

## **The Development of Sustainable and Responsible Tourism in Nepal**

*"Sustainable Tourism is tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities"*

Tourism has become a multi-billion dollar industry, which spans from high concentration urban cities to remote islands in the Indian Ocean. But, in some cases, the economic benefits come hand in hand with negative environmental and social impacts. Several regions in the world have had to overcome disastrous environmental damage or the loss of their traditions and local culture due to the growth of the tourism industry. This is the main cause for the emergence of new forms of tourism (adventure-tourism, alternative-tourism, eco-tourism, rural-tourism etc.) all gathered under the generic term of **sustainable tourism**.<sup>1</sup>

### **1. The Development of Tourism in Nepal**

By the mid-1960s tourism was becoming an established source of foreign income for Nepal. Everest and the other 8000m peaks in Nepal had been climbed and wide spread press coverage of these events were provided by the leading newspapers and magazines of the day. The early tourism pioneers of the like of Boris Lissanevitch, Jimmy Roberts, Jim Edwards and Toni Hagen all contributed to 'advertising' Nepal in their own ways. Nepal was beginning to attract visitors from around the world and in greater numbers.

The 'Hippy Trail' was a popular access route to Nepal established through the 1950s and into the late 1970s that offered freedom and enlightenment for travellers with little money but plenty of time. The availability and access to hashish and other drugs through Nepal Government owned and licenced hashish shops in Jhochhen Tole (Freak Street) generated a certain lure and reputation among the hippy travellers wishing to visit Nepal. Thousands of hippies, wanting to get as far away as possible from the capitalist societies of the West, sought places of "enlightenment and freedom." The overland route to Nepal usually started at a European capital, most commonly London and Amsterdam, and continued all the way through Germany, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey and from there to the Middle East. The final destination, Nepal, but sometimes with a prolonged stay in India, and many were going even farther to Thailand and Vietnam. These journeys were usually completed in old ex-military vehicles offering little comfort but cheap and sociable travelling.

<sup>2 3</sup>

At that time very few people paid much attention to the environmental, economic or the socio-cultural aspects of developing tourism, only the positive possibility of the potential financial impact could be clearly envisaged by the host nation, the negative impact, if any, was never recognised or considered.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.quaestus.ro/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/bac4.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thevintagenews.com/2017/09/06/the-hippie-trail-once-a-symbol-of-freedom-and-enlightenment-today-is-synonymous-with-danger-and-war/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nREleCAyeb8>

## **2. A short history of sustainable tourism**

Strictly, and from a historical point of view, some authors (Lane 2009; Weaver 2006) consider that the first ideas regarding sustainable tourism belonged to Jost Krippendorf from the University of Bern. In his book, "The Landscape Eaters", after identifying several negative impacts of tourism, he argues for an alternative – soft form of tourism ("sanfter turismus".)

Since the early 90s, the concept of sustainable tourism has begun to be used more often in academic circles and, to a lesser extent among tourism entrepreneurs. We consider that the birth of the concept of sustainable tourism was the publication of the first issue of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism in 1993 (Weaver 2006:10; Hunter 2002:3; Dodds and Butler, 2009: 43), which included six articles and two articles and a book review.

This new form of practicing tourism involved small companies or entrepreneurs, which aimed to support the community, preserving the environment and protecting local culture. One of the most prominent spokesmen of sustainable tourism, David Weaver, considers that "the main difference between the old and the new form of tourism is moving the focus from the wellbeing of the tourist to the wellbeing of the host community" (Weaver 1998:31).

At that time, the concept had been highly debated, and it was received with hostility by the tourist industry, dissatisfied with putting any limits to growth and in turn considered it an "ivory tower" unrelated to the market. Sustainable tourism was also considered "intellectually arrogant, expensive, elitist and useless" (Lane 2009:20).

