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**RURAL TOURISM IN NEPAL: DEVELOPMENT AND
SUSTAINABILITY**

A Case Study of Parbat District, Nepal

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ABSTRACT

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<p>Nepal is a country with over three thousand villages where rural tourism is a major part of the tourism industry. Its importance and value cannot be ignored or minimized. The main purpose of this thesis was to find out the possible measures that can be taken to make rural tourism sustainable in the context of Nepal. Development strategies and sustainable rural tourism development was the focal point of discussion in the thesis. To achieve these goals, a set of questionnaires was distributed among the entrepreneurs in the district headquarter Kushma of Parbat district. The important tourism sites of the study area were discussed as a case study in this thesis.</p> <p>The quantitative research method was used to conduct the survey. The data were later converted into various figures using Microsoft Excel and were later analyzed and interpreted by the author. It was revealed from the research that rural tourism in Nepal is a new concept and it is progressing at a good speed. Its development and promotion could be done through local people's participation, education to the community about food hygiene and awareness about the protection of environment and also the benefits that the community as well nation can gain through the development and promotion of rural tourism. However, lack of infrastructures and marketing policies were identified as the major bottlenecks for the development of the study site as a rural tourism destination.</p>		

Key words Development, impact, rural, sustainable, tourism, village

ABBREVIATIONS

VDC	Village Development Committee
DDC	District Development Committee
NTB	Nepal Tourism Board
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEP	United Nation Environment Program
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
TSA	Tourism Satellite Account
NTTR	Nepal Travel Trade Reporter
GDP	Gross Domestic Product

ABSTRACT
ABBREVIATIONS
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1 INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism defines the tourism activities in rural destinations. It is the merging concept of tourism development. The most essential factor for this form of tourism is accommodation services with additional local facilities. Cultural and natural resources are to be exploited according to the principle of sustainable development. Development of rural tourism in a particular area should not threaten the natural, cultural and social resources and at the same time stimulate economic development and increase the quality of living space of the local population should be ensured.

Nepal is in a sad economic condition among the poor countries even it is known for its backpacking and adventure tourism. Tourism plays a significant role for a country like Nepal, which is in the developing stage. And Nepal is rather popular for the professional travelers and backpackers. The country attracts tourists with its ancient history, culture, tradition and its fantastic natural beauty. A special category of tourism has recently appeared in Nepal – rural or village tourism, which offers the tourist to acquaint with maximum probability of precious wealth and natural beauty, rituals and beliefs, customs and traditions of the country. Besides, it also allows them to become acquaint with life and the culture of local citizens. Village tourism is considered to be one of the important factors, which brings out the significant change in the village economy and an innovative strategy in developing tourism industry. It is beneficial to both tourism entrepreneurs and people.

Most of the Nepalese tourism activity was focused on major trekking and mountains before the concept of village tourism was introduced. The rural tourism program was introduced to spread the economic benefits of the tourism industry over a wide area and was also a way of creating jobs within the local area in the fields like agriculture. And there is a heavy involvement from the local level but it suffered a major setback soon afterwards due to the outbreak of the civil war. The signing of the 2007 peace treaty brought stability to Nepal and it started growing again at a faster speed than before. Nepal has been fighting poverty for many years and until the poverty alleviation is considered implemented without any incremental plans it could be harder to implement the rural tourism due to the fact that poverty alleviation directly links to rural tourism.

Parbat district is one of the mountainous districts in western Nepal with an area of 494 square kilometer and a population of 146,590 according to the national population census of 2011 (Central Bureau of Statistics 2012). Almost 90% area of this district is a village. The purpose of this research is to examine the problem and prospect of rural tourism in Parbat district. How sustainable tourism can be developed? How local community be benefitted and what does it contribute to national GDP? In this research the author tries to describe the tourism activities in Parbat district, Nepal as a form of rural tourism. The quantitative research methodology is used to conduct the research. A questionnaire-based survey is conducted among the locals and entrepreneur of Parbat district.

2 NEPAL AS A TOURISM DESTINATION

Despite the abundances of natural resources posed by Nepal it has various cultural and religious resources too but the income earned by the tourism industry is not triggering down to the grass root people at desired level. Therefore, this research tries to evaluate the diversified culture of Nepal comparing with rural tourism. Nepal has been struggling with political instability, weak infrastructure development, immature government policies and a recent earthquake has triggered the whole nation. Under these circumstances sustainable development of tourism is not an easy topic for reaching the targets to get the returns from bottom level society, which is also partially involved in the tourism industry, and to maintain a sound environment at the local tourism destinations.

2.1 TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NEPAL

Tourism development in Nepal dates back to the early 1950s with the successful ascent of mount Annapurna by French mountaineer Maurice Hergoz and simultaneously three years later with Tensing Norgay Sherpa and sir Edmund Hillary a successful ascent of Mt. Everest. The whole country can be considered as a country of villages as there are specifically more than 3,915 Village Development Committees (VDC) located in all parts of the country from east to west and south to north (Upadhyay 2005, 16). Biodiversity comprises a significant role for the attraction of tourist to Nepal. (Thapa 2005.)

Nepal occupies the 25th position global diversity in overall and 11th position in Asia from the standpoint of bio-diversity. The high Himalayan ranges which contain rare species of snow leopard, black deer, red panda, tiger, one horned rhinoceros, wild buffalo, and elephant make up one of the major tourist attraction centers. Talking about the geographical situation, Nepal contains 0.003% of the world while 0.3% of Asia still harbors 2% flowering plants, 3% of pteridophytes, 6% of bryophytes, various indigenous plant species and more than 400 species of flora and fauna. Nepal is also considered as the home to the 8% of birds from the world's population (more than 850 species), 4% of the mammals of the earth and 11% of the butterflies. (Paudel 2014.)

The restoration of peace after the Second World War opened the market to travel around the world and this opportunity is directly helping to establish tourism as one of the biggest significant industries. The development of tourism in Nepal is relatively recent. And the rapid growth of tourism in Nepal started immediately after the fall of the autocratic Rana rule in 1950 but before that only a few numbers of tourists were visiting Nepal who discovered it as a fascinating country. And especially the successful ascent by sir Edmund Hillary from the Netherlands climbed the world's highest mountain Mt. Everest for the first time, is situated in Nepal. Pilgrim tourism is known to be famous in Nepal since the time of Hindu civilization. Recently in the time of Hindu civilization people have visited different natural and cultural places of Nepal for the purpose of pleasure and to devote them to the lord. And the Himalaya in Nepal itself is recognized by the name of the father of the Hindus' God and Goddess Shiva and Parvati. (Shrestha 2002.)

Considering the non-pilgrim tourism in Nepal started to develop its initial phase only after the initiation of the democracy in 1950. The first tourist that visited Nepal was only after the initiation of democracy and was brought 1955 by Thomas Cook (Bhatt, 2006; quoted by Kandel 2011, 27). The main motivation for the development of tourism in Nepal is especially its indigenous tradition and culture. Various conservation areas were established to protect the natural habitat of wild animals in 1970s and 1980s in the various parts of the country. Then, the year 1998 was celebrated as a tourism year, which generated a mass flow of tourists to the country. (Kandel 2011, 27-28.)

2.2 Cultural diversity

Pluralism is defined as a form of society or state in which ethnic or cultural groups maintain their independent tradition, practice and attitudes. Another definition includes the toleration or acceptance of a diversity of opinions, values, theories, etc. The meaning of diversity indicates the condition or quality being diversified, different or varied. The concept of cultural diversity reflects the social reality determined by languages, religions, ethnic membership and cultural traditions. It also implies a special societal condition comprising of ethnic, racial and religious groups with distinctive heritage, values, languages and life style. (Bentley 1971, 337; quoted by Bhattarai 2004, 294.)

Nepalese culture is unity in diversity. Diversity can be seen in Nepal's culture by the diversity of caste, religion, ethnicity, language, and festivals. The major religion in Nepal is Hinduism, which is followed by Buddhism and small minorities such as Islam and Christianity. According to the population census of 2001 more than 100 ethnic groups were found among which 59 were considered to be indigenous groups. Culture and tradition of people differ from one caste and ethnic group to another still the social harmony is always taken as a remarkable feature of Nepalese culture. (Hangen 2007, 3-5.)

Nepal is a multiethnic, multilingual, multi-religious and secular country, which possesses its own type of attitude, norms and values (NTB 2011). The country's diversified landscape is the major attraction for visitors. Tourism is an important industry to generate employment, attracts foreign investment, which eventually generates a big amount of revenue for the government. Tourism is evolving as an important part of the society in Nepal because of its diversified culture, natural beauty providing skilled and unskilled jobs to many unemployed people that is directly helping to alleviate poverty in the country.

2.3 Geographic location

Nepal is a landlocked Himalayan country bordering India and China with the highest majestic and beautiful snowcapped mountains and with an area of 147,181 square kilometers. Nepal lies in the temperate zone north of the Tropic of Cancer. The ecological zone of Nepal runs from east to west, which is 800 km along its Himalayan axis, and 150 to 250 km north to south, and is vertically intersected by the river systems. The country is mainly divided into three main geographical regions respectively the Himalayan region, the Hilly region and the Terai region. (Welcome Nepal 2016.)

