

Prospects of Pilgrimage Tourism Development in Tribeni-Badimalika of Bajura District

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Abstract

This paper examines the potential or prospects for pilgrimage tourism at Tribeni-Badimalika in Bajura, Nepal, a site rich in religious significance but with limited academic focus. Known for its sacred Hindu temples, Thapanas, and Thaans, Tribeni-Badimalika holds deep spiritual value for devotees. Alongside its religious appeal, the site offers natural beauty, including untouched landscapes, panoramic Himalayan views, pasture lands, diverse terrains, and dense forests that provide additional recreational opportunities. The study adopted an analytical approach to examine the spiritual and economic benefits of pilgrimage tourism at the site. It also analyzes local perspectives on the development of pilgrimage tourism and the effects of recent infrastructure improvements at Tribeni-Badimalika. Pilgrimage, an ancient practice across many religions, functions not only as a spiritual journey but also as a path to personal growth. For Hindus, pilgrimage is connected to Moksha (liberation) and other core life goals like Artha, Dharma, and Kama. Although pilgrimage tourism in Hinduism is relatively new, it presents significant potential in Nepal, a country with globally revered sacred sites. Tribeni-Badimalika, while comparatively under-researched, has immense potential to contribute to cultural preservation and economic improvement for local communities. The paper concludes that a high-level, coordinated approach is needed to fully realize and sustain pilgrimage tourism at Tribeni-Badimalika, thereby preserving its religious heritage and enhancing local economic benefits.

Keywords: Motivation, Devotion, Pilgrimage tourism, Spirituality, Prospects, Infrastructure

Introduction

Pilgrimage refers to a long journey motivated by belief and faith, in which people travel to sacred sites to experience spirituality (Digance, 2006; Sharma, 2008; Eade, 2015). It has historically been central to religious tourism, as the relationship between religion and travel has existed since ancient times (Olsen & Timothy, 2006; Kaelber, 2006; Vijayanad, 2014; Durán-Sánchez et al., 2018; Collins-Kreiner, 2019; Kunwar & Thapaliya, 2021). Pilgrimage represents a form of religiously motivated travel in which the pilgrim is often considered a tourist seeking spiritual fulfillment (Wang, et al, 2015; Durán-Sánchez et al., 2018). As a result, pilgrimage tourism has emerged as one of the earliest and most significant segments of global tourism (Ivakhiv, 2003, in Vijayanad, 2014). Contemporary interpretations of pilgrimage tourism therefore incorporate not only religious motivation but also broader spiritual experiences (Herntrei & Pechlaner, 2011; Kunwar & Thapaliya, 2021).

Pilgrimage is often regarded as the foundation of tourism in many countries (Bhatia,1994), and religion continues to be a strong motivation for travel (Khadka, 2018). Nepal is widely recognized as an important destination for pilgrimage tourism due to its numerous historical and sacred sites. The country has long been a spiritual center for both Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims, as it

is associated with significant religious traditions: it is regarded as the abode of Lord Shiva, the land of the living goddess tradition, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, and the birthplace of Goddess Sita. Consequently, large numbers of pilgrims—particularly from India—visit major religious sites such as Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu, Janakpurdham in Janakpur, Gadhimai Temple in Bara, Manakamana Temple in Gorkha, Muktinath Temple in Mustang, and Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha.

Pilgrim mobility in Nepal dates back to ancient times, highlighting the longstanding importance of these sacred sites. However, many pilgrimage destinations remain underexplored and underpromoted by policymakers. Several sacred sites are located in rural areas where accommodation and accessibility remain limited. Nevertheless, gradual infrastructure development has improved access to some destinations, such as the Manakamana cable car from Kurintar, Chitwan to the temple in Gorkha, the Kalinchowk cable car from Kuri to the shrine, and road networks connecting Pathivara Temple in Taplejung and Halesi Mahadev in Khotang. These developments have made pilgrimage journeys safer and more convenient for visitors of all age groups. The increasing number of pilgrims to these sites has created economic opportunities for local communities. It has encouraged small businesses, generated employment, increased government revenue, and contributed to improved living standards. In this context, tourism plays a significant role in the economic, socio-cultural, environmental, educational, and political development of the nation (Khadka, 2018)

