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**Promoting Employment and Preserving Cultural
Heritage: A Study of Handicraft Products Tourism in
Pokhara, Nepal**

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Abstract

Handicrafts form a fundamental part of tourist experience representing local traditions and indigenous population's talents and skills, income and job opportunities. This paper aims at exploring the role of handicraft products in promoting employment as well as preserving the cultural heritage of Pokhara. The study result reveals that there is a significant level of correlation and dependency between handicraft products and tourist's arrival, job creation and the increase in income and social status of artisans and handicrafts shopkeepers. As a unique experience for tourists, handicraft products have enriched national economy, identity and promoted cultural heritage, uniqueness and authenticity, and cultural commercialization. However, handicraft is not just about commercialization of cultural arts or displaying and selling products, it is about allowing tourists to truly understand the skill and the craft at rear and realize handicrafts unique tradition, linking tourists to artisans to facilitate them understand and appreciate the art. Further it is about how culture is recognized through display of a new self-representation or 'enterprising spirit', but not with the total loss of primordial 'pure culture' albeit an authenticity of hybrid culture. Lack of effective advertisement and marketing, inequitable price, scarcity of raw materials, intrusion of

Keywords

*Handicrafts,
commodified
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foreign goods, ineffective government policies are the crucial tribulations of handicraft products tourism in Pokhara. State policy improvement, increase in supply of raw materials, creative production and marketing are the ways that can promote handicrafts market. It is necessary recognizing the prominence of handicraft products tourism as a prodigious agent for preservation of traditional craft, methods of production and an effective means of sociocultural and economic empowerment, cultural renovation and national identity building.

Introduction

Despite the growth of tourism in previous years, tourism in 2020 has seen a great fall due to COVID-19 pandemic. After an agonizing spring that wiped out billions of rupees in revenues and rendered thousands of workers jobless, Nepal's tourism industry is bracing for further challenges. Despite this, the universal demand for tourism will continue to proliferate at normal time with economic growth that creates opportunities for its consumption as a lifestyle option across cultures of the world. The human desire to travel and the stretch of recreational tourism into distant locations replicates a desire to connect up to local lives for pleasure, touring, business, entertainment, accommodation, adventure etc. Robinson and Picard (2006) affirm that the desire by the tourists to encounter and experience different cultures as well as their materials and non-material/intangible expressions are the strong motivations behind the growth of tourism. Bhatia (1982) argues that humankind has always had the desire to travel to visit exotic place and encounter different cultures. For Kunwar (2002), tourists are temporary visitors staying at least 24 hours in country visited with a purpose. The most significant aspect of tourism is its economic dimensions. Tourism is inseparable part of development programs and also a solution to problems such as unemployment, social and regional disparities (Punia, 1997). Mill and Morris (1985) assert that other than approaching tourism sector as a tool for the development of the whole economy, it brings economic benefits to common people. Heritage and cultural tourism focuses on heritage and cultural attractions which are varied and may include traditional practices, handicrafts and cultural performances (Smith et al. 2010; Fernandes, 2013). Handicraft products tourism is a persuasive catalyst to develop tourism even at the difficult time and perform as a champion for the development of a vibrant tourism sector which contributes to sustainable economic growth, job creation, poverty alleviation, and protection of the natural and cultural heritage.

As an integral part of tourist experience, handicrafts represent local traditions and indigenous populations, they also symbolize the places visited by tourists, the experiences they had, and a souvenir to be taken for friends and relatives (Akhal et al. 2008). Hume (2013) affirms that the ubiquitous presence of souvenirs in global cultural circuits has depicted the relevance of popular culture and the ways

souvenirs are made in an increasingly globalized environment and how their fluidity affects production processes and material signification. Besides evoking wonderful memories by tourists when taking a good quality handicraft home, it arouses the interest of others who see it to visit the destination (UNWTO, 2018). Markwick (2001) affirms that the handicraft industries are of particular interest since handmade articles constitute ideal souvenirs and, if widely produced, may act as powerful tourist attractions. Further, the performance of the craft industries is dependent on tourism in terms of tourist arrivals, expenditure, length of stay and so forth.

