. Remembrance is vital human activity that connects to our past and our future, and the ways we remember define us in the present (Young, 1993). "As individuals and societies, we need the past to construct and anchor our identities and to nurture a vision of the future" (Young, 1993).

Respondents in Barpak said:

we all have lost the memory of the earthquake of 1990 BS in Nepal so the same may happen to earthquake 2015 too to the coming

generation. There must be the effective initiative to make the live experience of earthquake 2015 having epicenter at Barpak so that the coming generation would be aware. If such memorial work could be done in Barpak Dark Tourism will automatically promoted and the coming generation will be intended to visit the seismic site at Barpak. that remembrance connects from generation to generation.

The respondents also said that people are not interested in the meetings and the other works as the NGO/INGO provide allowance in their meeting training and seminars. The international society also played role to influence in the EQ affected area that the investment by NGO/INGO was more but only invested in the administrative work so not so productive and seen worthless except some as for example JICA did better in comparison to other. Distributing buckets, goats, train to wash hand only are not fruitful according to them, immediate relief was good but gradually it has not been effective as expected. Believers group came for the advertisement of the Christianity which shows the challenging sides of the affected or the victims right in Barpak. The observation revealed that the motivation to visit the Barpak shows that people visit the place for different reasons. To promote the tourism in Barpak after earthquake by familiarizing as the epicenter of earthquake there are many more things need to change and make. Respondents revealed that NGO and INGO are not effective except some as of JICA. Culture and tradition have not been preserved while building houses, making in their own by leaving the traditional houses and weaknesses of the technicians as they are not advocating of the fact that the old houses also be made earthquake resistance.

The direct observation further shows that to promote tourism, village specific and the space specific the certain culture and tradition must be preserved while rebuilding so that the visitors will be interested to visit Barpak. Most importantly the direct observation revealed the fact that the hope is the major motivator for the visitors at Barpak. Out of the more than 1300 houses, only 10 houses remain standing. In this horrible situation the people in Barpak are standing still with the hope of reconstruction and rehabilitation. They started to live normal life as if they are not suffered much by the earthquake. They have plan to make the memorial park and have enthusiasm to make Barpak one of the most beautiful village revived from the disastrous earthquake.

Case of Langtang

Langtang is one of the popular adventure tourism destination in Nepal. It is also considered Nepal's third main trekking region after the Khumbu (Everest) region and the Annapurnas (Horell, 2017). It is off the beaten path that goes through traditional ethnic villages and untouched forests on the way to the peaks of Langtang-Lirung.

The establishment of Cheese factory—the first of its kind in Nepal, built in the 1970s by a Swiss NGO around the time that Langtang National Park was created—serves as a kind of ‘boundary object’ that marks the transition between traditional pastoral livelihoods based on yak herding and the emergence of a tourism economy (Austin, 2017).

Foreign Visitors Statistics in Langtang

Particulars	2070/71	2071/72	2072/73	2073/74	2074/75
SAARC Country	279	277	63	157	289
Other Country	12,273	11,988	4,229	8,097	10,330
Total	12,552	12,265	4,292	8,254	10,619
% change	-6	-3	-65	92	29

Source: Langtang National Park, 2019 ; in Lamsal, 2019, p.28.

There was the drastic decrement in the visitor’s visit to Langtang in the post-disaster scenario. Langtang is still struggling to revive the tourism industry and increase the number of the visitors. Every household has turning into hotels has created unhealthy competition. A German visitor analyzing the pre-disaster and post-disaster tourism behavior in Langtang shares:

I have been here before but I noticed changing hospitality patterns and behaviour of people. Authentic mountain hospitality is lost. This place has become more commercialized. The price on the menu are so high- With Hot water 3\$ per thermus there is loss of warmth in people. I think earthquake created dependency, expectation for more and more.

There is also an increment in contact and recommendation system in this route. Both the suppliers and demanders are victims of it. And the dysfunctional tourism committee has escalated several problems like monopoly price, unhealthy bargaining, negotiation of the price, hindered freedom of choice, equality in the deliverance etc. Highlighting on the contact system.

A local hotelier shared her experience on demanding visitors and their paradoxical demands of natural versus materialistic interests as:

They say that like small houses and demand for attached bathrooms and heaters and many things that are not possible to manage on this topography. Foreigners are so demanding these days. We can’t fulfil all their demands. The price of the goods transported by porters and mules gets doubled till they arrive our place and we still have to face price negotiation with the visitors.