Similarly, Karnali corridor, Seti Lokmarga, Dhangadhi-Dipayal fast track, and other inter-district road connections are under construction which will be a milestone for bringing Hindu pilgrims as the roads will be directly connected to the India where there is a large population following Hinduism. The data shows that there is an opportunity to attract these religious tourists to Tribeni-Badimalika through promotion, strategic planning, destination branding, and effective management. Tribeni-Badimalika is located at 400 km away to the west of Kathmandu at Sudurpaschim Province, Nepal. It is at the altitude of 4216 meter from the sea level which is a mountainous region; the place is famous for its scenic landscape and for revered Hindu religious sites where huge numbers of pilgrims visit in the month of May- September. The scenic view from Tribeni, Badimalika, is so spectacular where visitors can enjoy the view of Himalayan ranges, pasture lands, hilly forests, and overall colorful and stunning landscape. There are also hiking trails starting from Martadi-Tribeni- Badimalika temple, Maure- Nateswori temple- Badimalika Temple, Korda-Tribeni- Badimalika Temple, Mana-Badimalika Temple, Porakhe-Tribeni-Badimalika Temple that can add a great adventure experience too for the tourists. The easy accessibility to Tribeni-Badimalika after the opening of the highway has gradually increased domestic and international tourists (pilgrims and visitors) creating an opportunity for the locals to become tourism entrepreneurs. It is gradually getting popular amongst the youth eco-tourists for cycling, picnics, camping, and other excursion activities besides pilgrimage.

The Badimalika Temple lies in the Tribeni municipality of Bajura district. It is an ancient shrine for Hindu pilgrims as this is the site where it is believed that the Goddess Badimalika Mata reside there. The Hindu religious book named Scand Puran has described about the origin of

Badimalika goddess. According to the Scand puran, the left organ of Satidevi was declined in that high mountain and that shrine was established. The god Mahadev told the sages that sacred place is located at the mountain named Mallagiri parbat. The pilgrims come not only from Sudurpaschim Pradesh but also from all over Nepal, India and abroad. They worship to Mata (Goddess) Badimalika and it is believed that the Mata Badimalika fulfill their aspirations and make them salvation from different problems. Tribeni Dham of Badimalika is God Shiva Dham is sacred pilgrimage site of Tribeni-Badimalika where pilgrims make them sacred by diving into the river water and drinking that water while diving. There are other religious purposes to reach the Tribeni Dham viz. a) send their demised soul to heaven, b) to wear sacred thread (Janai) and c) make one's body sacred for worship in Badimalika Temple.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to analyze and explore the prospects of pilgrimage tourism at Tribeni-Badimalika site and to expand the knowledge on this field which will be the reference to students, academicians, tourism entrepreneurs, and destination management companies as no previous research is found based on pilgrimage perspective at study site. Hence, this paper tries to analyze and explore the prospect of pilgrimage tourism at Tribeni-Badimalika based on the following objectives:

- To Analyze the prospects of pilgrimage tourism at Tribeni-Badimalika of Bajura district;
- To make recommendation for the promotion of pilgrimage tourism religious and economic benefits from study site.

Literature Review

A tourist is a half pilgrim if a pilgrim is a half tourist (Turner & Turner, 1978; in Digance, 2006). Wang et al. (2015) argue that there are two schools of thought in this regard. Smith (1992) suggested that tourism is opposed to pilgrim whereas Timothy and Olsen (2006) argue that pilgrimage is a type of tourism. There are many scholars who have identified journeys of various types in tourism and pilgrimage (Kim et al., 2019) which has been the basis of distinguishing the term '*Pilgrimage*' and '*Tourism*'. They are distinct and based on the objectives of travel and choice of destinations. Therefore, there are debates on the definitions of pilgrimage and other terms like secular sites and non-religious factors involved in pilgrimage have intensified over the years since the early 1990s (Badone & Roseman, 2004; Badone, 2014; Coleman & Eade, 1992; Margry, 2008; in Collins-Kreiner, 2018). Barber defines pilgrimage as: "a journey resulting from religious causes externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding" (1993; in Collins-Kreiner, 2018, p.8).