Mustafa (2011) asserts that manufacturing traditional artistic handicraft objects generates both income and employment opportunities. Further, there is a natural link between handicrafts and tourism as these two are inextricably connected, with mutual advantage in building and promoting one sector to support the other. For Vijayagopalan (1993) the importance of handicraft is both cultural and economic. The cultural importance of handicrafts leads to the preservation of the heritage, traditional skills and the art. Its economic importance lies in high employment potential, low capital investment, high value addition, and potential for export/foreign exchange earnings. Ramamurthy (1996) believed that handicrafts is not the commodities of sale rather they possess a religious and spiritual appeal reviewed as an essential segment of cultural heritage tourism. Cohen (1993) avows that handicrafts as utilitarian objects often integrates symbolic imagery, domestic tools, decorative items, or religious or ceremonial objects. For Zhang (2001), with the development of handicrafts tourism, commodification of craft products is an unavoidable social phenomenon, but cultural commoditization will also bring benefits to local culture.

Shakya (2017) argues that in Nepal's cultural history, handicraft has been a living heritage serving religious and utilitarian purposes as well as represent dexterous Nepali culture and customary talents. But despite the ability and skills of Nepali craftsmen, the handicraft sector has not been explored for its full potential in tourism market. While traditional handicrafts can be seen displayed in shops in tourist hot spots, very few actually promote the process of producing such items and the stories of craftsmen behind it and very little is known on the interplay between handicrafts and tourism market and the challenges. It is through tourism that handicraft products of Nepal can get recognition in the international market. Consequently, the scope of handicraft products tourism seems incredible in Pokhara which is a tourism hub of Nepal. Pokhara can serve a great variety of tourist needs for understanding Nepali tradition, culture, art and architecture. Particularly indigenous handicrafts can be used in tourism for demonstration of cultural prosperity, indigenous technology, cultural renovation and identity based indigenous culture and history. They can be the means through which community can offer its values and spiritualities and configure a vivacious social and cultural identity. On economic aspect, it can provide

locals with job opportunities and income and help in poverty alleviation and bring lifestyle change.

Barber et al. (2006), assert that the benefits derived from the sales of handicrafts items to tourists in many developing countries are insufficiently researched. Further very little literature has revealed the contribution of this industry to cultural heritage and livelihood. For this reason, there may have been an underestimation of the importance of the tourism informal handicraft sector in eradicating poverty and empowering the poor (Chhabra et al. 2003). Though cultural products like handicrafts can contribute to tourism development and can act as a catalyst in job creation and in propagation of Nepali culture abroad, the excessive focus on Pokhara's natural beauty and landscape has overshadowed the contribution of cultural assets/products. Though a number of studies (Adhikari, 2010; Upadhyaya, 2003) have been accomplished in this field, there has been very little anthropological research that has analyzed the contribution of handicrafts in promoting tourism in Pokhara. Various studies have shown benefits at country level, but failed to show the challenges for people engaged in the selling of handicraft products at the local level. This current study attempts to look at the benefits derived by handicraft entrepreneurs so as to conclude logically at small scale level and avoid the fallacy of generalization.

Objective and methodology

The main objective of this paper is to examine the role of handicraft products in promoting employment as well as preserving the cultural heritage of Pokhara. The impetus is also on exploring the tribulations and challenges of handicrafts sector. The study was conducted in Lakeside, a popular tourism hub, situated in the south-western part of Pokhara metropolitan city of Kaski district, Nepal. Handicraft products tourism is one of the important contributing factors for the promotion of tourism in Lakeside. Handicrafts are important cultural products and due to the availability of a large variety of handicraft items, Lakeside is best suited for understanding the ways in which the handicraft business contributes in promoting tourism in a specific place. The universe of this study comprised the handicraft shops of Lakeside area (altogether 204 handicraft shops). At first, they were numbered in order to prepare a sampling frame, and out of the total 204 handicraft shops, only 106 shops were sampled following systematic random sampling on the ground that owing to similar professional milieu and location, there is more commonality and representativeness of populations exhibiting a natural degree of randomness.