An Italian visitor shared his experience with a hotelier as:

You must come and stay here on your way back! -A hotelier really pressurized me that way, I responded back rude- I am not here to follow whatever you say.

The locals are pretty assured that there will be a boost in the tourism along with the stable reconstruction activities. Visitors are increasing every year. The major locations like Lama Hotel, Langtang Village and Kyanzin Gumba can accommodate at least 500 visitors per night. When asked about the tourism trends before and after earthquake. The service providers responded in this way:

I was quite hopeless about the chance of tourism revival after the earthquake, we were about to be relocated somewhere near Chitwan.

Now, I am running my own hotel at my own place-It feels great to back.

The avalanche and the force of the blast it created has turned the centuries-old village of Langtang into a monotone landscape. The disaster somewhat faded away effervescence of Langtang as a tourism site for a while and there was a phase of identity crisis and delusion within the Langtangpa community about the revival of tourism in their place and going back to normal. Langtang Valley was long considered a *beyul* (sacred hidden valley within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition), it had only recently become a tourist Shangri-La. Lost and found artifacts of life before the disaster excavated and repurposed, possessions that outlived their owners, materials laden with sorrow and hope. These objects index the contours of culture and catastrophe in Langtang.

we lost our families, we lost our property, we lost everything we had, and with the relocation idea that surfaced in the post-disaster scenario had us worry that we would lose our identity as Langtangpa. If there is no Langtang, we will lose our identity.

Many of the local residents of Langtang mentioned about the voyeuristic attitude of visitors that checked their patience at times. Although they have been involved in tourism industry for two decades, they explained they need some space and privacy which are often infringed by visitors who would cross their limits by either asking too personal questions, clicking pictures every time. They are our guests, they are paying us for the services we deliver, we have to respect them...but that doesn't mean we need to bear all their irrational actions. Some respondents believed that tourists come to Langtang not to gaze upon the mountains but to gaze upon the destruction with, perhaps, an element of schadenfreude.

Langtang is famous for its beautiful landscapes, flora, fauna, heritage... yet people like to go back in the rubble and take pictures. Is that a pleasant scene? What do you say?

We know tourists like to take pictures as a memory, but sometimes we are not ready.

“I think the natural beauty of our place is more appealing, rather than the deserted avalanche site.

Most of the respondent connected Langtang’s tourism industry based upon the leisure tourism model and thinking that’s the only alternative or way that pleases the tourists. Many local respondents ranked Langtang’s natural beauty on the top rank on the answer to the visitor’s motivation to Langtang and then the Tibetan heritage, beyul, National Park etc. Nevertheless, there was a different narrative from few respondents who realized that disaster marketed their place in the world like never before and also discussed on the prospects of tourism flourishing in post-disaster setting. There are variety of insights and retorts in regards to disaster tourism. From intolerance to voyeuristic gaze upon the misery to feeding the curiosity of the visitors on a right way in order to prevent misinterpretation of their place and experience. Langtnagpa’s resilience and evolvement over the time in relation to disaster tourism discourse is recognized after the field research.

To support this statement, few locals showed immense positivity on dark tourism possibility as noted:

we can’t change the past and we can’t lie about it either, we suffered and we bounced back, there need not be any reluctance in sharing what we went through, that is part of us now. It is better to share the real experience rather than making ourselves misunderstood by the random hunches of the visitors.

People are engaged in the cultural, psychological, and political work that helped them to move forward by accepting the uncertainty of life. Explaining the post-disaster cultural engagement work a local respondent said:

We are the mountain people. We worship Langtang Lirung as God, but it had been a few years that we missed a special ritual that was dedicated to Langtang Lirung. I along with my community members think that the massive avalanche and the destruction is the consequence of it. We have been extensively working together to fulfill all the religious and cultural affairs ever since.

Another local respondent when asked about the myths and legends about the earthquake responded that:

If Langtang Lirung gods were angry, there wouldn’t be impact on several areas of Nepal. It’s a natural disaster that happened naturally. Having said that we are guided by certain beliefs, rituals, customs that is linked with our identity and we have to continue doing it.