Accordingly, Gurung mentions "the word pilgrimage was derived from the Latin word 'Peregrinus' which means stranger visit to a sacred place" (2000; in Kunwar & Ghimire, 2012). The religious sites become a sacred place and worth visiting only when touristic practices are established by religious people and these religious people are known as a pilgrim who undertakes their journey of faith (Bremer, 2006) in search of truth, in search of what is sacred and holy (Vukonić, 1996; in Timothy & Olsen, 2006). Sindhe (2020) highlights those visitors to sacred places seek to experience the presence of the divine in some way where images of gods, goddesses, saints, angels, gurus, other

deities, sacred mountains, and other natural formations, religious events, and stories are all common in sacred sites in order to foster that experience. For some, this experience may be so rich as to manifest the deity in the eyes of the pilgrim. Likewise, Sallnow (1987; in Timothy & Olsen, 2006) stressed that people are attracted to sacred places are—where divine power has suddenly burst forth as a result of their spiritual magnetism.

Since the 1980s, pilgrimage tourism associated with Buddhism—particularly sites related to Buddha in India—has experienced significant growth (Thibeault, 2018). Sindhe (2020) explains that people seek various ways to connect with the divine, and pilgrimage is one of the most common forms of this spiritual pursuit. Individuals travel to sacred places for different purposes, such as seeking divine intervention in personal problems, asking for forgiveness and salvation, or pursuing spiritual enlightenment and rebirth. The author further notes that each religion has its own practices for establishing such spiritual connections. In some traditions, pilgrimage is considered a religious obligation, while in others voluntary journeys to sacred sites inspire believers to deepen their spiritual relationship with the divine. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2011; in Sindhe, 2020), approximately six hundred million domestic and international religious and spiritual trips occur annually, indicating that religious tourism has expanded beyond traditional pilgrimage practices. Scholars have also examined pilgrimage from a socio-cultural perspective. Turner (1972; in Digance, 2006) describes pilgrimage as a journey that fosters *communitas*, a temporary sense of fellowship and solidarity among pilgrims. During the journey and at sacred destinations, pilgrims interact freely regardless of social status, creating an egalitarian atmosphere and shared sense of belonging. This collective experience reflects both social equality and a desire to connect with individuals who share similar beliefs and spiritual goals. Digance (2006) further notes that such forms of *communitas* have also emerged in modern contexts, including alternative New Age events after 2001 A.D.

Belhassen et al. (2008; in Kunwar & Ghimre, 2012) emphasize that the search for authentic experiences during pilgrimages is shaped by three interconnected elements: the theological ideology underlying the pilgrimage, the sacred places visited, and the activities performed by pilgrims. These elements demonstrate the close relationship between belief, place, and practice in shaping pilgrimage experiences. Kunwar and Thapaliya (2012) conceptualize this relationship as *theoplacity*, combining the Greek word *Theos* (God) and the Medieval Latin *placea* (place), to explain the socio-religious and socio-spatial dimensions of pilgrimage. Cultural perspectives on pilgrimage tourism have also been considered important for sustainable development. Qin (1998) argues that pilgrimage traditions contribute to social stability, psychological adjustment, ethical development, and group integration. Similarly, Collins-Kreiner (2018) suggests that pilgrimage should be understood in a holistic sense that includes both traditional religious journeys and modern secular travel motivated by spiritual or cultural interests. In the context of Nepal, research on pilgrimage tourism remains limited. Most tourism studies in Nepal have focused on cultural, natural, adventure, and sustainable tourism, while pilgrimage tourism has received relatively little attention from both scholars and policymakers (Bleie, 2003). Furthermore, no academic study specifically addressing pilgrimage tourism in Tribeni–Badimalika was found during this review. Therefore, this study represents one of the first

academic attempts to explore pilgrimage tourism in the Tribeni–Badimalika area. Existing studies on pilgrimage tourism in Nepal generally adopt multidisciplinary perspectives and discuss issues such as strategic planning, authenticity, and the holistic characteristics of pilgrimage systems at different sites. However, most of these works provide only general introductions to pilgrimage destinations with limited detailed analysis. For instance, Kunwar (2017) briefly discusses pilgrimage tourism in Nepal but does not include specific case studies of pilgrimage sites within the country.