Primary data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with 106 handicraft shops proprietors in October 2019. Additionally, case study, observation and key informant interviews (altogether 3) were accomplished in gathering primary information. Two members of Pokhara Handicraft Association and one social activist

were the key informants. The key informants were selected on the principles that most members of any society do not know the full repertory of forms, meanings and functions of their society as claimed by Sjoberg and Nett (1968). As such, key informants, as a result of their personal skills/position within the local society, are able to provide in-depth information and a deeper insight into what was going on around them. For controlling the validity and reliability, a generic assessment checklist was designed on the magnitude of handicraft and its role in tourism market and pre-test was consummated on fifteen handicraft shops of Lakeside that assisted in maintaining consistency of reliability across time, items and respondents. This facilitated in assisting validation of measurement tools so that to represent the variables they are intended to. Ethical approval in the form of verbal consent was obtained from each respondent (handicraft shop proprietor) before administering the interview and they were convinced of the confidentiality of their identity. No higher statistical tools and methods were used to analyze and interpret the findings. The quantitative data has been treated in terms of frequencies and percentage.

Theoretical framework

Handicraft products tourism is pertinent to many theoretical and real-world issues in many disciplines. Based upon a social science approach to understanding the significance of tourism in contemporary society, Holden (2005) highlights tourism as a multidisciplinary area of study with rich and varied theoretical underpinnings. He analyzed social science disciplines with reference to relevant theories to the understanding of tourism and investigates how the economic and political structures of society influence the manifestation of tourism at global level, and subsequently considers a variety of topical issues including tourism as a form of trade, consumerism, the consequences of tourism etc. Discouraging on the increasing attention on creative tourism, Tan et al. (2013) explored the essence of creativity in creative tourism from a tourist perspective, although the concept remains rather vague requiring more research. Zhang (2001) points out that what western anthropologists of tourism have discussed most are cultural authenticity, cultural commercialization, and acculturation because they are closely related to cultural protection and inheritance in host community. However, under the great influence of modernization every traditional culture should have an enterprising spirit during its development while protecting its strong points. Only in this way it can accomplish its transition and transformation.

In broad-spectrum, the major themes anthropologists have covered in the study of tourism is divided conceptually into two categories: one that seeks to understand the origins of tourism, and the other reveals tourism's impacts. The problem is that most studies aimed at understanding the origins of tourism tend to focus on tourists, and most research concerning the impacts of tourism tend to focus on locals and in

the process many issues of culture, tradition, heritages, ecology etc. remain unstudied. Greenwood (1989) argued that tourism has also been studied by anthropologists as a form of cultural commoditization and/or cultural commercialism culture is packaged, priced, and sold like building lots. As the tourism industry extends its grasp commoditization of local peoples' culture results in them being exploited.

On the contrary, Cohen (1988) and McKean (1989) perceive Greenwood's notion of exploitation as an over-generalization. The impact of commoditization on the meaning and authenticity of cultural products, should not just be assumed to be destructive, but should be looked at within an emic, processual, and comparative framework (Cohen 1988). Cohen's argument is that the emergence of a tourist market frequently facilitates the preservation of a cultural tradition which would otherwise perish casts commoditization in a positive light which is contrary to Greenwood's repugnant claim. On the issue of commercialization of handicrafts, Markwick (2001) argues that such development cannot be conceived of universally as a simple unilinear process leading to inevitable degeneration of crafts, loss of authenticity for tourists and the cultural prostitution of producers. He suggests that development is not only multilinear and complex but may also be bidirectional, as products and styles originally produced for an external market sometimes become appropriated into the producer's own culture. Craft production may split into two distinct lines, with different meanings for the tourist on the one hand and for locals on the other.

Tourism in Pokhara

Ghimire (2009) enunciates that amidst pristine natural environment, abundant wildlife and rich culture and traditions, tourism has bright potentials to be an engine and dynamo for the Nepalese economy, but tourism development in Nepal is far below the potentials. Upadhayaya et al. (2013) argue that although often underestimated, the tourism industry can help promote peace and stability both in Nepal in general and Pokhara in particular by diversifying the economy (e.g. through jobs, income generation, etc.), promoting local environment and environment-related natural and cultural resources, promoting cross-cultural awareness, and solidifying local tradition and culture. Adhikari (2019) affirms that based on geography of the place, there are many forms of tourism, depending upon the place where they are viz. adventure tourism, cultural tourism, religious tourism, sports tourism, business tourism, and eco-tourism. Sahayogee (2018) has stated that Nepal including Pokhara has a diversity of structure that is contemplated within the variation of weather and climate simultaneously evaluated as blissful with glorious views of nature, mountain, multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural groups, cultural heritage sites, antique temples which are a matter of pride and appreciation. *Nepal Mountain Lovers* (webpage with no date) asserts that Nepal is very rich in handicrafts with more than thousands of varieties of handmade products, but there are mainly three types of handicraft

products...handicrafts made of wood, small plants and grasses; handicrafts made of leather and metals, and handicrafts made of clay.