This attitude was not only limited to the tourism industry. Governments and local authorities did not take seriously the concept, as the classical model of tourism was bringing them many lucrative benefits. Conventional mass tourism was generating jobs and wealth transfers from developed countries to developing ones. The mass - media did not pay much attention to the concept of sustainable tourism, considering that it is much easier to denigrate than to explain. In academic circles, there were researchers that considered sustainable tourism "an impossible dream" (Lane 2009: 21). This was best explained by Wheeler: "On one hand we have the problems of mass tourism, which is recording steady and uncontrolled growth. And what is our response, small scale, slow and controlled development. It is simply impossible!" (Wheeler, quoted by Miller and Twining-Ward 2005:32).

Like sustainable development, sustainable tourism has been the central or secondary theme of conferences and international meetings during which experts in the field discussed the concept, but most importantly it caught the world's attention.

The most important institution for the development of sustainable tourism was the United Nations. Since Agenda 21, resulted from the Earth Summit in 1992, tourism began to be considered as a tool for sustainable development: "We support the development of tourism programs that respect the environment and culture, as a strategy for sustainable development of urban and rural communities by decentralizing urban development and reducing disparities between regions. (UN 1992 Chapter 7)"

Several UN departments have focused on tourism, in general, and sustainable tourism in particular. In 1999, in New York, the 7th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development was held. The main topics of discussion were: consumption and production trends, seas and oceans, the development of small island states and sustainable tourism (UN 1999:1-2). For tourism, the Commission recognized the importance of this sector for the economies of countries, but draws attention to the impact that tourism activity can have. It also presented a number of challenges ahead for the tourism industry, national governments and the international community. For the tourism industry, the main challenges mentioned in the documents resulting from the meeting were: a) sustainability is central to the whole range of forms of tourism, not only for niche tourism; b) applying methods for waste management and other forms of pollution to minimize negative impacts of tourism activity on the environment; c) involvement of all partners (customers, staff, other local entrepreneurs) in the decision making process and creating partnerships with the local community or the State to ensure the sustainable development of tourism (UN 1999).

In 2002, the World Tourism Organization launched the Sustainable Tourism - Eliminating Poverty program. This initiative was launched in the context of the Millennium Development Goals, WTO experts considering that tourism can be an alternative in many regions of the world. With its partners, the ST-EP initiative materialized in many developing countries, through the implementation of projects: tourism legislation, promotion of destinations, creating themed packages, assistance in national parks and protected areas, etc.

The next moment occurred in 2006 with the establishment of the International Task Force on Sustainable Tourism Development, subordinated to the United Nations Environment Programme. The main objectives and outcomes of the task force focused on several areas:

- Policy - recommendations on policies, standards and certification process, international funding mechanisms;
- Best practices - collection, classification and dissemination of good practices;
- Education - development and dissemination of manuals and e-learning tools, focusing on sustainable tourism;
- Strategies and pilot programs - activities in the field of corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework for national and international development strategies and examples of pilot programs;
- Information, communication and networking - information dissemination, collaboration between web pages, sharing best practices and awareness raising activities.<sup>4</sup>

The latest entry in the history of sustainable tourism took place at the RIO+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The final document, entitled “The future we want”, has a chapter for sustainable tourism, where the importance of tourism for sustainable

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unep.fr/scp/tourism/activities/taskforce>)

development is recognized and the importance of funding sustainable tourism is emphasized. (UN 2012:25)

What is apparent from the history, as presented above, is that tourism is given special attention from the international community and numerous projects are trying to implement sustainable tourism in different regions of the world. But some questions can be raised regarding the results of these projects and the industry's ability to replicate them elsewhere. We can also notice some redundant proposals and advice that are offered by international institutions, with largely the same concepts, but lack of the tools of coercion to compel the implementation of these proposals. A harsh critique is made by Schyvens (2007: 134) who states that "everything the UNWTO makes, except promotion, is just dust in the eyes of public opinion".<sup>5</sup>