Table 1: *Pilgrimage Tourism in Nepal*

<i>The Hindu Pilgrimage to Muktinath, Nepal</i> (Messerschmidt, 1989)	Based on anthropological-geographical perspectives and the research examined different attributes of the sacred field at Muktinath and its vicinity.
<i>Pilgrim tourism in the Central Himalayas</i> (Bleie, 2003)	Focuses on the need for promotional activities of Manakamana temple through strategic planning.
<i>Lumbini as an international pilgrimage destination: Authenticity and significance</i> (Kunwar & Ghimire, 2012)	Explain the importance of authenticity based on the visitor's experience in the pilgrimage sites and its significance in tourism development.
<i>'Tirthparyatan'</i> (Gautam, 2014)	Focuses on promoting domestic pilgrimage extensively and has introduced 137 pilgrimage sites of Nepal; however, the treatise has not focused on international pilgrimage tourism.
<i>Focus and Locus of Pilgrimage Tourism at Santaneshwor Mahadev Temple, Lalitpur</i> (Khadka, 2018)	Depicts prospects and constraints of pilgrimage tourism at Santaneshwor Mahadev temple located in Godavari Municipality, Lalitpur and focused on implementing promotional activities to make the destination popular and stressed on developing infrastructures like tourist center, modern toilets, clean drinking water, restaurants, accommodation facilities, foreign exchange along with preparation of a master plan to brand Santaneshwor Mahadev temple as attractive pilgrimage tourism destination.
<i>A preliminary study of pilgrimage tourism in Barahachhetra, Nepal</i> (Kunwar & Thapaliya, 2021).	Focus on showing the holistic information based on the characteristic features of the pilgrimage system in Barahachhetra.

A multi-disciplinary approach is important to incorporate while focusing on both theoretical and practical aspects of pilgrimage tourism for critiquing the paradigms, developing new theories, definitions, and characteristics of religious travel along with the strategic plan, and management of sacred sites through training of tour guides for proper interpretation (Kaszowski, 2000; in Olsen & Timothy, 2006). Kunwar and Thapaliya (2021, p. 135) also highlight that:

Pilgrimage tourism as a social phenomenon has been the focus of numerous academic disciplines, including history, sociology, geography, anthropology, and psychology where

pilgrimage of various types has been an important part of most religions, including Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shintoism.

The study of pilgrimage travel has been approached by many scholars from multi-disciplinary perspectives which have included anthropology; geology; sociology; and religious studies. Social anthropologists are pioneers amongst other disciplines in the study of pilgrimage as they are focused on its connection to various social dimensions as well as a medium to understand complex societies and civilizations (Kunwar & Thapaliya, 2021).

Kunwar and Ghimire mention that different performative acts of religious belief and faith during pilgrimage can be observed at the shrines such as Buddhists traveling to Lumbini, Hindus traveling to Pashupatinath, Jerusalem by Christians, and Mecca by Muslims encourages faith-based travel (Kunwar & Ghimire, 2012). Digance (2003; in Collins-Kreiner, 2018) highlights that pilgrimage is currently experiencing resurgence around the world due to mobility. More and more people from different religions go on different kinds of pilgrimages (Seise, 2019; Timothy & Olsen, 2006) and are prevailing. Baral and Bhandari (2016) argue that tourism is one of the major economic sources that generate income and employment in Nepal. According to Ulak (2020a), the tourism industry of Nepal has always been the backbone of the national economy. Besides economy, there is an opportunity for travelers to learn and develop cultural understanding through visiting and experiencing historical sites, museums, arts & crafts, events, festivals, and cuisines. It also includes trips that enable tourists to connect with local communities in a typical location, and elements of religious tourism, such as pilgrimages (Global Data, 2018). Pilgrimage tourism is one of the classifications within cultural tourism (Mousavi, Doratli, Mousavi, & Moradiahari, 2016) which can be strategically developed in Nepal as there are many pilgrimage sites to attract pilgrims from all over the world where Tribeni-Badimalika is one of the important pilgrimage sites for Hindu pilgrims as well as domestic and international tourists.