Pokhara the second largest city of Nepal and a major tourism hub, was known as the waypoint for climbers to Mount Annapurna around 1950s to 1960s. These early mountaineers exposed Pokhara as a waypoint for mountaineering in the world. Upreti et al. (2013) affirms that Western hippies were the initial risk bearer and thrill seekers to travel around the new places of Annapurna region in the 1960s and 1970s and their photography has helped Pokhara to become popular in the world. However, it was only at the end of 1970s that the real development of tourism started in Pokhara. During those days Pokhara was known only as the destination of mountain tourist but now it is popular for its various attributes including *nature* and *culture*. It is a geographical landscape of beauty and its major attractions include three of the tallest mountains in the world, the large number of lakes, religious sites, cultural heritages, trekking and hiking routes, and other manmade tributes. Pokhara is often reflected as an adventurous destination that offers paragliding, zip flying, bungee jumping and trek to Annapurna Base Camp (ABC). It is categorized as number one Adventure and Leisure city (NTB, 2018).

Pokhara is also known for city tourism orientation due to natural beauty, cultural attractions, handicraft, social cohesion, harmony and mutual respect. It is famous for hospitality and adventure tourism. Presence of different ethnic and caste groups has made Pokhara valley an attractive place from cultural point of view that offers a number of joyful activities based on nature, culture, tradition, heritage, ceremony, adventure, and sports (NTB, 2011). Although the campaign of *Visit Nepal 2020* that aimed to bring two million tourists in Nepal by 2020, was suspended amid the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, the international tourist arrival in 2018 was 1,173,072, a growth of +24.8% compared to the previous year. About one million tourists (both foreign and domestic) visited Pokhara in 2018, and among them, 60 percent were Nepalese (The Kathmandu Post, 2019). However, according to Prasain (2020), tourist arrivals in Nepal slowed in 2019 after years of solid double-digit growth due to initial COVID-19 outbreak in China. Tourist arrivals grew by a marginal 2 percent to 1.19 million in 2019. This means that there were only 24,119 more visitors than the preceding year 2018, which put the country a long way off from reaching the 2 million target for 2020 which was the target of the postponed *Visit Nepal 2020* campaign.

Results and discussion

As a conspicuous form of tourism attraction, handicrafts are the basis of occupation for many in Pokhara. Most of the handicraft shop proprietors of Lakeside i.e. 39.6 percent are from the age group 26-35 years followed by 30.2 percent from the age group 36-45. Likewise, 19.8 percent are from the age group 16-25 years. Besides, 7.6 percent are above

45 years and 2.8 percent from 56 and above age group. In a predominantly patriarchal Nepalese society, majority of proprietors i.e. 80.2 percent are male and rest 19.8 percent are female. Around 5.9 percent are illiterate, 31.1 percent are just literate, while 30.2 percent are 2/PCL passed, 21.7 percent are Bachelor Level passed, and 7.6 percent are Master Level passed. Broadly the educational status of proprietors was reasonably better with more than half with a qualification equivalent to or above PCL/+2 level. Majority of the proprietors are Brahmin and Kashmiri Muslim i.e. 24.5 percent each, 13.2 percent are Chhetri and 8.5 percent were Tibetans. Besides, they are from Tamang, Dalit, and Gurung community. Most i.e. 50.0 percent are Hindus, whereas 22.6 percent are Buddhists and 24.5 percent are Muslims. Around 54.7 percent of them are living in an extended family and the rest 45.3 percent are living in a nuclear family.