### **3. The emergence of Sustainable Tourism in Nepal**

The late King Mahendra, who was a strong environmentalist, began to have concerns regarding the developing tourism trend on ill prepared communities, vulnerable eco-systems and fragile mountain environments. In 1982 he established the King Mahendra's Trust for Nature Conservation which later became known as The National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC). The founder member-secretary, Dr. Hemanta Raj Mishra played a key role in bringing international donors to support the trust with its mission to conserve nature and the natural resources in Nepal while addressing the needs of the local people in a sustainable way. Geographically, the Trust's activities spread from the sub-tropical plains of Chitwan, Bardia and Kanchanpur in the Terai to the Annapurna and Manaslu regions of the high Himalaya, including the trans-Himalayan region of Upper Mustang and Manang.<sup>6</sup>

With the death of King Mahendra in 1972 the newly crowned King Birendra took on a more proactive role in developing 'Tourism' with one of his main goals being to rid Nepal of its 'freak and drug heaven' image and to replace it with 'adventure tourism'. After studying at Eton (UK) until 1964, he returned to Nepal where he began to explore the country by travelling on foot to the remote parts of the country where he lived on whatever was available in the villages and monasteries.<sup>7</sup> Birendra enjoyed traveling in his youth, and went on trips to Canada, Latin America, Africa, many parts of India, and a number of other Asian countries. He was also an art collector, a supporter of Nepalese crafts people and artists, and learnt to fly helicopters. During these trips he became aware as to how other countries adapted to the impact of tourism<sup>8</sup>

### **4. Nepal, on the Right Lines**

Within a very short period of time Nepal established its first Ministry of Tourism, its first National Park and Wildlife Reserve and its first Cultural Zone. This proactive approach gave Jimmy Roberts' new trekking initiative a boost as it began to promote Nepal as an

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.quaestus.ro/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/bac4.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National\\_Trust\\_for\\_Nature\\_Conservation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Trust_for_Nature_Conservation)

<sup>7</sup> "King Birendra of Nepal". *Daily Telegraph*. 23 August 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Crossette, Barbara (3 June 2001). "[Birendra, 55, Ruler of Nepal's Hindu Kingdom](#)". *New York Times*

‘Adventure Tourism’ destination. Up to this point tourism in Nepal had more or less developed accidentally but from 1973 all that changed.

The Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) was established in 1986 to address these rising concerns. It undertook an innovative and successful approach to natural resource and tourism management in the Annapurna region. It practiced a multiple land use method of resource management, combining environmental protection with sustainable community development and tourism management.

The multifaceted problems of ACAP have been addressed through an integrated, community based conservation and development approach, an experimental model which has been in the vanguard of promoting the concepts of “Conservation Areas” through an “Integrated Conservation and Development Programme” approach in the country and abroad. ACAP was first tested as a pilot Programme in the Ghandruk Village Development Committee (VDC) in 1986. After being notified in the Gazette as a “Conservation Area” in 1992, ACAP’s programme covered the entire Annapurna area.

Additionally, the ACAP was the first protected area that allowed local resident to live within the boundaries as well as own their private property and maintain their traditional rights and access to the use of natural resources. It was also the first protected area, which refrained from using army assistance to protect the dwindling natural resource base on which the region depends. Instead, it invested whatever financial resources available for community development and social capital building in the region. NTNC receives no regular funding support from the government for the operation of ACAP, but has been granted the right to collect entry fees from visiting trekkers. The focus is on local capacity building, both at the institutional and individual levels, to meet all the conservation and development aspirations of the people. <sup>9</sup>

The natural and cultural features of ACAP have made it the most popular trekking destination in the country, drawing more than 60% of Nepal’s total number of trekkers. Tourism, over the years, has been firmly established as one of the most important and competitive sectors of the local economy. There are over 1,000 lodges, teashops and hundreds of other subsidiary services to cater to the thousands of trekkers, pilgrims and their support staff. All the proceeds from these visitors go towards the socio-economic benefits of the communities in which they are generated.