Combined funerary rites were organized at Yellow Gumba in Soyambu, Kathmandu on 49th day, where the Langtangpa survivors stayed for several months in post-disaster scenario. Community members and lamas conduct a *ghewa* ceremony, the final stage in the larger process of 'ritual poiesis' that facilitates the "transmutation of life" in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition (Desjarlais. 2016; in Austin, 2017). Formal ceremony was organized in Langtang village to mark the one-year anniversary of the earthquake. Langtanpa's along with the families of foreigners who lost their lives in Langtang, supporters from around the world, tourists gathered in the monotone avalanche zone to perform religious rites (*puja*) led by a group of local lamas. Diverse acts of commemoration were conducted including reading aloud the names of the deceased, unveiling memorial wall with the inscription names of people who lost their lives in the disaster, instilling white prayer flags in avalanche spot as a symbol of peace. Acts of memories and death rituals signifies the cultural coping mechanism that people of post-disaster scene engage themselves in order to recover from the suffering and despair.

On visiting the post-disaster Langtang, subtle emotions mixed with trauma, hope, frustration, could be identified in relation to the entire process of sustainable recovery, bouncing back and resettlement. The resilience and determination of Langtangpa community to lead the reconstruction phase all by themselves 'not merely as victims of disaster or idealized 'others' living in a remote Himalayan community, but as complicated people facing uncertainty, doing the best they can'(Austin, 2017).

Explaining their resilience in the post-disaster situation the present local leader explained:

The disaster created a state of dilemma among all of us. There was rampant dishonesty in relief and rescue works led by outsiders. We could identify few fraudulent practices happening around us. Hence, we formed Langtang Reconstruction Committee for community led reconstruction works. 116 household united, appointed core team. We unified to act for our own wellbeing.

Langtang reconstruction committee was formed as a symbol of local unity in times of hardship, one person from each household was member of the committee that made 116 members and Seven executive members in the Committee. The unanimous voice was represented in several forums to plan for reconstruction. Open discussion, participation, ideas of each village member was ensured in the committee. Financial transparency was the key for committee's success. Explaining about the progress of the community and motivation of the people to build back better and stronger. The representative of Langtang reconstruction committee explained:

We had to take permission from CDO office to visit our own village. We stayed as an outsider in our own country. State didn't properly address

our concerns when we were suffering from such a harsh phase. We weren't stable but determined that we have to reconstruct our village by ourselves. Other people won't understand our concern and we will end up being dependent our entire life. We have to continue on what we were doing before earthquake and we knew our skills which was based on mountain lifestyle.

Culture is joining each and every quintessence that furnishes the human flavors with the capacity to be a piece of a general public (Albense & Boedeker, 2003; in Pliakas,2017). The disaster hindered the cultural landscape of Langtang. The present Langtang valley resembles very little to what it was before the disaster. Despite an interest of rebuilding in a culturally sensitive way. In the hustle of rebuilding faster, the cultural identity of the Tibetan Buddhist community could not be promoted as the way people wanted. Traditional houses are replaced by concrete buildings with minimalistic cultural designs. Explaining the cultural catastrophe, the religious leader of the community explained:

There is very little cultural replication in the structures now. All the skilful people died. No experts to construct the old designs, it is also very expensive and consumes more resources and time. One house could be built with the cost of windows. We live in a national park area which has already endured so much of ecological devastation in post-earthquake scenario. Hence, it won't be wise to initiate the wooden heritage revival as of now.

On discussing about the preservation of the cultural heritage in Langtang valley, the local leader of the valley mentioned their effort as Mundu resident in protecting the undamaged traditional houses in Mundu and planning to change it as a museum. He said:

Old houses are encouraged to be preserved in Mundu and few in Langtang. We are planning to provide monthly allowance for households who remain stagnant with the old structures. Transforming it into museums in near future, promoting cultural and heritage tourism, collecting revenue and helping the community ticketing system etc, we can only motivate the household owners for this community initiative, we cannot restrict people from there way and plan to use their property.

Museums have been described as key institutions through which we understand our past and present identities. They are considered to "trustworthy houses of authenticity" and history and, as such, they are among the most prominent institutions for education about and preservation of the past (Sodaro, 2011, p.79;

in Frew, 2018, p.693). The dark tourism discourse has started in Langtang as a part of disaster education and museum discourse. Since the people have rebuilt their household without maintaining the authenticity. They have now realized that there needs to be an effort to preserve the settlements which were not devastated by disaster and convert them to museums. Few notables in the valley have been discussing about setting up a museum as a way to introduce new product in Langtang's tourism and an initiative to protect the authenticity related to their identity.