Souvenir consumer and tourism promotion: Innovative experience of culture and authenticity

Souvenir is a vital component of tourist experience with tourists bringing back home the mementos and relics which is something antique. Timothy (2005) assumed that shopping tourism by souvenir consumers is the most favored and functional travel activities and has supported tourism growth and revenue contribution. Around 94.3 percent handicraft shops at Lakeside have been visited by foreign tourists as souvenir customers, while 34.0 percent are internal tourists from different parts of Nepal. Similarly, 3.8 percent are the local visitors of Pokhara.

Table 1: Souvenir customer

Type of the Customers	Number	Percent
External (foreign) tourists	100	94.3
Internal (domestic) and foreign tourists	36	34.0
Local, internal and foreign tourists	4	3.8
Total	140*	

Source: Field Survey, 2019

**Multiple responses*

Foreign tourists are the recurrent and major customers of handicraft shops of Lakeside. One case reveals the magnetism of souvenir handicraft items for foreign tourist.

It is my experience as a handicraft shop proprietor that souvenirs and tourism are allied since souvenirs represent an object purchased to remind the buyer of experience or destination visited. Foreign tourists purchase souvenirs either for themselves or as a gift to someone back at home. Among the handicraft souvenir items purchased by foreign tourists are local craft, postcards, fine art, pottery, woodcarvings and figurines, baskets, blankets, clothing, fabrics. Nepali people are little aware of the worth and uniqueness of these items.

Indigenous cultural souvenirs have facilitated familiarize Nepalese handicraft items globally, popularizing Pokhara as a popular touristic destination, attracting tourists as well publicizing the country as a unique cultural showcase, hence thereby promoting the identity of Nepal colossally. The case cited below divulges the viability of souvenir handicraft in tourism promotion.

Numerous external tourists arrive merely to buy indigenous handicrafts which create jobs and lead to the increase in our/artisans' income and social status. Handicraft and foreign tourist are mutually dependent. Tourism is not possible without handicraft; also handicraft can't thrive without tourist. If Government provides easy access of raw materials, skilled employees, cut-low taxes, we will be able to produce quality goods. It will help attract more tourists as well as help in publicizing Nepal at international level. Not less important is awareness on cultural commercialization i.e. to perceive handicrafts as products only for money making and hence forgetting the cultural sentiment and bequest attached to it.

Due to the expansion of tourism industry and escalating worth of handmade products, the demand of the handicraft has greatly increased which has boosted tourist arrival that signifies the correlation between handicrafts and the foreign tourist arrival. Further, there is dependency of handicrafts industry on tourist arrivals. Hence, it is crucial recognizing the magnitude of local handicrafts in tourism development and reciprocally the magnitude of tourism as an agent for the protection and preservation of traditional crafts, methods of production and the cultural context. Kim (1997) states that favorable attitude toward the aesthetic and the uniqueness of souvenirs indicates significant direct effects on purchase intention of the souvenir. It is the exclusivity of souvenir artifacts that appeal customers' intent to purchase that item. Based on artifacts attraction types, the items appealing and purchase intent of souvenir handicrafts at Lakeside can be categorized into three types as cultural items, items related to art, and to religion. For 51.9 percent tourists visiting Lakeside, cultural products are the major attractions, while for 41.5 percent artistic items are the main attraction. Similarly, for 6.6 percent tourist, religious items are the chief attractions.

Echtner & Ritchie (1993) designates *batik* (handicraft tradition of Indonesia) with a number of component-based images attribute viz. holistic impressions, functional characteristics, psychological, unique and common that motivated tourists to purchase these items. In modern world of computerized and machine-made products, indigenously crafted, reshaped and uniquely mastered and distinct Nepali artful handicrafts are not mere pretense, they carry a pride, a sense of possession and satisfaction in substantial nature. Henceforth, almost all visitors (especially foreigners) buy at least one handicraft item during their visit to Lakeside.