The soaring number of visitors into the ACAP region has exerted immense pressure on forest resources that are already stressed as a result of the growing local population and whose fuel wood consumption is twice that of the local people. Similarly, litter, particularly the wastes produced by trekkers and hoteliers, is another major concern. It is estimated that an average trekking group of 15 people generates about 15 kgs. of non-biodegradable and non-burnable garbage in 10 days trekking, producing tons of garbage in mountain regions annually. This has on many occasions brought local communities through their Buffer Zones into conflict with the Central Administration. In the ACAP region this has led to a situation where the

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<sup>9</sup> <https://ntnc.org.np/project/annapurna-conservation-area-project-acap>

local people want to abolish ACAP or at least seriously realign it so as it recognises the limitations the local communities believe it unfairly places on those communities, in part because they feel that the Central Government does not disseminate the finances gained from the permits and other taxes placed on the tourists. Consequently Community-based approaches to decision-making in the management of protected areas are increasingly being implemented in many areas. However information on the outcome of these approaches for conservation is often lacking. In the study 'Effectiveness of community involvement in delivering conservation benefits to the Annapurna Conservation Area, Nepal' the effectiveness of community-based approaches for conservation of biodiversity was examined in Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA) (Nepal) through a combination of ecological assessments and social surveys undertaken both within and outwith ACA. Forest basal area and tree species diversity were found to be significantly higher inside ACA than in neighbouring areas outside. The mean density of cut tree stumps was significantly lower inside ACA, associated with a decline in use of fuel wood as an energy source over the past decade. Social surveys also indicated that wild animal populations have increased inside ACA since the inception of community-based conservation. Observations of animal track counts, pellet counts and direct observations of selected species such as barking deer (*Muntiacus muntjak*) and Himalayan tahr (*Hemitragus jemlahicus*) indicated higher abundances within ACA. The community-based management has been successful in delivering conservation benefits in ACA, attributable to changing patterns of resource use and behaviour among local communities, increased control of local communities over their local resources, increased conservation awareness among local people resulting from environmental education, and the development and strengthening of local institutions such as Conservation Area Management Committees (CAMC).<sup>10</sup>

Broughton Coburn makes a strong case for change to the established system of management in his article 'It's time to restructure conservation area projects in Nepal' published on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019<sup>11</sup>

##### **5. Are the Principles of Sustainable Tourism now giving way to the Pressures of Commercialism and maybe Development?**

It is extremely important that those in charge of developing not just tourism but sustainable tourism fully understand the expectations of trekkers and other visitor sectors that spend time in Nepal.

Most visitors expect to see the local wild life, cultural architecture, a pristine environment and local customs and traditions, however this must be managed in such a way to also meet the expectations of the local communities – access to essential services, good communications and the opportunities to generate a liveable income from tourism. After all

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<sup>10</sup> [https://ntnc.org.np/sites/default/files/doc\\_publication/2019-03/Bajracharya\\_et\\_al\\_%202005\\_Community\\_Involvement\\_ACA\\_Environmental\\_Conservation.pdf](https://ntnc.org.np/sites/default/files/doc_publication/2019-03/Bajracharya_et_al_%202005_Community_Involvement_ACA_Environmental_Conservation.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <https://english.onlinekhabar.com/its-time-to-restructure-conservation-area-projects-in-nepal-says-conservationist-writer.html>

what is the point of developing tourism if it actually has a negative impact on the local communities and environment?

Although today the ‘Tourism’ industry contributes only around 3.0% <sup>12</sup> to the national GDP its potential is far from exhausted. The grass-root operators and mountain communities see the value of tourism as supporting their financial sustainability but in the vacuum created by a lack of direction and monitoring from senior levels of administration they are often taking things into their own hands. However, these positive achievements are threatened by the current political and dare I say moral situation in Nepal.

In short the communities hosting tourists are not getting the benefits that they expected.

Although systems are in place to manage a positive expansion of the tourism industry the rapid development accompanied by a lack of transparent monitoring by some of the major players of today has also allowed some dubious practices to enter into the industry and in many areas this is having a negative impact on Nepal reaching its sustainable tourism potential. This is especially so with regard to the environment and the impact of tourism on the wild-life.