For Ashworth and Hartmann (2005), empathy relies upon the capacity of heritage consumers to identify with individual victims of the atrocity in question. Subsequently, Miles (2002, p.1176) regards this enabling of empathy 'between the site seer and the past victim over and above the evocation of historical knowledge' as essential to the success of dark tourism interpretation. Yet genuine empathy (defined as 'the ability to understand and share the feelings of another') with those whose lives and deaths are represented by in-situ sites of atrocity may be impossible to achieve. So many visitors visit the site of Langtang disaster, interact with locals and tell them. They could empathize on how it must feel to lose an immediate family member. But the intensity of pain is different in the case of natural death and unnatural death. The real difference of Fatality and Mortality.

A huge influx of professional outsiders was found in post-disaster setting of Langtang. In course of reconstructing the devastated village, in the very beginning many donors who arrived in Langtang were in great dilemma on how to support the community. Media is a crucial element in the consumption and supply of dark tourism experiences. Through global communication technology that transmits events almost as they happen into people's homes around the world (Sharpley, 2005) but in the case of Langtang, media hindered the destination image of the touristic place. Explaining this situation, a local activist said:

Outsiders didn't know that Langtang village and Langtang Valley are different. Media visited Langtang village only and popularized that nothing is left in Langtang. But the avalanche and earthquake affected several other villages within Langtang Valley that starts from Rimche-LamaHotel-Ghodatabela-Thanshyap-Gumbadada-Langtang-Mundu-Sindhun-Kyanzin. Previously it was named as single Langtang Village Development Committee but now under the federal system the entire valley falls under ward no. 4 of Gosainkunda Village Council.

This scenario could be correlated with the statement of Barsalou (2014). As he writes "while it is apparent that professional outsiders can indeed plan and implement memorial projects, especially if they have a qualified skill set not readily

available in survivor communities, it should always be ascertained whether they assist in bringing disparate together without creating unrealistic expectations or generating additional hostility' (Barsalou, 2014; in Freidrich, Stone, & Ruksha, 2018, p. 266). Adding up to the media led dilemma a local tourism entrepreneur said:

Even reputed media agency like BBC hired helicopter to cover the news of Langtang earthquake, only visited Langtang village, took picture and videos and published reported with the title "Langtang Gone" without visiting other villages within Langtang valley. The world got a wrong message of the impact of disaster in Langtang. We are still facing its drawbacks because backbone of Langtang is tourism industry and still people fear to visit Langtang. We complained several media agency for their misinterpretation and they realized their mistake. But is really tough to correct place image interpretation.

Realizing an urgency to the participation of locals in disaster interpretation and signifying their effort of coming together during in the post-disaster scenario local tourism entrepreneurs mentioned:

Interpretation of the disaster experience will be entirely changed if there are no local people to voice their experience.

Disaster gave us spirit to bounce back better than before. Gone are gone but we have to work for what is present now. Sleepless nights, work stress, multiple works and appointments. One day 20 meeting, same matter repeated, it was hard but we didn't stop.

To avoid the conflict and solve the dilemma in post-disaster period in Langtang, the insiders (the survivors) of the community played a very important role of coming together and decided to form a reconstruction committee on their own. The committee eased the reconstruction work, most importantly by setting up a joint bank account for the entire community where the donated amount from every donor was distributed equally to 116 household. Even bringing and coming together demonstrated few conflicting expectations, priorities, memories, and realities which were shared by the then reconstruction committee members and the community people during the interview.

The reconstruction realities were narrated and interpreted by the committee members in different way by prioritizing their present ameliorations (political, social, personal, economical). Referring to a foreigner who was clicking the pictures of a lady eating porridge in her relative's courtyard and recalling the dissatisfaction in reconstruction period an old lady said:

They click pictures of poor people like us and when in need they select their own people.

Contrasting to her statement one of the executive members said:

There was equality in relief process. Minimum requirement was fulfilled. Each household has four room. Every community has rich and poor but we assured minimum demand of people. Committee really helped as catalyst to revival

This could be linked with the concept of dissonant heritage. As Asworth and Hartmann (2005:253) define, dissonant heritage is a “lack of congruence at a particular time or place between people and the heritage with which they identify”, characterized by (re) presenting painful pasts. Therefore, it is crucial for the researcher of this study to ‘identify, determine, and attempt to alleviate narrative tensions within the interpretation of dark tourism sites’ (Freidrich et al., 2018, p. 266).