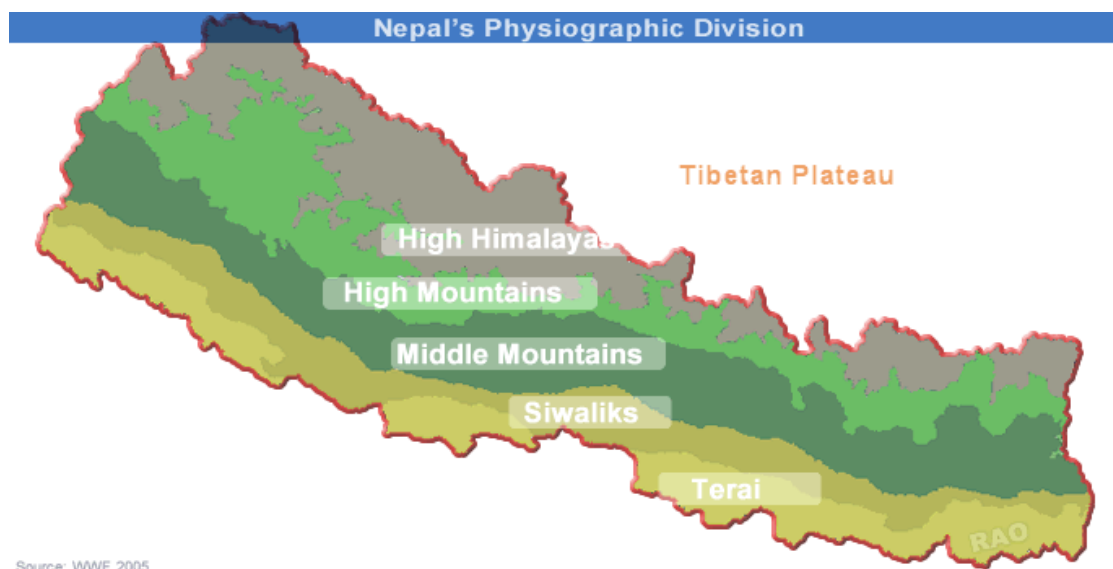


FIGURE 1. The topography of Nepal (adapted from RAOnline 2015)

The highest point in the country is Mt. Everest (8,848 m) while the lowest point is in the Terai plains of Kechana Kalan in Jhapa district (60 m). The Terai region occupies a total of 17 percent; the Hilly region covers 68 percent and the Himalayan region covers 15 percent of the total land of the country. (Nepal Tourism Board 2015.)

Eight of the fourteen highest peaks in the world lie in Nepal, which are 8000 meters above from sea level. Mustang and Dolpa are the cold deserts sharing topographical characteristics with the Tibetan plateau. Nepal holds the so-called “water towers of South Asia” with its 6,000 rivers; which are snow-fed or dependent on rain. Out of 163 wetlands, the nine globally recognized sites lie in Nepal. Nepal has been successful to conserve more endangered species of flora and fauna than any other country in Asia. Now, the protected areas in Nepal include 10 national parks, 3 wildlife reserves, one hunting reserve and 6 conservation areas and 11 buffer zones which is 23.23 percent of the total area of the country. (Nepal Tourism Board 2015.)

3 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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 constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. (UNEP & UNWTO 2005, 11-12.)

All tourism activities of whatever motivation – holidays, business travel, conferences, adventure travel and ecotourism – need to be sustainable. Sustainable tourism is defined as “tourism that respects both local people and the traveller, cultural heritage and the environment” (UNESCO 2010). To make tourism sustainable it is essential to maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction ensuring a meaningful experience to the tourists through increasing awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them (UNEP & UNWTO 2005, 11-12).

3.1 Sustainable rural tourism

Sustainable rural tourism in this era refers to protecting the resources and building community capacity. The highest purpose of tourism policy is to integrate the economic, political, cultural, intellectual and environmental benefits of tourism cohesively with people, destination, and countries in order to improve global quality of life and provide a foundation for peace and prosperity. The success of rural tourism must be multi-purpose with the concept of sustainability. It should aim to sustain the culture and character of host communities, landscape and habitats, rural economy, and the tourism industry, which will be viable in the long term (Lane 2005, 13).

Tourism in this age is seen as an agent for rural economic re-generation. However the rural environment is a very fragile one. It is easily either changed or damaged by rapid changes of any sort; since tourism is a powerful agent for change. Many surveys show that ‘rurality’ is a unique selling point for holidays in the countryside (Lane 2005, 12-18). Visitors are always looking for high quality and ‘unspoiled’ nature, scenery, and landscape. Tourism in rural areas has grown, partly because of market forces seeking

different kinds of holiday, and partly as a result of government initiatives. This growth has been most noticeable in the countries of the developed world.

Village tourism or rural tourism is one of the significant tourism sectors in Nepal. These kinds of tourism services and activities help to explore the tradition, culture, arts, food of different community and ethnic groups throughout the nation. In order to obtain the sustainable development of village tourism in Nepal, firstly political stability in the country is a must. Proper marketing of the place should be maintained. All ethnic groups in the country should be empowered and given equal rights. Green tourism is the major tool for creating new opportunities for tourism and encouraging the development of existing tourism enterprises with minimum impact on wildlife and the environment. It is believed that sustainable green tourism makes important sense for the long term, and taps into a growing demand for holidays that leave the smallest possible 'footprint' on the environment and local communities. Environment is an important factor for the development of sustainable tourism. Eco-tourism or green tourism activities should be promoted. (Across Himalaya 2015.)

3.2 Sustainable ecotourism

Sustainable ecotourism aims to minimize the environmental and cultural damages, optimize visitor satisfaction, and maximize long-term economic growth for the region (Gupta 2015). It is a way of obtaining a balance between growth of tourism and the need for environmental conservation. Nepal is a landlocked country that lies in between two big nations China and India respectively. The topography of Nepal offers a wide range of variations, which include a high amount of hilly regions and mountains and a low volume of plain regions. This is also one of the major attractions of rural tourism in Nepal where tourists love to see and visit those places that have an important flora and fauna, the majority of which has been listed to be in the zone of extinction. Ecotourism is not a newly born concept in Nepal; however, it is getting a wide popularity among the visitors who aim to visit the country for experiencing natural resources and wildlife. To maintain the sustainability in the ecotourism sector, the government as well as the private sectors are actively making an effort to help everyone understand the concept of ecotourism and maintain the tourism sustainable (UNEP & WTO 2005, 3).

4 IMPACTS OF TOURISM

A form of tourism that demonstrates the living of a rural society, its art, culture and heritage it holds, benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling communication between the tourists and the local residents for a more lasting and prolonging experience is termed as rural tourism. Tourism, in the modern era, is explained as a tool that leaves a huge impact on the hosting community and the nation as a whole. It is a matter of fact that any form of tourism, from its root, is supposed to leave a dramatic positive impact. However, the adverse impact of it is unseen and neglected at its initial stage. Hence, it cannot be ignored that tourism would not leave any bad impacts on the community or society as a whole. (Ruoss & Alfare 2013.)

4.1 Environmental impacts

The study of OECD in the late 1970's figured out the stress created by the tourism activities on the environment. This study highlighted major sectors of stress or activities in the tourism industry such as permanent environmental restructuring (highway, airport, resorts) which generated biological and non-biological waste products. These have negative impacts on vegetation, affect fish production and create health hazards and decrease the attractiveness of a destination; another is direct environmental stress caused by tourism activities (destruction of coral reefs, dunes, etc.); and the last one is effects on the population dynamic (migration, increase of population in a particular place). (Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert & Wanhill 2008, 161.)

There are three major impact areas of tourism activities on the environment. Natural resources are one of them. The development of tourism indirectly creates problem in areas where the resources considered to be essential are already scarce. Tourism activities can also create pressure on local resources like water, food, energy and other raw materials that may be in short supply. Another impact on the environment is pollution. Emission from different means of transport causes air pollution, which is the biggest challenge of this time. Natural resources such as minerals, fossil fuels, fertile soil, forests, wetland and wildlife are also affected due to noise pollution. An increasing number of construction in tourism and recreational

facilities has increased the pressure on these resources and on scenic landscapes, which is creating direct impact on natural resources, both renewable and nonrenewable. The act of deforestation done for the purpose of fuel wood collection and land clearing are also the negative impact of tourism. For example, one trekking tourist in Nepal can use four to five kilograms of wood a day. (Cooper et al. 2008, 164-166.)

4.2 Socio-cultural impacts

Socio-cultural impacts of tourism can be widely seen as positive and negative. In every country there is a tradition of examining the socio-cultural impacts of tourism relating to the contact that takes place between the host and visiting populations. In this chapter the author tries to illustrate both positive and negative impacts of tourism in the host country or region. Developments in infrastructure and leisure amenities that result from tourism activities benefit the local community. The positive side of socio-cultural impact encompasses the host and guest interaction and exchange of their traditions and beliefs. It means that those visiting the destination not only experience a new culture and traditions but also leaves and shares their own culture. It helps in exchange of cultural behaviors between both parties. In addition, tourism encourages people to preserve and protect the cultural heritages, ancient and historical places, customs, handicrafts, and festivals. In this sense, tourism is directly helping to preserve the resources of high importance that has both local and national values. (Cooper et al. 2008, 188.)

However, there are certain things that cannot be ignored which follow a negative trend in terms of social and cultural impacts. For instance, behavioral and demonstration factors are something that might sometimes create a big misunderstanding among the host and the tourists. It means that in certain destinations, the norms and values, which are already being accepted, or in use could be a matter of surprise for the visitors and vice versa. In such a situation, there is a risk that people do not react in a positive way because of the difference in thoughts, culture and beliefs. This creates a high level of constraint between the host community and the visitors. Hence, it is the most important element that the visitors should always be aware of the place when they are going to visit and the customs and values that they might have to adjust to. (Cooper et al. 2008, 188-189.)