There are various advantages of handmade crafts and products such as reusability of waste materials, indigenous creativity and skills, self-employment, eco-friendly, local identity and uniqueness. Tourists considered handicrafts that can be displayed at home that makes a good gift, and are handmade as the most appealing attributes for handicrafts available at Lakeside. Foreign tourists deem handmade items viz. garments as naïve, indigenous, more natural, healthy and easy to wear. The researcher observed many foreign tourists wearing handmade garments along with different indigenous handicraft items. When asked about the price of handicraft, most of the tourists did not find them costly. Foreign tourists don't mind about price if crafts look beautiful, light and easy to carry back home as souvenir. The advantageous assets of Pokhara handicraft products tourism perceived by tourists are fair price, exotic, eco-friendly, welcoming community, fabulous places, and unique culture. It is an *innovative experience* to be the part of local culture and *authenticity* attached to it. For them handicrafts as tangible objects are valued because they serve as their proof of travels and experiences within Nepalese culture and augment their self-identifications as cultured and worldly individuals that consider handicrafts as an aspect of traditional indigenous culture. Examples of authenticity are such as wearing local handicraft outfits and even enthused to speak in Nepali language.

Employment generation and transformation in lifestyle

The handicrafts sector has the prodigious potential in solidification and development of economy in terms of employment generation and social transformation. Jansen-Verbeke (1998) assumes that the retail trade of souvenirs has always been part of the tourism experience and contributes to the local economy and employment in many tourism destination areas. Around 64.2 percent handicraft shops at Lakeside have provided employment to family members, rest 35.8 percent have provided employment to other people outside the family. There were a total of 376 employees (including artisans and other staffs) working in 106 handicraft shops. Out of them 210 are the family members and rest 166 are from outside the family.

Table 2: Employment generation through handicraft

Response	Number	Jobs Provided
Employment for family members	68 (64.2)	210 (55.9)
Employment outside the family	32 (35.8)	166 (44.1)
Total	106 (100.0)	376 (100.0)

Source: Field Survey, 2019

In average, a shop was generating about 3.5 job opportunities. It is largely due to the handicraft tourism that these shops have been able to provide such number of jobs. One case elaborates.

By birth a Kashmiri Muslim, I am running this business with the help of my Nepali wife and her relatives. I have employed four workers. Handicraft business is uncertain but good for earning money and for giving jobs. Handicrafts help to promote tourism, generate employment as well as facilitates in tourist arrivals. There is a link between tourist arrival and our income and the handicraft production. Because of them there has been an increase in our and artisans' income. We need to boost-up handicraft production of different items and maintain the fair price rate of products for the sake of whole tourism industry.

There is a close association between the tourist arrivals and the increase in the income levels of handicraft entrepreneurs. There is an intricate relationship between the tourism industry, proprietor and the handicraft production. Handicrafts are the source of income; it has led to substantial and multifaceted alterations in handicraft proprietors' lifestyle/livelihood pattern. The changes have taken place in various aspects of individual life that includes day-to-day foodstuff pattern, clothing style, housing pattern, consumption of market goods, schooling of children etc. Handicraft shop proprietors perceived the alteration in their social status after they got involved in handicrafts business. Around 81.1 percent labeled an escalation in their social status after the adoption of handicraft business. They perceived their social status much better compared to the period before they got involved in this business. They got due admiration during social gatherings or meetings. One of the key-informant interviewee put forward that the handicraft proprietors have firmly established themselves in the local society; as a result, mutual reverence has greatly increased among the people. Since most of them are experiencing certain degree of rise in their social status, they are blissful and satisfied with handicraft business. With the increasing satisfaction, they have increased their investment in the diversification, expansion and further promotion of handicraft business which has consequently facilitated in the promotion of Lakeside tourism.

Tribulations and challenges in marketing and supply of handicraft items

Marketing is an activity undertaken to endorse the procurement or selling of a product or service. It is an important factor for product promotion in commercial activities. Around 53.8 percent handicraft proprietors market their business/items within Pokhara, 2.8 percent of them market their items at national level. Importantly, 41.5 percent market their items internationally.

Table 3: Handicraft products marketing

Response	Number	Percent
Pokhara only	57	53.8
National level	3	2.8
International	44	41.5
No response	2	1.9
Total	106	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The marketing of handicraft products at national level is bleak due to the lack of publicity at a mass level. Further, proprietors have less trust over national media. The marketing of the handicraft items at the international level has been done by only few number of proprietors as well as by Nepal Tourism Board. One case divulges in detail.