What were the main reasons for you to visit Langtang valley? When the researcher asked this question to the visitors, the majority of the respondents stated that the main reason for visiting Langtang was because of its adventure and tourism features i.e. beautiful landscapes and mountains, scope off-beat travel and adventure, wildlife, wilderness, remoteness, comradery. The third most popular trekking route of Nepal has been benefited through the word of mouth marketing principle and preferred by beginners, short-term travellers and cultural enthusiasts. This covers the context of the pre-disaster scenario and disaster unknown tourist perception of Langtang. This is how the visitors explained their primary motivation to the place:

I came here during extreme cold because I can bear cold but can't tolerate hordes of tourists. I like it peaceful. Off- beat trails, ethnicity and culture.- Visitor from France

It can be completed within 1 week; it matched my schedule. Hence, this is my second visit to Langtang in year 2018 only.- Visitor from Thailand

I heard that Langtang is best for off-beat travel and adventure, beautiful mountains. It was recommended by a friend. – Visitor from England

Recommended by a friend who is a mountain Lover. Choose Langtang also because I could support the community by his visiting here. I visited most of the guest houses...purchased their food and services... since everyone were inviting to stay at their place... that was least I could do...- Visitor from Italy.

Despite this one of the reasons that frequently emerged as the first answer to the question there were several more motivations that the researcher was able to

discuss with the respondents was the disaster induced tourist motivations. Langtang valley became popularized in tourism market with the magnitude of the avalanche it suffered in the aftermath that swiped of the entire Langtang village situated at the altitude of 3430m which is the prominent landmark and stopover to every visitor passing to Kyanzin Gomba, 3,850m the last settlement of the valley. The visit to the avalanche site appears to be 'a must' when visiting Langtang valley because it falls on the main trail. The spot of the disaster is so confronting that every adventure tourist who visited Langtang for adventure purpose will incidentally turn into dark tourist because of the curiosity that arises in them when they see the intensity of the damage. The monotone area spread almost 1 km where former Langtang village was situated resembles nothing to its former state is filled with rubbles, big rocks, debris of older settlement, white prayer flags, small pond, a five storied building in the corner that survived avalanche. The walk through the disaster site triggers a lot of questions in the visitors and despite the curiosity they will have to be limited with the information provided by their guides and their conversation with their hotel owner. The researcher has accumulated few statements of the visitors who passed the disaster site:

We didn't know about it before coming to Langtang. We felt very sad while walking through the site of devastation.-

Didn't knew about avalanche, only knew of earthquake. Who enjoys watching devastated sites?- I could not imagine the intensity of the damage it made in the lives of people.-

I see this place as it is now and want to contribute for better-looking back would not be an ideal idea-I don't want to dig into their personal stories- but rather believe that they need our support to heal- Their resilience must be respected.- French Visitor

I was so curious about the entire incident, asked a few questions to the locals but was very reluctant to dig into their person life.- Irish Visitor

Mountains are the danger zones for most of the German's, they don't like taking risk", that's why they hire porters and guides, I couldn't do that because I can't afford it as a student. I thought it would be risky to visit this place, especially with all the bad things that I heard from the news. I can now recommend this to anyone.- German Visitor

We skipped our college trip to Mardi and choose Langtang, because we like off-beat trail like these." We heard about the intensity of the damage that this place went through and wanted to explore that along with the beautiful Himalayan valley.- Group of Nepali Students

Wow, this is huge - the stones, rubbles, glacier bridge, sandy road, prayer flags, mules passing by, mane, yak...I was capturing all of it ...I was walking alone through the devastated site. I only knew the story when my guide briefed me afterwards. I could sympathize only. -Thai Tourist

Avalanche spot is very triggering- questions can't be avoided. It definitely generates curiosity in every visitor that pass by. The curiosity of the visitors must be treated well in an official way. – Swish Visitors

Everyone has to pass the Avalanche site...that's unavoidable and so is the curiosity.

Educative module of the disaster needs to be launched.- Hongkong

We want to know a lot of things about the disaster and it's damage but afraid to pinch or trigger the locals.- Japanese Visitor.