4.3 Economic impacts

Tourism has a variety of economic impacts. Tourists contribute to sales, profits, jobs, tax revenues, and income in an area. The most direct effects occur within the primary tourism sectors; lodging, restaurants, transportation, amusements, and retail trade. Through secondary effects, tourism affects most sectors of the economy. An economic impact analysis of tourism activity normally focuses on changes in sales, income, and employment in a region resulting from tourism activity. (Gyan Publishing House 2005, 80-81.)

Tourism is also recognized as one of the largest service-based industries. Economic benefits are the main driving force for tourism development. For the development strategy in tourism industry; income, foreign exchange and employment generation are major motivations. International tourist expenditure is taken as invisible export from the host country and domestic tourism is seen as an export from the host region to the other local regions. Tourism activities are broadly taken as import substitution when tourists prefer to travel within the country rather than travelling abroad. The data of movement of people from one place to another is collected and monitored by central banks, which is also helpful when searching for data of income and expenditure in tourism sector. It is always easier to measure international tourism activity instead of domestic tourism activity where there is involvement of currency exchange and immigration. (Cooper et al. 2008, 129.)

International tourism activities increase the flow of foreign exchange. During past decades many countries in service sectors have experienced the economic growth than in any other sector. General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) stated that in developing countries service sectors contribute 40% of the GDP, while in developed countries it contributed up to 65% of the GDP. Tourism is a major element of service economy because of this it has been appreciated for its sustained and rapid growth (Cooper et al. 2008, 130). One practical approach to determine the economic importance of tourism activities to an economy is to create Tourism Satellite Account (TSAs). It has different roles in terms of economic impact models to determine the economic benefits that are associated with tourism activity. (Cooper et al. 2008, 135.)

There are also negative economic impacts associated with the tourism activities. Many hidden costs to tourism services can have unfavorable economic effects on the host community. Quite often rich countries generate more profit from tourism than poor countries. For better and smooth running of the tourism industry, improvements of infrastructure, roads and visitors centers are necessary. The cost for this

development usually falls on the head of government, so it has to come out of tax revenues. Tourism services and jobs created are often seasonal and conditional. Leakage of expenditure is one of the major elements, which create negative economic impact on tourism activities. When tourists make expenditure within the economy the amount of money that stays within the economy depends upon the leakage that occur. For example, a purchase of a souvenir made in other countries. (Cooper et al. 2008, 136.)

5 CASE STUDY OF PARBAT DISTRICT, NEPAL

This chapter introduces and discusses the importance of Parbat district for the development of rural tourism. The author describes important places to be visited by the tourist in Parbat district. Demography, geography and other elements of the district are introduced. Mainly this chapter focuses on how the studied area can be developed as a rural tourism site and what elements are lacking.

5.1 Overview

Parbat district is situated in a hilly area of Nepal in the western development region. It is a part of the Dhaulagiri zone and one of the seventy-five districts of Nepal. Its district headquarter is Kushma. It lies in an altitude of 750-3250 meters from sea level with an area of 53,686 square meters. Temperature varies from 15-30 degrees centigrade. This district has a population of 146,590, which is 0.55% of the country's population. About 33.88% of the total land is covered with forest. Varieties of flora and fauna are found in this district due to the difference in altitude, climate and landscape. There are possibilities of producing large amounts of grains in the lower belt of the district. In animal husbandry, cow, buffalo, goat, pig and chicken are the most commonly raised in this district. Parbat district has a small area compared to other districts in the country. This small district is rich in the history of owning various mines of iron, copper and slate stone. (DDC Parbat). This district is mainly famous for the Gupteshwor cave, which is visited by thousands of pilgrims during the Shivaratri festival. Another important pilgrimage site in Parbat district is Patheshwori temple, which is situated in the district headquarter Kushma. (DDC Parbat.)

5.2 Infrastructures

Development of infrastructure in this district is still inadequate and it is tampering the development of tourism. The major problems are in the area of transportation, communication, accommodation and health sector. These amenities are not developed according to the need of the people. Transportation is the main pillar for the development of any place. This allows people to move easily and freely. Present day's

transportation is not available in many destinations of the Parbat district. Pokhara-Baglung highway is the main route to connect Parbat. This highway only connects the northern part of the district but southern part is far behind from this facility. Kaligandaki corridor is under construction, which would solve the problem of transportation to the district. There is no air connection to the district, so roadways are the only means of transportation available so far. (Tiwari 2009.)

Communication is another important tool for the development of rural tourism industry. Most of the tourism sites in the district are in remote villages. Telephone service is a must for communication and to create link between the tourist and the host community, which is not available in most of the villages of Parbat. But the recent development in the communication and technology has brought life to the destination, though most of the areas in the district are still untouched by the modern means of communication. (Tiwari 2009.)

Accommodation is another important factor for the development of tourism in a certain place. Development of accommodation services in the district is not satisfactory. Accommodation facilities are insufficient and are not available in all tourism destinations. Some available lodges and hotels are only in Kushma, the district headquarter. The development of home stay program has brought life to the rural destinations. People are interested in welcoming guests in their home where there is no availability of hotels and guesthouses. The banking facility is another essential factor for the growth of tourism in Parbat. There are few banks offering banking facilities and they are more focused in the district headquarter. Development of banking facilities in the rural part of the district has been seen as an important step for making the district as a tourist destination. Besides, the entire above-mentioned infrastructure, establishment of a tourist information desk is highly important to provide tourists with bunch of information they require to know about the destination. (Tiwari 2009.)

5.3 Prospects of tourism

Parbat district is situated in the hilly region of Nepal and it possesses many higher mountain peaks. Hampal and Loprekolek are in the northern part of the district and Dahare in the center and Chisapani and Gorlyand are in the southern part of the district. The beauty of these peaks attracts hundreds of tourists

throughout the year. During springtime, the forests are covered with the rhododendron, which is the national flower of Nepal and various species of butterflies. There are many caves, which are mostly visited by the tourists. Gupteshwor cave is one of them, which lies 500 meters away from Kushma. In this chapter, the author describes the possibilities and opportunities for developing rural tourism in a small district like Parbat. The prospective of tourism in the Parbat district are described in following sub-headings.

5.3.1 Nature-based tourism

Nepal, a mountainous country having diversified topographic climatic conditions, occupies a wide range of flora and fauna. Out of the whole nation, Parbat is such a district that gives access to medicinal natural resources. There have been many surveys conducted in this place focusing on ethno-botanical studies to find out the existence of natural herbs and medicinal plants. The ethno-medicinal data collected in 2012-2013 found the two major ethnic groups Magar and Manjhi holding adequate knowledge of the use of flora and medicinal herbs. These herbs are used for local health medicinal purpose and they use it the way it has been adopted from their ancestors. Another important natural resource found in this area is called Lokta, the one that is used to make handmade paper. The trend of using handmade paper is still in use in all government institutions of Nepal. The Parbat district is the only place where this species of plant exists. However, due to overexploitation, encroachment and destruction of natural habitat, the natural resources have been listed in the zone of extinction in the recent times. Therefore, strong steps from both the government and non-government organizations should be lodged to protect all these endangered species of floras. It is also important to preserve those resources because the place is used as a research area for many of the forestry and agriculture professionals to experiment with herbs, shrubs and trees. (Chhetri & Gauchan 2015.)

5.3.2 Cultural and pilgrimage tourism

Alongside the nature-based tourism and adventure tourism, the place is also an important destination for offering various cultural and pilgrimage destinations. Gupteshwor cave is one of the most popular places

that are 500 meters away from the headquarters of the district. The timber ladder is used to reach the inner part of the cave which is very narrow. However, outer part of the cave can be visited normally without support of any accessible equipment. The most interesting thing in this cave is, it offers the spectacular view of ancient stone images of holy gods and goddesses. On the occasion of Maghesakranti and Balachaturdashi, which are some of the most celebrated festivals in Nepal, the largest number of pilgrims who visit this place. (Tiwari 2009.)

5.3.3 Adventure tourism

Adventure is the most thrilling experience for any tourist who visits the mountain sides like the ones in the Parbat district. The topography of this area offers a wide spectrum of variations in altitudes where experiences from trekking to the highest suspension bridge walk can be done. Rafting in Kaligandaki is the most famous adventure trip a tourist can experience. The place is named after the holy goddess of Nepal 'Kali'. This holy river cuts through one of the deepest gorges in the world. It is also famous for the reason that the rafting route is a bit longer than other rafting routes of Nepal. The trip starts from Beni of Myagdi and ends at Setibeni. (Tiwari 2009.)



FIGURE 2. Longest suspension bridge of Nepal (Source: Highest Bridges 2010)

The Parbat district is also famous for having the highest, tallest and longest suspension bridge in Nepal that connects the district headquarter Kushma and southern region of the neighboring district of Baglung and is 117 meters high and 334 meters long (Shore 2011). The bridge is a milestone in the region which serves an average of 500-1000 people a day. The feedback from tourists experiencing rafting in Parbat shows that they not only experienced a thrilling rafting fun, rather they also had an opportunity to see the up and down slopes of the mountain on each side of the river and got a combined experience of exhilarating rapids with amazing scenery of rural Nepal. (Tiwari 2009.)

6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research method is the way used to gather information from the target group of people. There are many ways information can be gathered via research using questionnaire, individual interview with the person, using secondary source of data and survey. In general, two kinds of research methods are in use and they are qualitative research and quantitative research method (Veal 2006). For accumulating the source of information, the writer in this thesis used quantitative research method by organizing a set of questionnaires where the participants have answered the questions related to this thesis. The purpose of this research was to find out the facts about the rural tourism development in Nepal, how it is managed and to overlook the constraints that could appear to be a barrier in fostering the tourism development in those rural regions. The questionnaire was distributed to the targeted participants to carry out the survey and gather the valuable information from their point of view. The findings of the questionnaire were then analysed using Microsoft Excel.