Beforehand 40 to 50 thousand rupees was enough to start this business, but now 4 to 5 Lakh rupees is required. The quantity of sale is affected by the season. We face difficulty in importing raw materials, the government charges heavy tax. It is necessary to produce handicraft at local level and tag the products, maintain data base, similar price rates, and do adequate marketing of our products at international levels because it makes our identity abroad. There has been inadequate marketing of handicraft items not only at worldwide level but even at the national level.

When the demand of any market items increases, ensuring its efficient supply becomes a challenging task. The researcher attempted to find the state of supply of handicraft items (especially those preferred by tourist). For 55.7 percent proprietors, the supply of handicraft items is good, while for 0.9 percent the supply is not in accordance to the demand of tourist. For them the handicraft products are not being produced as per the market demand. They stressed on appropriate actions on the part of concerned agencies to work towards availing the handicraft items as per the demands of tourist.

Table 4: Handicraft items supply to shops

State of Supply of Handicraft Items	Number	Percent
Very good	5	4.7
Good	59	55.7
Normal	41	38.7
Below the demand	1	0.9
Total	106	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Fulfillment of foreign tourist demand plays an important role in promoting handicraft products tourism at international level. For 63.2 percent proprietor, the supply of handicraft items is meeting the demand of their international customers. Their international consumers do not go discontented due to the lack of handicraft items. But for 33 percent, the supply is below tourist demand and for 3.8 percent the supply is not in accordance to the demand of international customers. Further many handicraft products are not being produced as per the market demand of foreign customers. Difficulty in access of raw materials is also a serious concern. For 68.9 percent proprietor, their handicrafts have been manufactured using the locally available raw material products, while for 31.1 percent, their handicrafts are manufactured from the imported raw material. It was noticed that many handicraft shop had employed artisans manufacturing handicrafts at the corner of the shop. Local products include all type of handicraft products made from Nepali raw materials as carvings, textiles, leatherwork, ceramics, and metalwork hence forming a fundamental part of tourist experiences that embodies local traditions and indigenous culture. Since majority of handicraft proprietors rely on classier local raw material and the handicraft items made from them, price of handicraft products is much expensive (for average Nepali) owing to the high value of raw materials as well as scarcity of raw materials in the market. The case of a shopkeeper unveils:

Since it is difficult to import foreign materials, I use Nepali raw material for making handicrafts. Their consignment time is lengthy; the supply system is very bleak hence the product befits costly for average Nepali. If the Government provides us easy loan, raw materials, and good publicity it will help the growth of handicraft industry. We sell indigenous materials made from stone, statues of god/goddess, bangles, pottery, basket, tatting, tapestry, garments etc. Foreigners give us good response and I am planning to manufacture goods according to their choice.

Though handicrafts have been playing a very crucial role in the promotion of tourism in Lakeside, it is not devoid of tribulations and challenges. Kumar and Rajeev (2014) stated that one of the major issues faced by handicraft sector is in information dissemination. This has led to a situation where customers have no information related to the craft products. Insufficient advertisement and marketing, intrusion of foreign goods, inadequate supply of raw materials, inappropriate market price and ineffective government policies are some of the key challenges of handicraft industry in Pokhara. About 33.0 percent handicraft proprietors reckon that lack of effective advertisement and marketing is the main challenge faced by handicraft sector in Lakeside, while 18.9 percent view the encroachment of foreign readymade items and inadequate supply of raw materials as the problem. Similarly, for 14.2 percent, there is the lack of appropriate market price, for 9.4 percent there is the lack of effective

government policies and the rest 24.5 percent think all of the above reasons as the main hurdles.

Price variations of touristic products for internal and foreign tourists has created unfair commercial setting and an environment for cultural commercialization. Around 60.4 percent proprietors sell the similar handicraft item at different rates for foreign and domestic tourists. They charge more money to foreign tourists. Around 37 percent sell without such difference in price. When asked about the reason for this difference, almost all could not furnish concrete and rational reason.