We felt like coming to a new place... this settlement seems new to me...I had wonderful stay, was inspired by the warmth of people back in 2009. We hope we could help this community in certain way. I knew a lot of people, feels sad to know about their death, it is distressing to witness this reality. The old Langtang is still in our memory. -The former visitors

To sum up, adventure tourism in Langtang is already commodified earlier before earthquake but after disaster a new possibility of dark tourism has been identified with the patterns of visitors thinking about disaster, dead and suffering. This will be consumed by the tourists on one side and getting adventurous activities on the other. Langtang visitors will experience with repressed sadism (disaster, death and suffering) which compels them to memorialize with invisible debris of dead buried under the avalanche site. Until before earthquake the tourists used to get only one benefit now in the post-disaster the prospective tourists would get multiple benefits with features of darkness and adventure respectively. This could be called as “darventure” (dark+adventure=darventure) as a new form of dark tourism as coined by Kunwar, R. R., 2019 in his lecture series.

Dark tourism projections based on Barpak and Langtang.

While analyzing the sites through dark tourism lens, the researchers figured out that Barpak and Langtang as a seismic memorial site has few similarities and differences based on dark tourism theme. Noting that there are diverse motivations in visiting the seismic memorial sites as Robinson (2015) examines dark tourism motivations as mind boggling and multi-layered. It is recognized as subjective experience which will fluctuate starting with one individual then onto the next

including their relationship to the site (Robb, 2009). Researchers of this study have attempted to conscript the common possibilities of dark tourism in Barpak and Langtang in following headings:

Adventure Tourism

Adventure is presented as multidimensional fields of experience and investigation. Adventure is commonly viewed as form of what Lyng (1990, 2005; in Priest & Bunting, 1993, pp.265-266) calls “edge work” and attempt to negotiate that razor’s edge between life and death, order and chaos, control and uncertainty, as such offers a consumption experience that is extraordinary and redolent with rich symbolic resources. Six dimensions of adventurous activity and experience are introduced: territoriality; duration; transcendence; risk; coping; and routinization (Vester, 1987, p.12). By contrast, commercial adventure tourism has been described as ‘manufactured adventure’ (Holyfield, 1999) and presents a paradox” as described by Holyfield, Jonas & Zojicek (2005, p.114). The adventurer, according to Jansson, seeks new experiences in new environments (without serious risk) primarily for the sake of personal challenge and arousal, and this may lead to a total rejection or total adoption of technology in order to put him or herself ‘on the line’ (Jansson, 2006; in Burns & Novelli 2008, p. 153).

Mountains provide a broad range of adventure, challenges from soft ecotourism hikes, to moderate exertion trekking, to highly skilled technical climbing Lew & Han (2015, p. 38). Mountains, frontier travel experiences and adventure tourism have many components that matches the dark tourism discourse. Although there are several tourism scholars who are in favor of introducing, promoting and developing dark tourism in the frontiers there has not been specific studies that highlights this chronicle.

Many international tourists go to Manasalu, Larkepass and Chum Valley via Barpak. This might create an opportunity to promote Barpak as the adventure tourism destination. Also, Manasalu Conservation Area Preservation route will be diverted to the primary route via Barpak as the route will be replaced by the Budhi Gandaki Hydro Power so Naradpokhari and Morchakharka base camp will be the main route. This will benefit Barpak. So far as Langtang is concerned, it is third-most popular adventure tourism destination after Khumbu and Annapurna region. The region transformed into a tourism-based economy through mountain attractions wedged between 6,000 to 7,000m, rich flora and fauna, situated in Langtang national park the place hosts many adventure activities. In course of undertaking adventures activities in Barpak and Langtang, the tourists will be at risk which is one of the chief features of adventure tourism to which scholars use the term as risk recreation. Risk recreation can be defined as recreational activities containing elements of risk

or danger that are experienced in a natural environment, in which the actions and abilities of the participant play roles in the final outcome of the experience (Ewert, 1989; in Ewert, 1994, p.4).

Museum

Sheng and Chen (2012; in Korstanje, 2012, p.57), paid attention over the five key factors that may very well determine the museum attractiveness : a) easiness and fun, b) cultural entertainment, c) personal identification, d) historical reminiscence and e) escapism. Museums allow combining emotional and spiritual factors to create the tourist experience (Sheng & Chen, 2012; in Korstanje, 2012, p.57). In case of Barpak the existing Victoria Cross museum is one of attractive sites but after the earthquake those unique architectural patterns has been changed which is one of the center of observation and also it has been proposed the museum for all the architectural remnant of Barpak. In case of Langtang, the proposal of museum establishment project in Mundu village of Langtang highlights the component of historical reminiscence and cultural entertainment (Sheng & Chen 2012; in Korstanje, 2012, p.57).