6.1 Quantitative research method

The quantitative method of research deals with the statistical analysis of the data. It literally relies on the numerical evidence to represent the outcome of the research. Quantitative research method is essentially about collecting numerical data to explain a particular phenomenon. The questions used in the questionnaire of the quantitative research method are suited to be answered immediately after looking at the questions. The main objective of using quantitative research method is also to find out the demand of the quantitative answer, the numerical changes in expression of the data, the demand of wanting to find out about the state of something, and the testing of hypothesis” (Veal 2006, 40). There are also factors which rely on reliability and validity of the research done. For this purpose, the writer has asked questions of different nature to the respondents and analysis of the questionnaire has been done through Microsoft Excel.

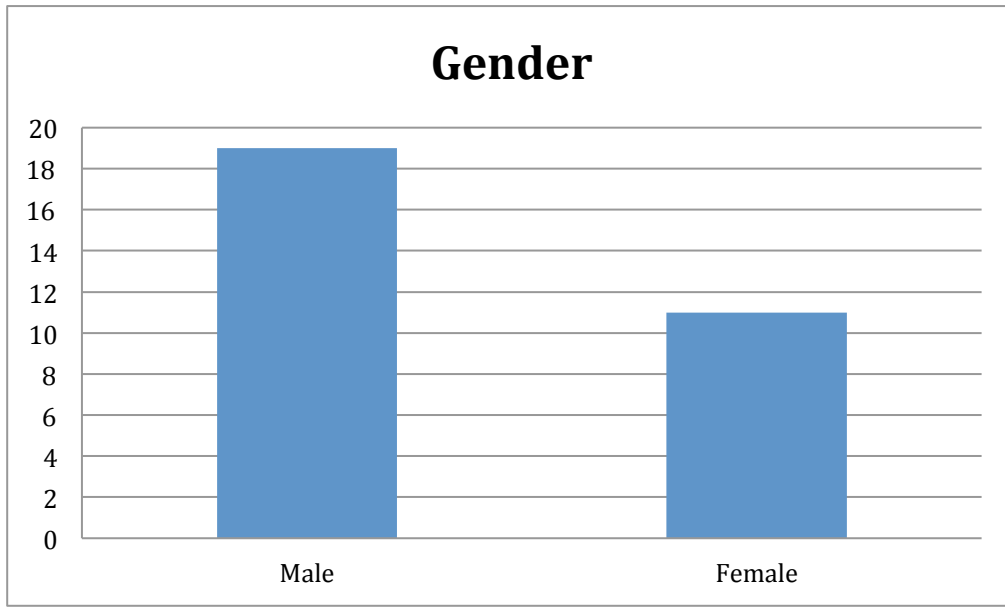
6.2 Reliability and validity

A.J. Veal has described his ways of dealing with reliability which says that reliability would appear to be the same if the research would be done after a certain gap of time and when dealing with different samples or subjects. For instance, if the research was conducted within the field of natural sciences where experiments are repeated and kept under control, then it would produce identical results. However, this is different in social science where dealing is done with human beings in different social situations. (Veal 2006, 41.)

Validity is the context where the information collected by the researcher reflects the idea suited by the researcher. For this research, the empirical research is based on people's attitude and behavior; however, the personal point of interest reflected by people depends on their personal interest. The elements are subjected to a number of imperfections, which tells that the validity can rarely be as sure as natural sciences. (Veal 2006, 41.)

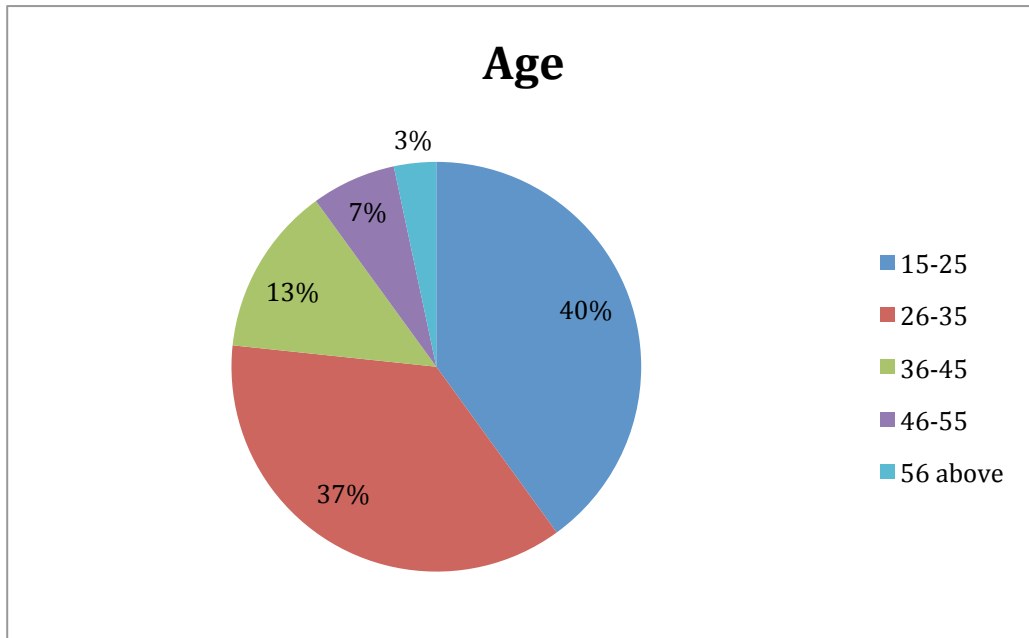
6.3 Data analysis

The research of this thesis is totally based on quantitative research method. The survey has been conducted in Kushma, the district headquarter of Parbat, among 30 respective individuals by providing them a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was made to reveal the current development of tourism activities in Parbat district and to figure out possible ways to make it sustainable. The outcomes of the research were put in the Microsoft Excel to depict the analysis of the data and they have been interpreted in the set of different figures.



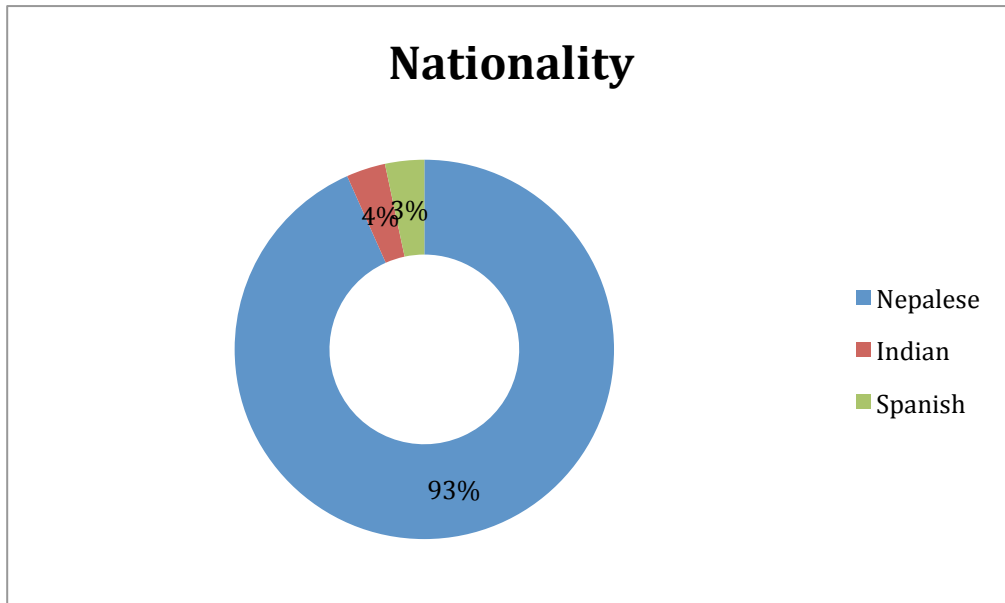
GRAPH 1. Gender of participants

The graph (GRAPH 1) tells about the gender, both male and female who were actively involved during the research process. The two respective bars in the graph represent male and female participants who answered the questionnaire distributed to them. Out of 30 participants, 19 were male and 11 were female. This illustrates that the number of male participants outweigh their counterparts.