Badimalika Tourism Plan and Policy

It has been found that the Tribeni municipality and Badimalika municipality of Bajura district has developed a tourism master plan with objective to develop trekking trails and routes; promote eco-tourism, religious tourism, mobilize local youth for tourism promotion. The tourism potential of Tribeni-Badimalika has been divided into three categories: 1) Pilgrimage Tourism, 2) Trekking Tourism, and 3) Eco-tourism. The prospect of pilgrimage tourism in Tribeni-Badimalika site is high when this shrine is linked to Ramaroson of Achham district, Khaptad, Budhinanda, Nateswori and Kalajagra, Padukadham, Swami Sunanda of Bajura district and Kailash Mansarobar of Tibet China, and many shrines related to Lord Shiva and goddess that helps in attracting Hindu pilgrims. Similarly, adventure tourism in the form of trekking is gradually developing in this region and the popular routes discovered are trekking from the Martadi-Phul Chadhaune- Sota patan-Bhitto Chirne- Tribeni-Badimalika Temple, Porakhe- Diura -Budhimai-Tribeni-Badimalika Temple, Jadanga- Ladepatan-Bhittochirne-Tribeni- Badimalika Temple, Mana-Badimalika temple-Tribeni, Maure- Nateswori-Bisnupani- Badimalika Temple- Tribeni, Maure--- of Bajura district. Similarly, Chhape-Dhajalauna-Tribeni-Badimalika Temple from Kalikot district.

Finally, high-end tourists can be attracted to Tribeni-Badimalika linking to Kharkastays

(homestays) that offer traditional indigenous accommodation, amenities, local cultural aesthetics, local cuisine experience, and panoramic view of the Himalayas. Besides tourism development, the master plan has also addressed the need for basic infrastructure and aims to promote water supply management; improve sanitation and hygiene, manage electricity, transportation, security, Kharka (temporary home stay) stays and develops entrepreneurship skills and other economic activities to enhance the lifestyle of the people.

Methodology

The study adopted an analytical and exploratory research design and followed a qualitative research approach. Data were collected through field observation and semi-structured telephone interviews. Observations focused on the religious circuits, routes, Thaans/Thapanas (monuments), and shrines that are popular in the Tribeni–Badimalika pilgrimage area. A total of 50 respondents participated in the study. The participants included 10 local government representatives, 5 trekking agency representatives, 15 pilgrims, 3 temple priests, and 17 school teachers. The study employed both random and purposive sampling techniques. Pilgrims, local tourism entrepreneurs, community members, local government representatives, and secondary school head teachers were selected through random sampling, while temple priests were selected purposively due to their specific religious roles and knowledge.

Semi-structured interview questions were designed to gather primary data, and some follow-up questions were asked spontaneously to ensure clarity and coherence in the responses. The average interview duration was approximately 20 minutes per participant. In addition, the researcher conducted field visits to the religious sites and their surrounding areas during the study period from July 2, 2024, to August 20, 2024. The research questions focused on several aspects of pilgrimage tourism in Tribeni–Badimalika, including the prospects of pilgrimage tourism development, available activities for pilgrims, the strength of tourism infrastructure, existing plans and policies, religious and economic benefits of tourism, and local community participation in tourism development.

The research process followed four main steps. First, research questions were formulated to guide the study. Second, relevant primary and observational data were collected. Third, the collected data were presented and analyzed, and respondents were identified using pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. Finally, the findings were summarized and interpreted to draw conclusions. The study is organized into introduction, literature review, research methods and procedures, results and discussion, and conclusion with recommendations.

Findings

There are many agencies like local government, political parties, and local tourism entrepreneurs at Bajura district who are found involved for the sustainable pilgrimage tourism development at the destination. Local participation is one of the most important practices required in pilgrimage tourism development for its sustainability and growth. Hence, many families are found who are engaged in the tourism businesses directly and indirectly which has helped them to generate revenue and uplift their lifestyle. There are many tourism infrastructures (Roads, foot trails, Dharmasala, homestays named Kharkastays) under construction which shows there is a prospect of tourism development at Tribeni-Badimalika area. Besides tourism, the locals' income source at

nearby areas of pilgrimage site is based on agriculture and their involvement in other sectors like service and business. When asked with locals about the impact of pilgrimage tourism in socio-culture and economic sectors, one of locals opined:

There have been changes in culture and traditions; however, they have also witnessed positive changes in cultural values and norms. They are focused on preserving heritages, cultures, and traditions to hand over them to their upcoming generation. They have also realized that cultural heritages are assets that can generate income via tourism development. Similarly, the change in living style and their capacity of spending is influenced by many factors like modernization in agriculture; connection of transportation routes, and an increased number of tourists at Tribeni- Badimalika.