Remembrance through memorialization projects

Remembrance entails a commemoration of those whose suffering and death one may not have personally witnessed, but is not yet history. When memory is not first hand, it turns into remembrance or history, genealogy, or ancestry ...and doubtless other possibilities too (Walter, 2009, p. 47). If there is no formal way to care for the dead, all that is left is to remember them. If a shrine is where the dead are cared for, prayed to and where guidance is sought from them, a memorial is more simply place of memory. Memories may be internal to the individual visitor, or shared within the group, but a memorial is not designed to be a place of interaction between the living and the dead-or at least, not officially. Post-disaster memory projects are initiated in Barpak and Langtang in different way. Barpakis have allocated the 216 ropani (Nepali measurement of land) of land to build the Memorial park which depict the memory of all the deaths all over the country in earthquake. Within the Memorial park, 14 pillars for the Earthquake highly affected districts, statue of all the deaths of Earthquake 2072 (9000 deaths) in the memorial park, clock showing 11:56 am in one pillar and every Baisakh 12 celebrate Earthquake Memorial Day were proposed. In Langtang, the inception of Langtang memorial project aimed to create a 'living archive' of Langtangpa culture and heritage and supported Langtangpa to tell their tales before and after the avalanche. The projects as part of a larger commitment to polyvocality in the wake of disaster—providing space for at-risk communities to describe their own conditions of vulnerability and narrate their own process of recovery (Schuller, 2014; Liboiron, 2015; Gergan 2016; in Lord & Murton, 2017, p. 96).

Edutainment

For Cohen, dark tourism epitomizes an instrument which very well can be used for educative purposes (Korstanje, 2017, p. 61). The dead may be encountered for educational purposes. Dark tourism sites represent unique opportunities for learning not only about the historical facts of atrocity and disaster, but also human experiences of and responses to them, including our own (Roberts, 2018, p.628). The dead, like much else from the past, are used to educate and entertain today's massed- as they were too in 18th-century public executions (Walter, 2009, p. 48). To which Roberts (2018; Dale & Robinson, 2011) called 'darktainment', which identifies both dark attractions that attempt to entertain (Robinson & Dale, 2009 b; in Dale & Robinson, 2011, p. 213).

Barpak and Langtang could be also developed as educational sites. As educational visits to the dead, whether in the classroom through books or at heritage sites through educational tourism, are the basis of the teaching of history. Sometimes the dead are physically present, as in exhibitions of mummies and bog bodies. The exhibition, like all popular yet purportedly serious exhibitions, museums and heritage sites, and indeed like comparable television documentaries, is edutainment (Walter, 2009, p.48).

Dark Tourism: opportunity in Barpak and complimentary in Langtang

Citing Dunkley's (2005) recommendations on various inspirations that may hasten visits to dark tourism destinations. Researchers realized that the case of Barpak coincides with the components of dark tourism authenticity (Dunkley, 2005) and the need to recognize the truth of a place's or individual's presence. Barpak being the epicenter of Nepal earthquake 2015 and observing the trends of tourism that increased drastically after earthquake. Hence, dark tourism comes as an opportunity in the case of Barpak. So far as Langtang is concerned, the popular adventure tourism destination was severely impacted by the earthquake. There was drastic decrement of visitors in post-disaster scenario. The tourist flow is increasing over the years but not yet reached the statistics before 2015. The major motivation of people visiting Langtang is because of its popularity as adventure tourism destination. Hence, the case of Langtang coincides with the components of dark tourism convenience (Dunkley, 2005; in Dale & Robinson, 2011, pp. 205-217) when a fascination is situated in a renowned trekking destination. Dark tourism can be considered as a complimentary phenomenon in the case of Langtang.

Conclusion

There is a considerable amount of theoretical research available on dark tourism, but there are very few academic studies that provide any empirical research on visiting a seismic site as post-disaster destination for dark tourists. This study follows the dark tourism definitions which highlight disaster situations as a part of

dark tourism experience which is qualified by “the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified death and disaster sites” (Foley & Lennon, 1996, p.198). This research can be considered a preliminary investigation into Dark tourism experiences in Barpak and Langtang, the mountainous seismic memorial sites of Nepal.