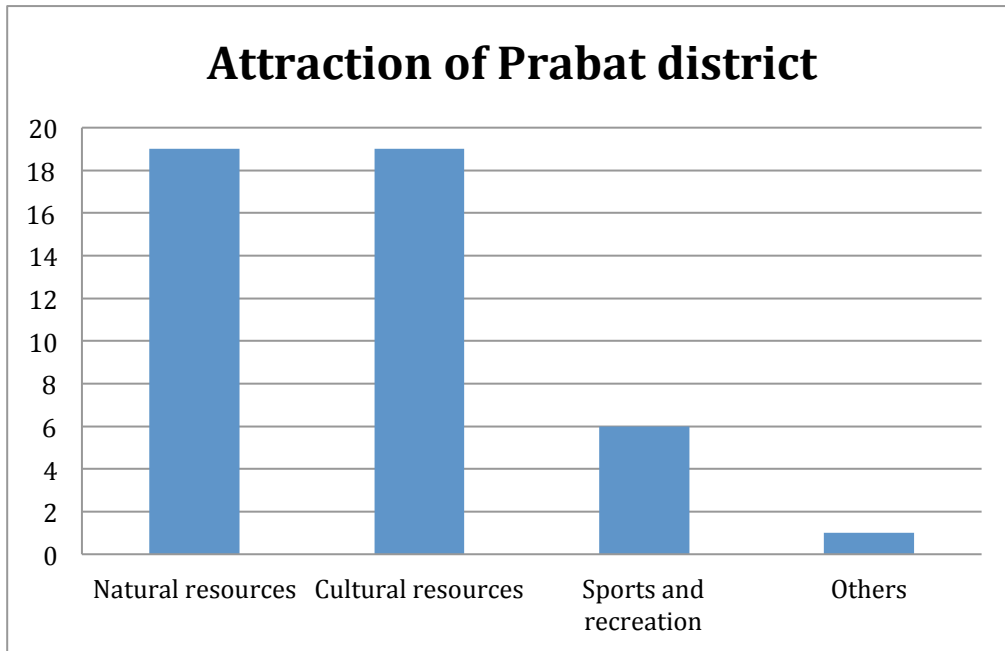
GRAPH 2. Age group of participants

The pie-chart (GRAPH 2) gives information about the age groups among those male and female participants. The chart demonstrates different sections respective to different age groups and they have been distinguished with different colors in the chart. The age group 15-25 was 12 in number, which is equal to 40% of the total participants. The age group between 26-35 was 11 in number, which is 37% of the overall candidates. Similarly, the age group between 36-45 was 4 in number, which equals 13% of the whole participants. The group between 46-55 was 2 in number, which is 7% out of total candidates. Interestingly, there was only one participant who was in the age group above 56 and it shows 3% in the chart analysis. It shows that youths are more active and participating in such surveys than old age citizens. However, one candidate above 56 years age was a senior citizen and it was interesting to have him in the survey.



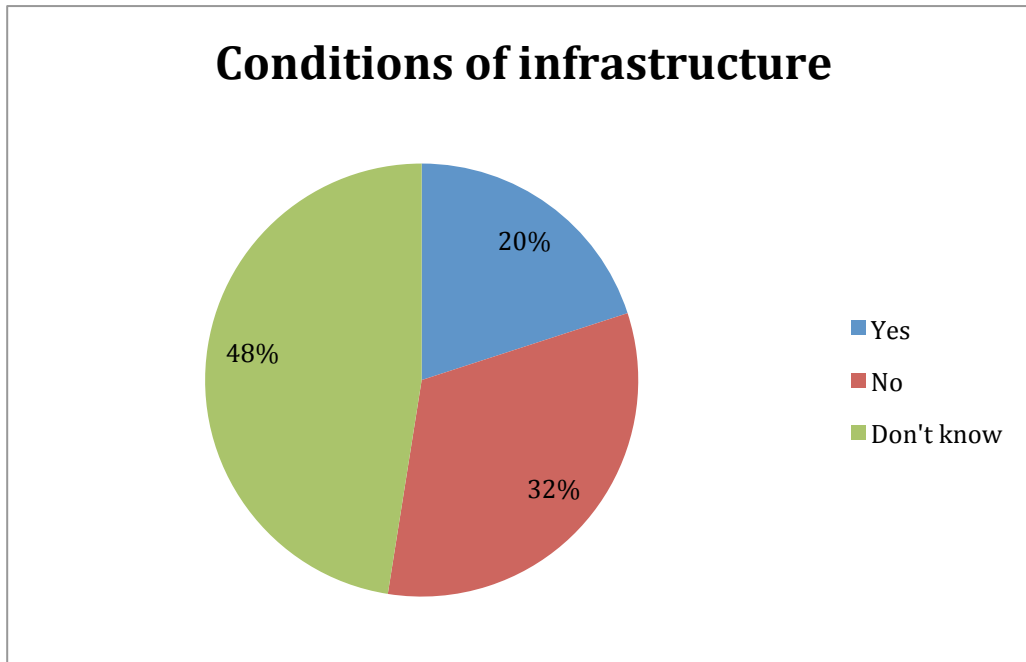
GRAPH 3. Nationalities of participants

The chart (GRAPH 3) depicts the figures related to nationality involved in this survey. The majority of the participants were Nepalese, which represents 93% in the chart. Out of which most of them were local. Other participants in the survey were Indian and Spanish, which represents 4% and 3% respectively in the chart.



GRAPH 4. Attractions in Parbat district

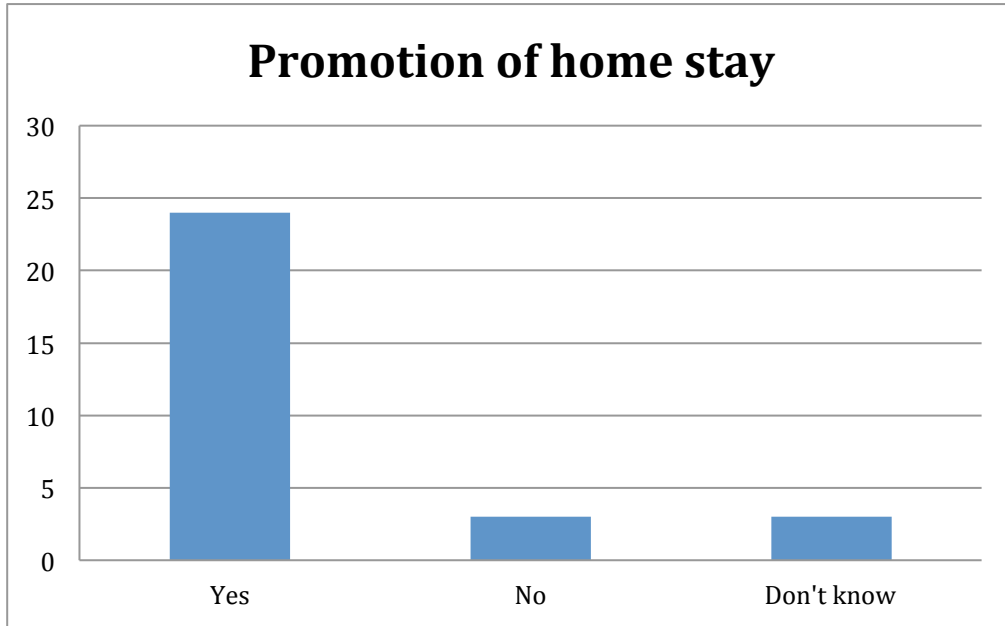
The bar graph (GRAPH 4) shows the different kinds of attractions of Parbat district. The question relating to this in the questionnaire allowed the participants to answer with one or more options. Among them, most of the participants answered natural and cultural attractions to be the most preferred among all other options. Natural resources and cultural resources hold the similar level of attraction among people, whereas sports and recreation and other resources are comparatively low.



GRAPH 5. Conditions of infrastructure

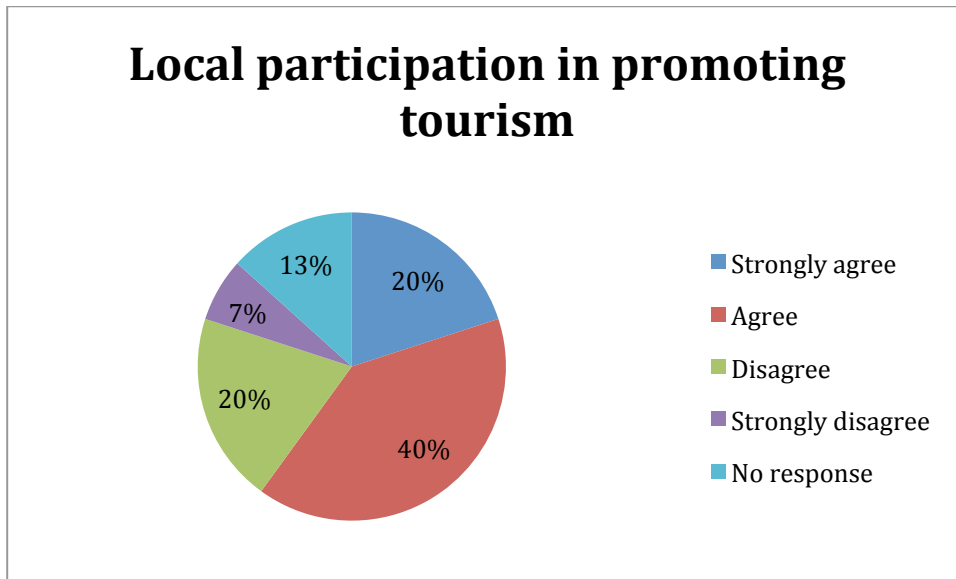
The chart (GRAPH 5) explains the infrastructures in Parbat district and the possibility of it to host the visitors maintaining different tourism activities. Out of the total participants, 8 of them agreed to the statement, which in graph is represented to be 20%. Similarly, 13 individuals answered no to the statement, which reveals as 48% in the chart. And finally, 9 individuals chose the third option, which says they do not know about the statement that was asked. And it represented as 32% in the chart. It shows that, the condition of infrastructure in the district is still inadequate, provided the fact that those who are not sure about the infrastructure available are pretty close in number to those who agreed on it.

In addition, those who did not agree with the statement and chose option no were further asked to specify what kinds of infrastructure was insufficient in the following question. They stated many different kinds of amenities that should be built and developed in the district. Among them big highways and small sub-road connecting to many small villages were necessary. On top of that, lack of airport in the district was another issue coined by the participants because the district has no air connection access. Besides, banking facilities were only focused in the district headquarter. Internet connection is not available in remote villages of the district, which are the major destinations for rural tourism.