For example as part of the major challenges facing the new administration in the mountain tourism sector it has recently been announced that, in partnership with the Nepal Tourism Board, the Ministry has succeeded in hosting the ‘world famous Formula E race’ in May 2021 which will be held in Larjung, Mustang. Organisers said the championship would also support the Mustang region — which is particularly vulnerable to the effects of the climate crisis due to its large concentration of glaciers. While electric cars are used worldwide in this formula race, racing in Nepal will be different as electric SUV vehicles will also be allowed to enter<sup>13</sup>. The BBC (UK) show TOP GEAR also took to the streets of Nepal. The upcoming Christmas 2019 special which has already been filmed in Nepal will be on BBC Two and BBC iPlayer at 9pm on 29th December<sup>14</sup>. The possible construction of a new airport at Tsarang in Upper Mustang, despite the fact it might promote religious and adventurous tourism in the country’s northern district will also have a negative environmental impact. The proposed area lies 3,700 meters above sea level but locals say if the Korala border point that connects Tibet to Nepal could be opened, more Chinese tourist would visit the country via Mustang<sup>15</sup>. The pay-off would be to what extent would the area lose its existing tourism trade from those wanting to visit a remote and so far relatively untouched community of historical significance?

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.tourismmail.com/tourism-sector-contributes-only-3-towards-gdp-of-country?fbclid=IwAR0C73Alf3RpoXx4wPHzLg25DwYkqQyFovsgzdrknxjkEP45PO3yZ33Rlj8#.Xfuy100O5rM.facebook>

<sup>13</sup> <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/mustang-to-host-formula-e-race-in-may-2021/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.nepalayatimes.com/bbc-top-gear-to-travel-on-adventurous-roads-of-nepal/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/construction-of-airport-in-upper-mustang-proposed/?categoryId=opinion>



Whilst recognising that the remote communities need to be more included in mainstream Nepal developers must keep in mind the expectations of all shareholders and the impact on sustainable tourism.<sup>16</sup>

There has been a rapid expansion of rural road development over the last few years. The situation along the Annapurna Circuit has been well aired and documented, now there is aggressive road development in Dolpa, one of the most unique regions in Nepal. Recent reports have highlighted the fact that the new roads would only be used for motor bikes and tractors taking goods to remote villages. But at what point will the first 4 x 4 head into Dolpa? Helambu is criss-crossed by roads and many villages have had a total change in character, and many locals regret the modernisation that is affecting many remote hill communities.<sup>17</sup> In some regions conflict has broken out between local people and the contractors.<sup>18</sup> The development of new roads will always impact on the environment and wild-life. Over the years the balance might well be addressed but in the short term the negative impact on both the environment and wild life will be compounded by the probable loss of revenue from mountain tourism, the destruction and displacement of the very elements that trekkers visit these areas to witness.

## **6. To address these issues the first question that must be asked is ‘What is sustainable tourism?’**

According to the World Tourism Organisation ‘Sustainable Tourism’ is the development of guidelines and management practices that are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments<sup>19</sup>.

Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance that must exist between these three dimensions to guarantee long-term sustainability.

The second question to be asked is ‘Is Nepal’s approach to modern tourism sustainable?’ Data shows that the tourism industry contributes 3.0% to the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) and that the actual economic contribution of the sector to the GDP has increased in recent years. It was anticipated that the sector would grow but without any pre-determine indicators, as opposed to recorded data, these advancements are difficult to monitor and the published 3% contribution to the GDP has caused many to ask Why? However the government has now set a bench mark of two million tourists for ‘Visit Nepal Year 2020’, can this be achieved, is it sustainable, what impact will it have on the environment and above all will it be a quality experience for both visitors and the local communities?