There are diverse motivations in visiting the seismic memorial sites. Robinson (2015) recognized dark tourism as subjective experience which will fluctuate starting with one individual then onto the next including their relationship to the site (Robb, 2009). There are many types of dark tourism and the motives of the visitors are all different (Chang, 2014; in Pliakas, 2017). The flow of the internal and international tourists and their motivations and benefits show the prospects of dark tourism in Barpak and Langtang. Barpak as an epicenter and Langtang as a doubly devastated seismic site can be promoted as memorial site in order to educate people of the disaster and intensity of damage which may arouse extensive interests of tourist. The individuals or groups whoever interested to visit the seismic memorial sites of earthquake 2015 will be benefited and well-motivated in the different aspects as of: culture & tradition, environmental, heritage identity, suffering, commemoration, economic, security, ecological, psychological, remembrance, educational, ethical, memorial, humanitarian aspect and more importantly edutainment. This is what Roberts (2018) called dartinment. To fulfill all these motivations and make more beneficial through the dark tourism in Barpak and Langtang, it is necessary to promote the dark tourism by accessibility, attraction, interpretation, accommodation and reconstruction. As Cohen (2018) emphasizes that dark tourism should be globalized because tourism itself is a globalized.

The commoditization of sites related to seismic hazards is highly contested (Tang, 2018). And, it is even delusional in countries like Nepal where even the Post-Disaster Recovery Framework (2016-2020) doesn't address the scope of disaster tourism/dark tourism. Many people are not aware of the concept of dark tourism often confuse dark tourism with the deterioration or the negative consequences of tourism industry which is not true. Therefore, the researchers of this study suggest for not taking it as negative deviance as many countries have already developed the concept of dark tourism and benefited from it. This study shows that Nepal has a lot of scopes of dark tourism (Kunwar & Karki, 2019). Besides Barpak and Langtang, there are various dark tourism themed sites of Nepal which could be developed as dark tourism sites in Nepal such as: Mortality gaze: Pashupatinath (Kathmandu); Memory and Remembrance: Rani Mahal (Palpa), Rani Pokhari (Kathmandu); Battlefield: Jomsom (Mustang); Tourism and Tragedies: Mt. Everest (Solukhumbu); Accident: Kakani (Kathmandu); History and Heritage: Royal Museums (Kathmandu), Timal (Kavre); Natural Disaster: Jure (Sindupalchowk), Barpak, Langtang, Dolakha; Major conflict

sites (various places of Nepal), Guerilla Trek (from Baglung to Rolpa) could be the major attractions of dark tourism in Nepal.

This study is a product of dark/disaster tourism induced by earthquake 2015 that killed 8,790 people and more than 22,300 people were injured. Out of 31 districts affected from the earthquake, 14 districts had severe impact. This could be the darkest event in the history of Nepal with a lot of dark/disaster tourism research opportunities, as Raine (2013, p. 242) and Stone (2006) stated that dark tourism spectrum identifies different categories of visitors identified at the burial grounds, ranging from “darkest” to “lightest” tourists (Raine, 2013, p. 242). Several sites could be commoditized as Nepal’s dark tourism product. The researchers hope that this study could be a milestone for prospective researchers in the field of dark tourism.

Adventure tourism in both Bardiya and Langtang is already commodified earlier before earthquake. After disaster both destinations reflect a new product of dark tourism and popular adventure tourism destinations. The prospective tourists visiting Bardiya and Langtang may not know about the disastrous events. When they reach at the proposed destinations, they will come to know regarding the tragedies that might instantly change their mind thinking about disaster, death and suffering. Ultimately this will be consumed by the tourists on one side and getting peak experience from their adventurous activities on the other. Thus, the tourists might realize, consume and enjoy from nature and culture. Though the trekking seems to be most important activities in these seismic memorial sites, Bardiya visitors will experience with authenticity as an epicenter and Langtang visitors will experience with repressed sadism (disaster, death and suffering) which compels them to memorialize with invisible debris of dead buried under the avalanche site. Until before earthquake the tourists used to get only one benefit i.e. peak experience. In the post-disaster the prospective tourists visiting both sites would get multiple benefits with features of darkness and adventure respectively. This could be called as “darventure” as a new form of dark tourism in future.

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