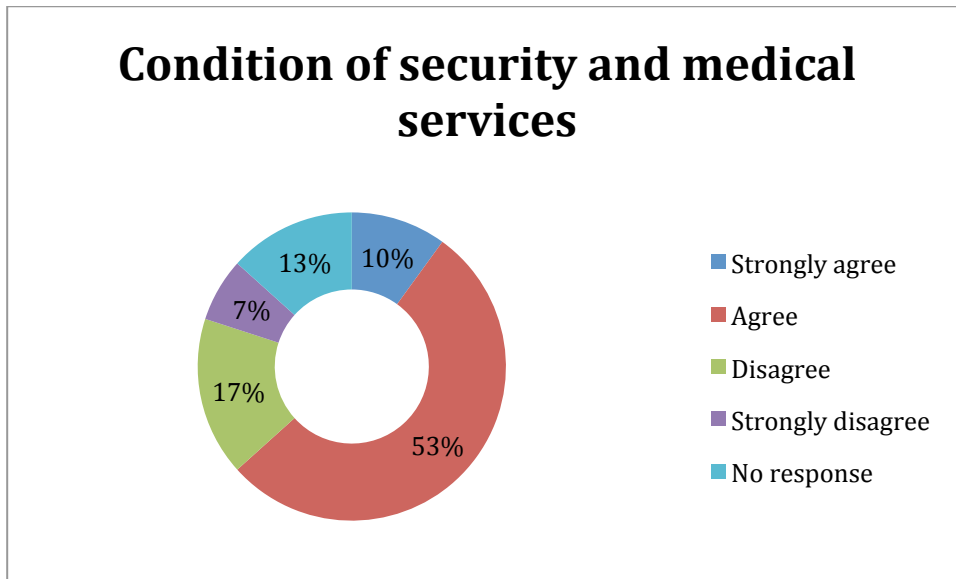
GRAPH 6. Promotion of home stay program

The graph (GRAPH 6) illustrates the interest in promotion of home stay in Parbat district. Out of all participants, 24 agreed with the statement, 3 disagreed with it and 3 said they do not know. It explains that promoting home stay could be a good choice for tourism business in rural sites of the district, which are close to flora and fauna as well as the rich cultural heritage.



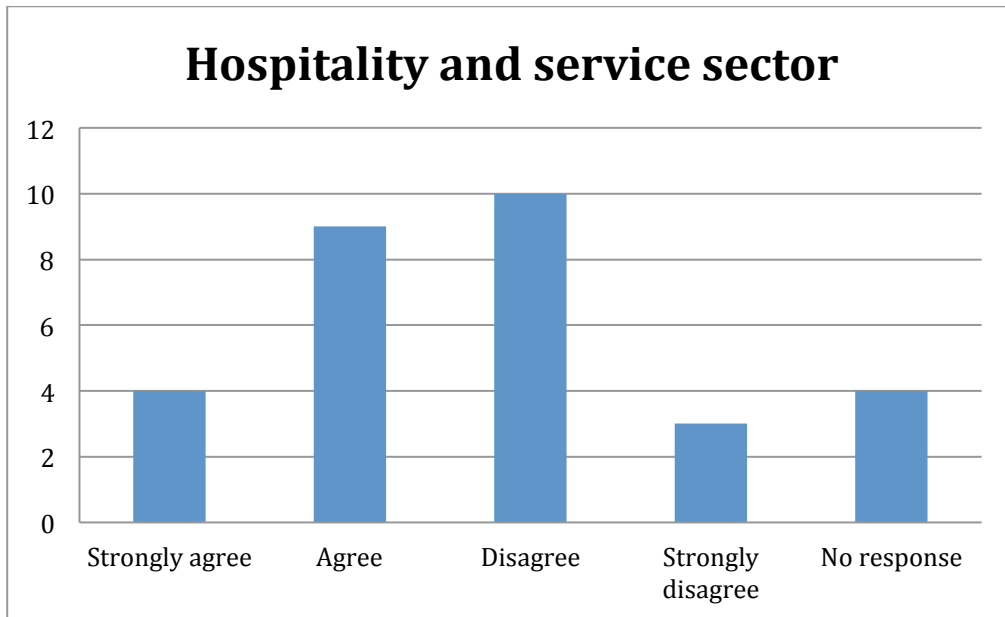
GRAPH 7. Level of local participation in promoting tourism

The pie-chart (GRAPH 7) explains the promotional activities to be carried out by local residents in fostering the rural tourism in the district. Several options have been provided to the participants to answer the question. Out of all candidates, 6 answered that they strongly agree and 6 said they do not agree with the statement, which in graph is equal to 20% respectively. Similarly, those who agreed occupy the greatest space in the chart with 40% and 12 individuals in the survey group answered it. Similarly, two candidates strongly disagreed with the statement, which is 7% and four gave no response at all, which in graph is 13%. This tells that those who agree on local residents' participation in promoting tourism in Parbat district is satisfactory. Only few of them disagreed or gave no answer to the statement.



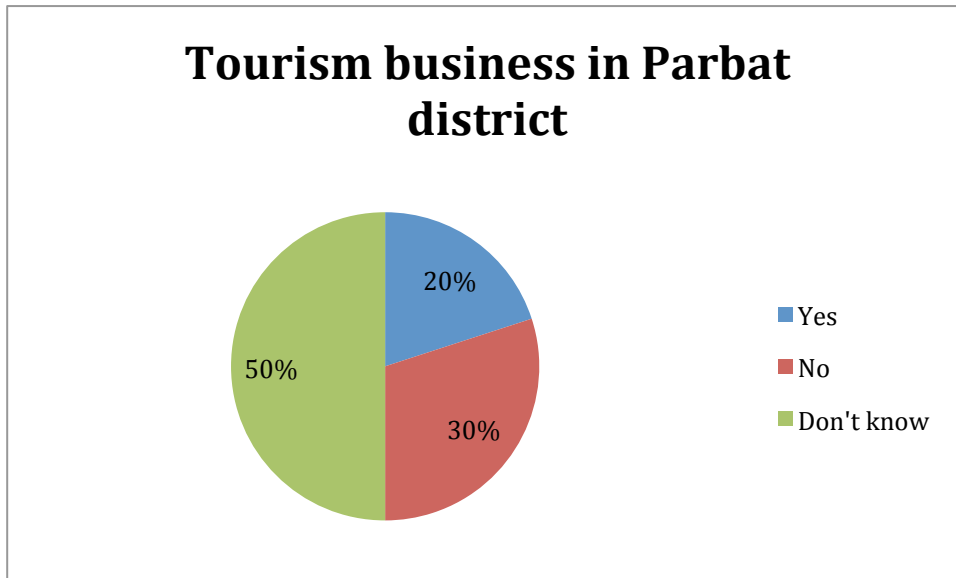
GRAPH 8. Medical and security services in the Parbat district

The chart (GRAPH 8) describes the condition of security and medical services available in the zone for the travellers. Out of all, only 3 persons strongly agreed on availability of security and medical services in the area, which is represented as 10% in the chart. And 16 persons agreed to the statement, which denotes 53% in the chart. Similarly, 5 persons disagreed with it, which is 17%; those who strongly disagreed were 2 in number, which is 7% in the chart. And finally, 4 persons did not respond to the question, which is equal to 13% in the chart. It tells that security and medical services are available in the area; however, there is still a need of more health posts and security units to be implanted.



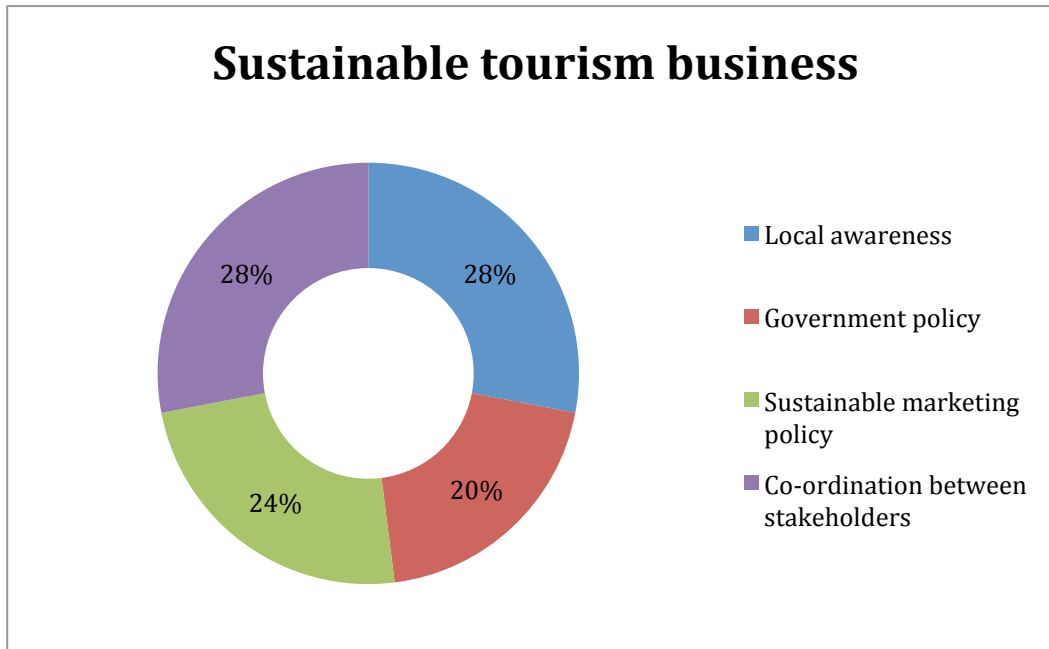
GRAPH 9. Availability of hospitality and service sectors

The bar-diagram (GRAPH 9) displays the availability of hospitality and service sectors in the district. Interesting fact to notice in this bar diagram is that a majority of the participants disagreed with the question of availability about hospitality and service sector. There were 10 persons who disagreed with the statement whereas those agreed was nine in number. The views of those who agreed and those who disagreed are close in number, so it raises a question of mystery whether the services for hospitality are adequate or not. The rest of the answers divided into strongly agreed, strongly disagreed and no responses were almost similar in numbers.