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<http://www.uncrd.or.jp/content/documents/5051Final%20Background%20paper%201%20for%20EST%20Plenary%20Session%203.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.nepalitimes.com/banner/new-high-way-to-dolpo/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/three-more-to-be-sued-for-excavator-attack/?fbclid=IwAR3Lo28D5oVsaqLZ3g-rvxKAiq4JAHYsGqMhonLZ-p2WvWXpZdM2wTXPuNQ>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>



Ask any local person in any one of Nepal's tourist destinations, 'Are you getting what you expected from the developing tourism market in your area?' And the answer is nearly always 'NO!' If there is no long-term financial advantage from tourists visiting 'attractions' then tourism is not having a positive impact on that area. Money taken in the form of business taxes, permit fees, tourism taxes and other related costs paid by the tourists don't always go to the related communities who then feel cheated. Schools, health and income generating activities, issues which local communities regard as being the benefactors of hosting the tourism industry do not always materialise. In economic terms although the country's GDP contribution is growing it has not reached a sufficient level for 'tourism' to be recognised at government level as a major area of income generation that should be heavily, sustainably and appropriately invested in within the near future. The local players feel that they are not being supported from the senior administration level sufficiently to create a sustainable economic life style from tourism. While at the senior administration level the financial benefits from tourism are maybe seen as 'disposable income' rather than a resource to reinvest in the sustainable tourism industry.

The environment, flora and fauna are under extreme pressure from tourism. Deforestation to make way for new airports, wider roads, creating productive subsistence agricultural land, developing new road networks, destroying natural water courses, building new lodges or other tourist facilities with little consideration for the delicate balance of the Himalayan environment are all contributing to a less sustainable industry.

#### 7. **Nepal must now consider the effects of global warming and climate change on the development of Sustainable Tourism**

The Nepal Government is well aware of the changing weather patterns and its effect on natural productivity and this is nowhere more obvious than in the present day condition of the high Himalaya, the decreasing 'permanent' snow cover and potential reduction in water supply.

The development of the tourism industry, in its present form has several major socio-economic and cultural consequences. Not all tourists are travelling from abroad and in Nepal there is a huge upturn in domestic tourism. Tourism may have many different effects on the social and cultural aspects of life in a particular region or area, depending on the cultural and religious strengths of that region. The interaction between tourists and the host community can be one of the factors that may negatively affect a community as tourist may not be sensitive to local customs, traditions and standards. The effects can be both positive and negative on the host communities.

#### 8. **Positive impacts from a well structured Sustainable Tourism Plan**

- Local community can mix with people from diverse backgrounds with different lifestyles which through 'demonstration effect' may lead to the development of improved lifestyles and practices from the tourists' examples.
- There can be an improvement in local life through better local facilities and infrastructure (developed to sustain tourism) which could lead to better education,

health care, employment opportunities and income. Tourism related business opportunities can be developed.

- The conservation of local and cultural heritage of an area and rebirth of its crafts, architectural traditions and ancestral heritage to meet client expectations.
- The income generated from permits and fees should be reinvested back into the local communities to strengthen capital development.
- The Government would benefit financially from the taxes and other tourism related charges.

## **9. Without a good Sustainable Tourism Plan there would be negative effects**

- Existing infrastructure may not be able to cope with the greater stress created by influx of tourists.
- Local population's activities and lifestyles may suffer intrusion from tourists leading to resentment towards tourists.
- The local population may copy lifestyles of tourists through the 'demonstration effect' and the result could be a loss to local customs and traditions as well as lower standards of behaviour.
- Increased crime could develop through decline in moral values, leading to greed and jealousy of wealthier visitors.
- Traditional industries may be lost and local goods substituted by imported and mass-produced goods which lack authenticity but appeal to a mass market.
- Tourists may act in an anti-social manner which could cause offence to the local population. Unless sufficient information is provided by the host nation and tourist providers on the standards of behaviour expected in that area, local populations come to resent tourists and act aggressively towards them.
- Language barriers between the tourist and the host community which may create communication problems.