Therefore, this clearly shows that pilgrims and tourists have helped locals in many ways to improve their lifestyles. Therefore, in the case of Tribeni-Badimalika, pilgrimage tourism development was found to have a higher degree of positive impact in the case of religious and economic sectors which have shadowed the negative sides. The reason why Tribeni-Badimalika is famous has been described by the locals as: *Badimalika is one of the oldest and famous Hindu shrines where they believe Goddess Badimalika has the power to fulfill the wishes and aspirations demanded by the pilgrims. Similarly, many international priests, monks, scholars, sages have been visiting this site. On average, 10000 pilgrims from Nepal and abroad including india visit Tribeni-Badimalika every year. There is no official and proper data records of pilgrim tourists at Tribeni-Badimalika; however, hundreds of Nepalese, Indian and other nationals visit this site.*

They do not only worship at the religious sites but also explore the surrounding environment where many visitors have an objective to experience a soft adventure like hiking, mountain biking, camping, and so on around Tribeni-Badimalika. The Priest of Badimalika temple also mentioned that: *Every year, thousands of pilgrims come from Nepal and abroad to worship the shrine for mainly to fulfill their aspirations demanding with the Goddess Badimalika. One of the pilgrims from Doti opined his view about the importance of Tribeni-Badimalika as: The bath in sacred river of Tribeni Dham is for salvation/ Liberation from any kinds of sins committed during the past. One can take departed soul to heaven by Tribeni Dham.* The chief priest of Badimalika temple Netra Raj Padhyaya opined his view about the religious importance of Tribeni-Badimalika as: *This place is highly important for it is full of sacred power of (Mata) goddess Badimalika. The Goddess Badimalika can provide power fulfill aspirations to those who are really devoted to her. Tribeni Dham and Badimalika temple are heavenly place where God Shiva and goddess Badimalika live.*

According to one of the elderly priests of Badimalika temple states:

As per the mythological story Scan Puran, the god Mahadeva carried his wife Satidevi's dead body on his neck and wandered around different places of earth. The dead and spoiled organs of Satidevi were felt down in different parts of the earth. Accordingly, the left shoulder of demised Satidevi was fell down on the peak of Mallagiri Prabat(mountain). Later the Mallagiri Parbat was named as Badimalika. And Satidevi has been worshipped in the name of Mata(Goddess) Badimalika.

Discussion

Tribeni-Badimalika is an ancient pilgrimage site and an important holy site for Hindu pilgrims. It is located at Tribeni Municipality of Bajura district where one can reach through different routes viz. Maure-Nateswori-Bisnapani-Badimalika Temple-Tribeni dham, Mana-Badimalika Temple- Tribeni Dham, Korda-Ghodapatan-vittochirna-Tribeni Dham- Badimalika Temple, and Martadi- Sotapatan-Vittochirna-Tribeni Dham-Badimalika Temple. A gradual increase in the number of national and international pilgrims has been found. The state of tourism infrastructure at Tribeni-Badimalika is poor which can hinder the all seasons flow of pilgrim tourists. Besides, there are some Kharka Stays (homestays), Dharmashala, are in the state of under-construction which has been observed during the field visit. Similarly, locals are also found optimistic on sustainable development of pilgrimage tourism at Tribeni-Badimaka site where many locals from the native community are involved in tourism businesses like home-stays, and small-scale hotels.

Thousands of pilgrims visit Tribeni-Badimalika including domestic and international tourists but no official documentation and record-keeping of the visitors are found. Mainly Nepalese and Indian pilgrimage tourists visit this site. It is clear that the place is of high importance for Hindu pilgrims and definitely it is a popular pilgrimage site among national and international tourists. However, the tourism master plan has provision to develop this site as religious and eco-tourism destination which shows this place has the prospect of developing sustainable pilgrimage tourism. Tribeni-Badimalika religious site has been selected for developing pilgrimage tourism by the Badimalika and Tribeni municipality for which municipality initiated to construct an artistic gate to welcome tourists, they are also focused on infrastructure development. Visible signage for visitors' management and provision of the entrance tickets to the religious site is in a discussion phase. Likewise, the municipality has also focused on proper record keeping of visitors help of local communities. Similarly, Provincial government, Nepal tourism Board (NTB) and other agencies are investing in physical infrastructure development to promote and preserve Tribeni-Badimalika which is being appreciated by local communities, pilgrims and the municipality.