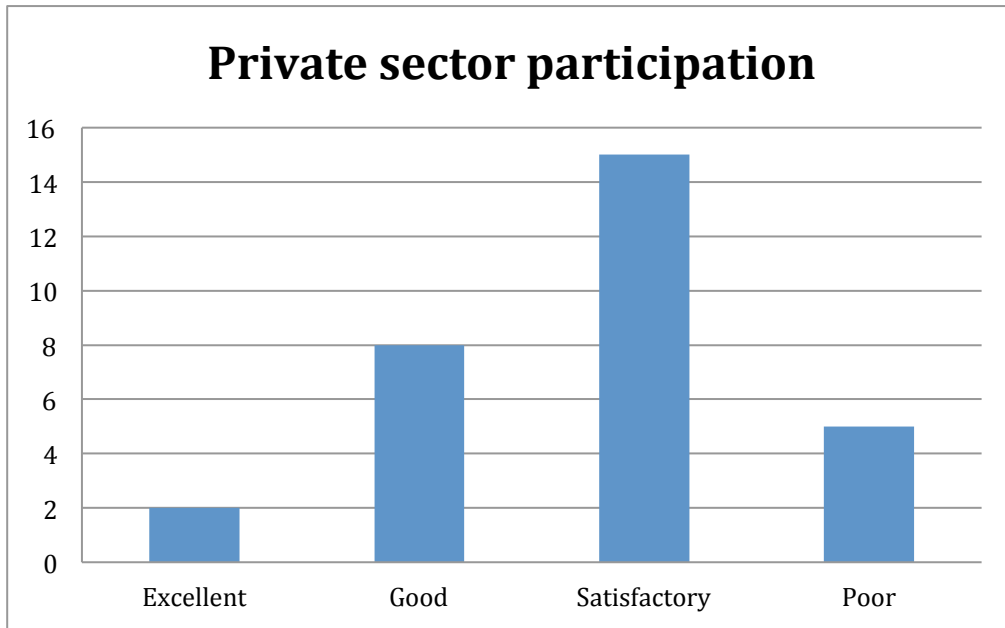
GRAPH 10. Tourism businesses in the Parbat district

The chart (GRAPH 10) tells whether tourism business has become as a major business in the district or not. There were only six persons who agreed with the statement, which in chart is 20%. There were nine persons who disagreed with the statement, which represents 30% in the chart. Interesting fact to notice in the chart is about those who responded with do not know. It explains that majority of the residents living in the district are unaware of their major source of business in their own district. It seems quite important to disseminate awareness among them.



GRAPH 11. Sustainable tourism developments in the Parbat district

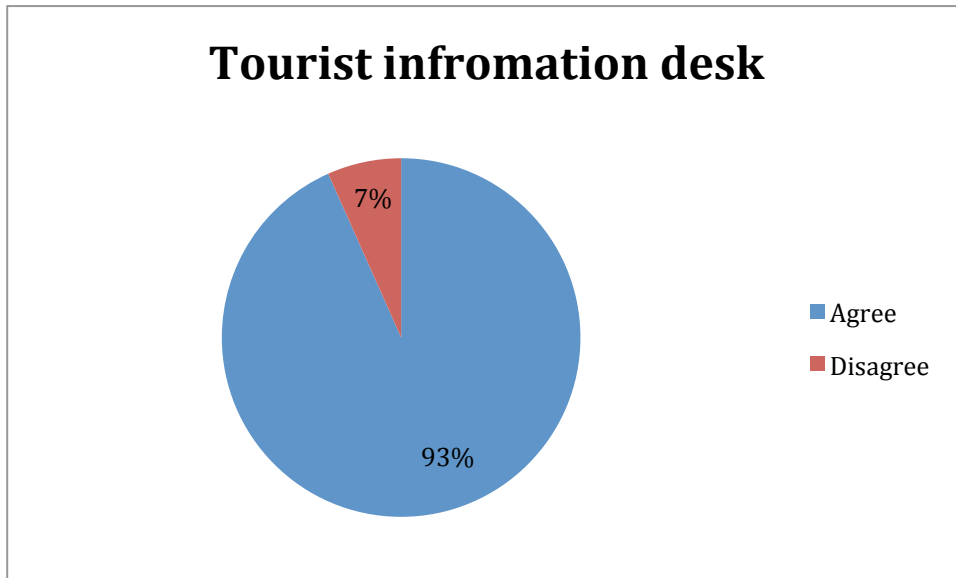
The chart (GRAPH 11) explains the ways to make tourism business a sustainable business in Parbat district. The graph represents that both options local awareness and coordination between the stakeholders are the prime factors for maintaining sustainability in tourism business. Each comprises 28% in the chart, which is the highest comparing to others. The question in the questionnaire gave multiple options to the respondents too choose more than one answer to the question. Maintaining the government policy and sustainable marketing policy were also preferred to be holding some level of importance for sustainable tourism business in Parbat district. They hold 20% and 24% respectively in the chart, the importance of which cannot be ignored.



GRAPH 12. Private sectors participation in tourism development

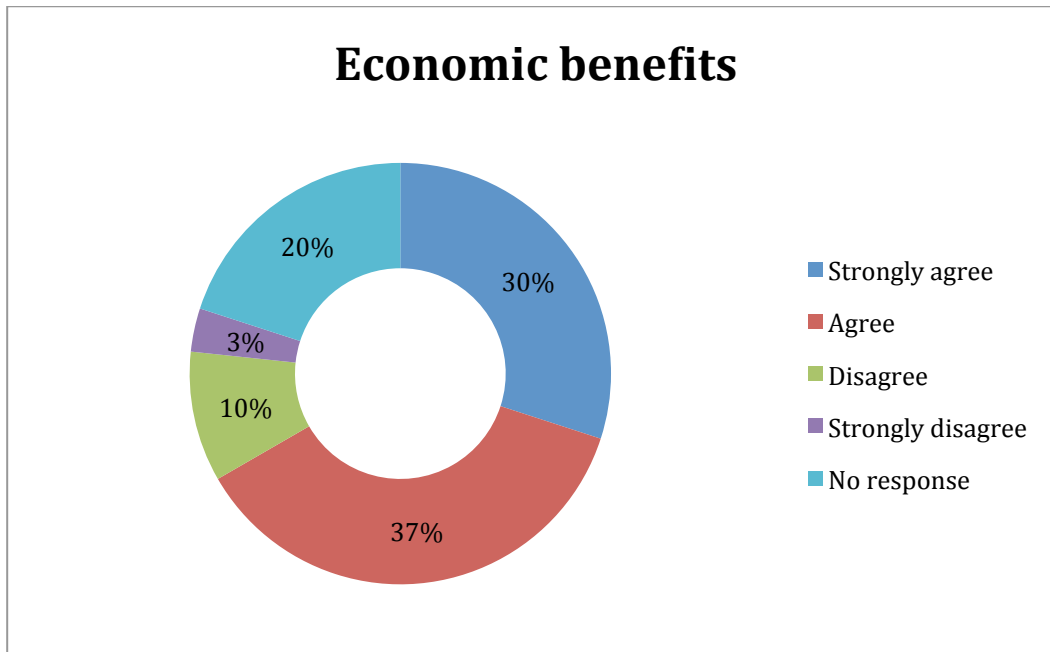
The diagram (GRAPH 12) illustrates the information about the involvement of private sectors and local entrepreneurs in maintaining tourism business in the district. Majority of the participants choose the satisfactory option. However, those who answered with a positive response to the statement were few in numbers. It says that private sectors are not actively involved in promoting tourism. In other words, the success in making tourism in a sustainable way is not overlooked by local entrepreneurs and privately owned companies.

The following question relates to the government support to make tourism a sustainable business in the district. The responses from the respondents on this issue talks about policy making from the legislative bodies to protect and conserve the environment. Planning and marketing committees could be established to ensure proper marketing of the place. Cultural heritage sites should be preserved in more concrete ways. Security and health sector should be more enhanced with adequate services. Different promotional activities should be carried out along with the stakeholders of tourism industry of the district. Proper coordination between private sector and government must be ensured to eradicate the lapses of information between the government organizations and tourism entrepreneurs. Conservation sites could also be declared in certain places where valuable flora and fauna are at risk of extinction.