## **10. Present Day Overview**

In general, tourism entrepreneurs, at local level do not believe that tourism as delivered in its present form will, in the long term, be sustainable.

On the other-side of the coin the tourists also have expectations, and they pay a relatively high price thinking that their financial contribution to Nepal's GDP will ensure a sustainable outcome. At national level and in general terms visitors have common expectations, to be safe, to have value for money based on their payments for permits and other services. They expect a litter free environment, efficient methods of transport, good customer care provision and exposure to Nepal's unique culture, festivals, architectural and ethnic heritage. There are then specific expectations based on, religious tours, mountain trekking, wild life safaris, bird-watching or adventure tourism, niche activities.

In the context of sustainable tourism development it must be born in mind that Nepal has only been developing a tourism industry for the last nearly 70 years, for the mountain and remote communities this has been considerably less. As a developing nation it is unfair to expect that Nepal can provide the same standard of service and facilities as more developed tourism

destinations, however, it must have a positive vision with pre-determine positive indicators to enable it to move in the right direction.

To understand exactly what is required to create a sustainable tourism sector it is worth considering the World Tourism Organisation's definition of Sustainable Tourism and cross reference that to activities that are being played out in Nepal's tourism industry at the present time.

Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

#### 11. **To develop a truly sustainable tourism industry**

There are three key issues that need to be addressed:-

- 1) There must be optimal use made of environmental resources, those that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- 2) Respect must be given to the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their original and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- 3) Viable, long-term economic operations must be ensured to provide socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and specific services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires the constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.

Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.

It has been suggested by PATA, Nepal Chapter that a tourism arrival goal for 2030 could be 5 million tourists. Within the next 10 years is it possible for Nepal to have sufficient infrastructure in place to meet all the criteria for a sustainable tourism industry? Several leading travel writers and already voiced their concerns.

#### 12. **Viable, long-term economic operations**

- Tourism must contribute to three high-priority goals of developing countries: the generation of income, employment, and foreign-exchange earnings.
- There is a need to improve access to the environment or facility, and for a mode of development that does not interfere with a sensitive habitat or historic /cultural diversity of an area.
- Address issues of the boom in outdoor recreation and the new interest in health and fitness.. sustainable tourism needs to keep up with changing demands
- Climate change and environmentalism are elements that have changed people's attitudes about how they should spend their vacations.
- To increase the value-added of tourism land only provision needs to be improved (at present long-term economic growth is being squeezed between foreign operators and local financial expectations
- Tourism can become a dynamic force in regional economies, recognition of these attractions, preserve them and appropriately monitor control and market them.

### **13. The way to developing Sustainable Tourism**

(full chart following on page 12)

**Optimal use must be made of environmental resources**

- Mitigate the negative impact of tourism on the environment
- Restrict the negative impact of road development
- Reduce the pollution in major cities, rivers and rural environments
- Provide adequate toilet/washroom facilities
- Restrict and monitor inappropriate building and other development
- Recognise and preserve natural land water drainage courses
- Reduce the impact of noise pollution on the wild life (helicopters/vehicles etc)
- Monitor and control deforestation
- Preserve the pristine Himalayan high altitude environment

**Respect must be given to the socio-cultural authenticity**

- Preserve local and ethnic culture so that it is not reduced to conforming to a tourism model
- Avoid developing 'destination standardising' to satisfy tourist demands
- Avoid dilution of cultural designs, architecture, souvenirs, festival and cultural dances to satisfy commercial expectations
- Preserve security in the midst of being tourist friendly
- Balance the use of local resources between tourism and local needs
- Avoid conflict of land development
- Reduce economic inequality
- Train and include local work force, keep locally developed finance, local



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### **Additional Reading**

1. Journal of Nepal Mountain Academy June 2019 – Business Model Intervention in the context of Sustainable Tourism Prof Ruhet GENC,Phd
2. Thamel through Time KGH Group Benjamin Linder 2018
3. <https://sustainabletourism.net/>
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5. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/features/what-sustainable-tourism-means/>
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