Around 37.7 percent proprietors deem that quality improvement with the preservation of traditional art features will automatically contribute in promoting the handicraft business. Similarly, 33.0 percent consider increase in the source/supply of raw materials, 32.1 percent deem ensuring supply as per the demand, 17.0 percent gave priority to creative production and 30.2 percent view all of the above as the main ways for ensuring the promotion of handicraft products. Additionally, 49.1 percent deem that the future of handicrafts business is bright, for 44.5 percent, it is very bright and for 6.6 percent, it is normal. It denotes that almost all of them perceive the future of handicrafts business as positive and glowing. In the view of one of the key-informants, the reason for such perception is the uniqueness and the benefits of Nepalese traditional handicraft items. They are such that foreign consumers easily get attracted. For most of them they are quite unique and conventional, so they prefer to buy the handicrafts. Hand-made handicraft pottery items, weaved basket, tating, macramé, crochet, tapestry, mosaic along with popular products like scarf, shawl and blanket are the common choices.

Ingrained in cultural heritages of Nepal, handicraft products tourism has created a foundation for income opportunities and has been efficacious in linking the handicrafts sector to tourism market with cultural uniqueness, cultural authenticity, and cultural commercialization. However, commercialization does not basically extinguish the authenticity of cultural products and the meanings attached to it. Rather it implies how culture is recognized through display with a new self-representation of new-fangled meaning to tourism products that can create a space for new products. This also does not mean the total loss of primal cultural connotation of pure culture but also epitomizes an authenticity of hybrid culture. However, more important is cultural protection and inheriting traditional culture along with supporting innovation and developing new handicrafts markets and meeting the requirements of modern tourism market demand.

Conclusion

Arrival of more number of tourists increases the demand of new handicrafts, consequently the handicraft products proprietors place order to the artisans who are

the main producers of goods. This implies a relationship between handicrafts and foreign tourist arrival and increase in income and social status of handicraft shop proprietor as well as the artisans. Hence, the handicrafts business is dependent on tourist arrival and job creation which is the means of livelihood to many. Handicraft products tourism has played a vital role in extending the fame of local artistic items at national and international level. It has connected *Nepal's ancient cultural heritages to its present that has helped generate an inimitable experience for tourists leading to escalation of tourist arrival hence contributing positively to the promotion of tourism and nation's pride, conviction and identity.* Souvenir handicrafts market has facilitated the preservation of Nepali cultural institutions and led to the renovation of traditional arts and skills which otherwise would have perished. It has led to the economic empowerment of the people involved with it and made them proud of their hand-made handicrafts which is coherent to Cohen's (1988) theoretical argument that commoditization on the meaning and authenticity of cultural products should not just be assumed to be destructive, but should be looked at within an emic and processual framework. Corresponding to Markwick (2001), such development cannot be conceived of universally as a simple unilinear process leading only to inevitable degeneration and commercialization of local arts and crafts, but as a contrivance that facilitate in sharing and constructing the *commodified persona* in the heritage industry by transmuting local cultures into alienable products for consumption under the fast process of cultural commercialization to adapt to the modern tourism market demand of handicraft products. Agreeing with Zhang's (2001) contention, under the invasion of fast modernization, traditional cultures should have an *enterprising spirit* while shielding its strong points so that to accomplish its transition and transformation in an innovative way.

Though handicrafts have been playing a significant role in the promotion of tourism, its contribution has been made trivial owing to excessive emphasis on the natural splendor and landscape of Pokhara that has overshadowed the contribution of handicrafts sector. As a result, handicraft products tourism has not been getting sufficient attention from the concerned authorities. Hence, it's the right time for the recognition of handicrafts' contribution and thereby their promotion so that they play much enhanced role in the promotion of overall tourism sector of Pokhara and Nepal. It is necessary to focus on quality improvement and ingenious production and maintain a balance between supply and demand of handicraft products and the raw materials. It is indispensable to focus on production and marketing practices of handicrafts and drawing lessons in relation to production technologies and design aspects, financial and management aspects of production units, marketing channels and methods for optimizing the sale of handicrafts among tourist and the tourism industry. It is crucial defining strategies and practical tools for governments and the

private sector to strengthen the links between handicrafts production and tourism, the skill and craft of the artisan who really make it, prevent them from exploitation and becoming too commercialized, identifying the roles of the government departments and tourism organizations and the sources of financial and technical assistance. There are other implications also such as to establish a database for information on handicrafts' a medium of certification of cultural heritage, uniqueness and cultural symbolism.

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