Table 2: *Infrastructure development at Tribeni-Badimalika*

Road Access	Vehicle Accessible Road from <i>Martadi-Sota Patan</i> Vehicle Accessible Road from <i>Maure-Motipani</i>
Water Supply	Pilgrims/ visitors use water of natural streams, small rivers etc.
Lighting/ Electricity	Not available
Toilets	Not available
Waste Management	Lack of proper waste management
Mobile phone service	Poor network
Hotel/Accommodation	Not available but traditional <i>Kharka</i> stays (homestays), and tents

Source: Field Survey 2024

The physical infrastructures that need to promote pilgrimage tourism sustainably are lagging behind. The tourists/visitors going there should manage all those things by themselves. Pilgrimage tourism is highly dependent on local participation in tourism activities and the strategies of governing bodies for sustainable tourism development. Cultural heritages like architecture, religious circuits,

and intangible heritages of Tribeni-Badimalika can definitely add extraordinary experiences to the tourists. Another major attraction at Tribeni-Badimalika is Baisa Patan (twenty-two pasturelands and terrains) and Khetibeti (Natural Paddy field) which does not only focus on religious purposes but also has importance for eco-tourists.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the global pilgrimage tourism development and practiced models, Tribeni-Badimalika can also become a popular pilgrimage tourism destination if proper management, branding and marketing are done. According to Hall (2006, p.182), travel for pilgrimages grew drastically in the late 1990s in Nepal from 4,068 pilgrimage tourists to over 15,000 in the year 2000 which reached 172,013 in the year 2019 (MOCTCA, 2020). Hence, a gradual increment of pilgrimage tourists is seen in Nepal as per data. Pilgrimage tourism development can bring huge changes in terms of socio-cultural and economic development at Bajura, which will enhance the living standards of locals, bring interest in preserving the culture and heritage, and aids in sustainable tourism development. The Badimalika and Tribeni municipality has developed a tourism master plan to harness tourism potential and attract investment to address poverty alleviation through the introduction of home-stay programs; cultural tourism; eco-tourism programs which are metaphors for sustainable tourism development. The overall study found that Tribeni-Badimalika has a great potential for developing pilgrimage tourism since the local community and local government attitude towards tourists are positive; the tourism infrastructure development in this area is quite promising; local's, as well as few government investments, are gradually increasing; the overall experience of the pilgrims are found highly satisfied, and this destination is not limited to pilgrimage as there are many diverse attractions and activities in and around its vicinity, such as sightseeing, trekking, and other soft adventures.

Government support is much needed for protecting investments as there are some local entrepreneurs who have invested in tourism businesses. Therefore, Tribeni-Badimalika as a destination has a high potential to develop pilgrimage tourism along with varied activities; however, it is important to address the problems and challenges tactfully by the stakeholders. Further study is advisable to link Tribeni-Badimalika with other places like Ramaroson, Khaptad, Nateswori, Kalajagra, Budhinanda, Padukadham, Swami Sunanda etc. The Khaptad–Nateswori–Badimalika–Tribeni–Kalajagra–Budhinanda–Padukadham–Kailash Mansarovar religious circuit should be developed in an integrated manner to enhance pilgrimage activities. Local participation in pilgrimage tourism needs to be strengthened, along with proper record-keeping of visitors. The local government should launch environmental awareness campaigns at the pilgrimage site and improve visitor management through adequate signage and surveillance systems. Establishing souvenir shops, producing promotional documentaries, and preserving local architecture, language, costumes, traditions, and festivals are also essential. Additionally, suitable infrastructure, including hotels, resorts, and homestays, should be developed in appropriate locations.

Author's Biography

Bhim Bahadur Bist has earned an MA in Rural Development from Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu. Currently, he is an Assistant Professor and the Assistant Campus Chief Bajura Campus

at Far Western University. With 15 years of experience in teaching and working in the field of Rural Development and Development Studies, he has contributed significantly to the academic and administrative growth of the institution.

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