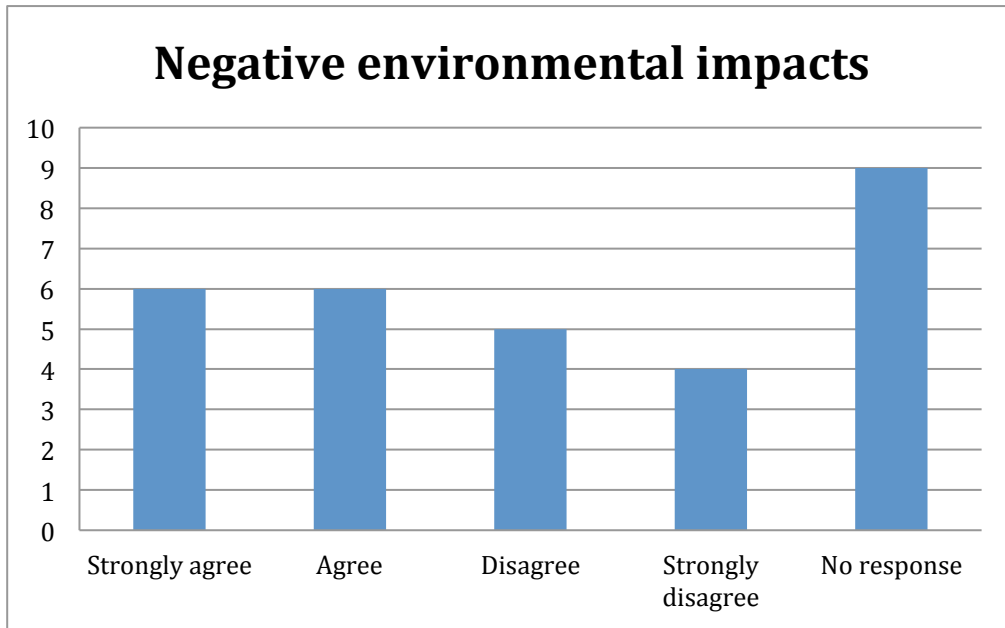
GRAPH 13. Establishment of tourist information desk

The chart (GRAPH 13) describes the necessity of establishing tourist information desk in the district. The majority of the respondents who were 28 in numbers, agreed with the statement and they specified the need of information desk as an important thing to be accomplished. It shows in the chart as 93%. However, there were a few respondents who disagreed with it. The chart shows 7% as a figure of those who do not think the necessity of tourist information desk as an important thing. All we can understand out of it is that establishing tourist information desk is always useful for those who seek information about any local places of the district.



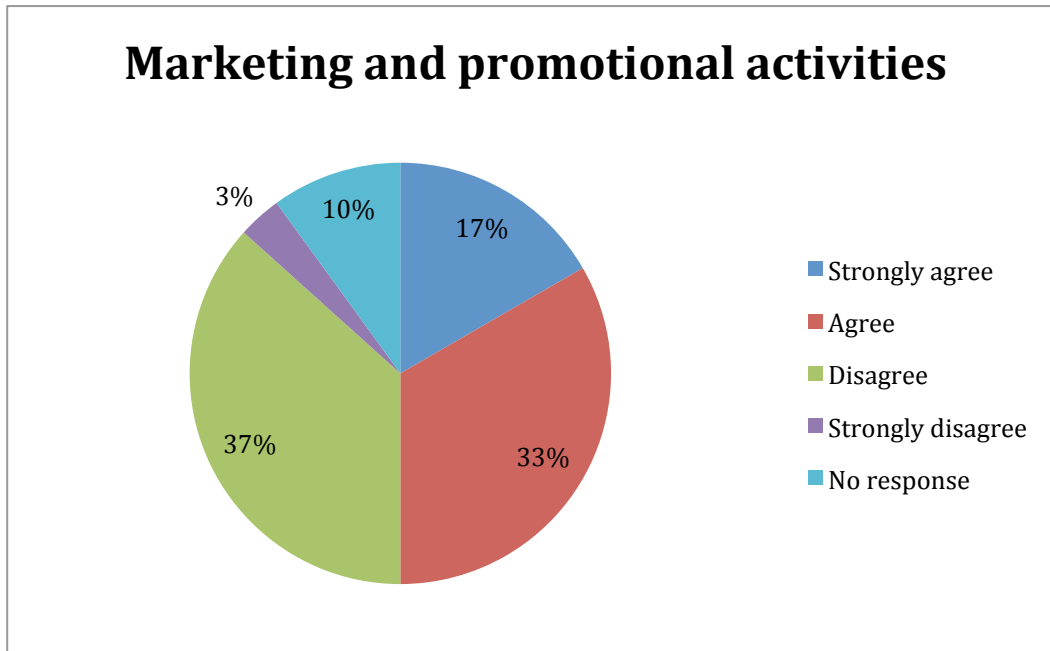
GRAPH 14. Economic benefits from tourism activities in the Parbat district

The chart (GRAPH 14) explains whether the district is getting any economic benefits from tourism activities or not. Those who agreed with the statement hold the greater space in the chart, which shows majority of the participants agreed to the benefits that tourism contributed to the district. It covers altogether 67% of those who agreed and strongly agreed with the statement. However, those who disagree hold 13% in total. The interesting thing that can be seen in the chart is about the respondents who did not respond to the question and it covers 20% of the space in the chart.



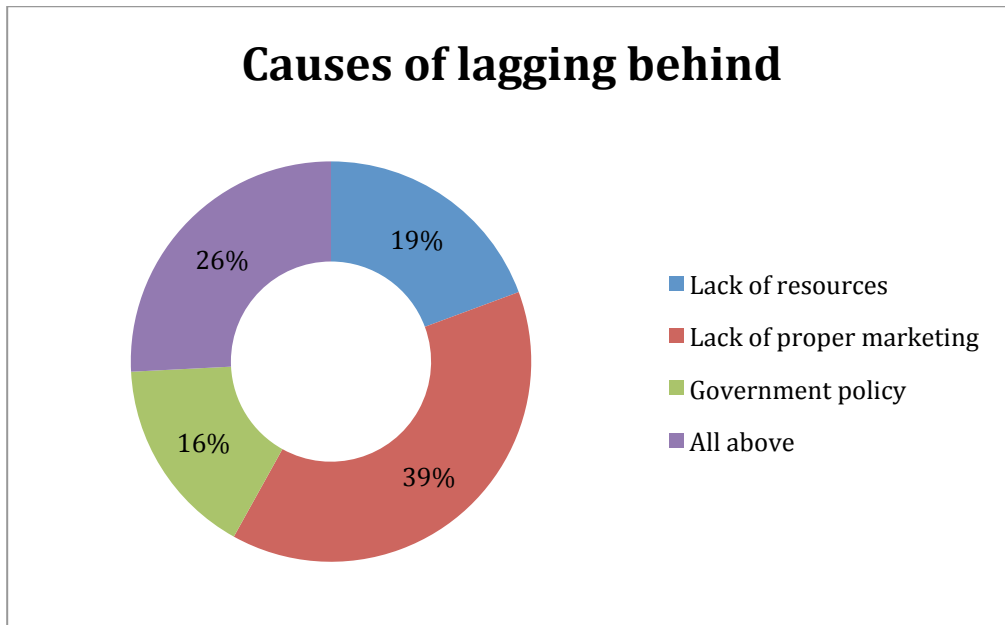
GRAPH 15. Negative environmental impacts of tourism in the Parbat district

The diagram (GRAPH 15) deals with the possibility of negative environmental impacts that tourism can cause in the district. Surprising fact in the diagram is to notice the number of respondents who did not answer the statement, which is nine in number. However, those who agree on it cover 12 persons altogether. Those who disagree with the statement cover nine respondents. It means that there could be some negative impacts on environment despite any precautions and awareness programs conducted for the protection of environment.



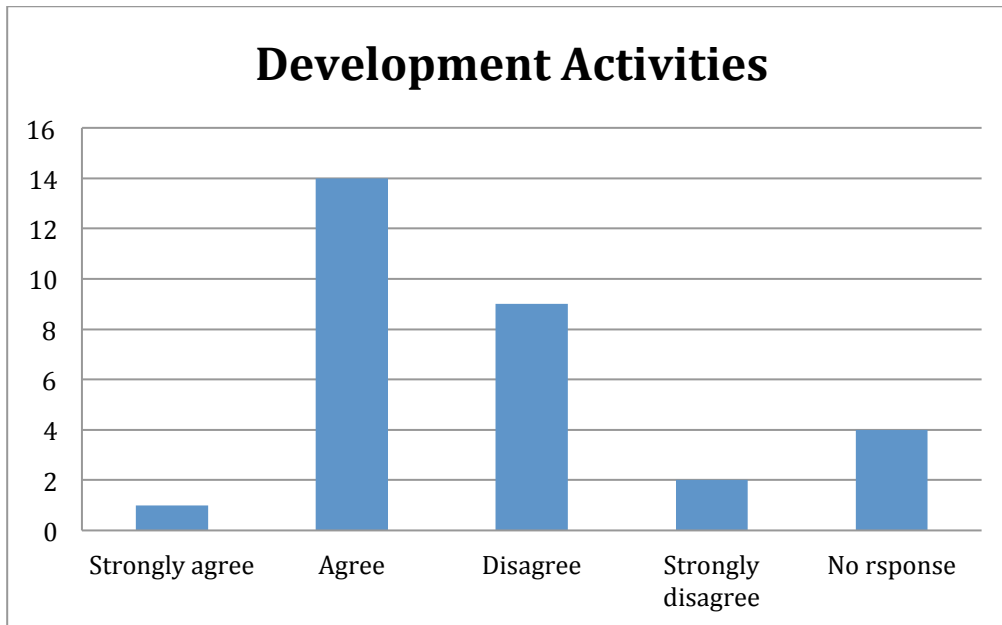
GRAPH 16. Marketing and promotional activities in the Parbat district

The chart (GRAPH 16) deals with the satisfaction level of marketing and promotional activities carried out in the district. Those who agreed with the statement were 50% of the total participants. And interestingly, 37% of the participants disagreed with the statement. And some of them did not respond to the question. So, it reveals that marketing and promotional activities in the district are not satisfactory as a whole. A set of concrete strategies could be carried out for the promotion of the sites and cultural heritage of the Parbat district.



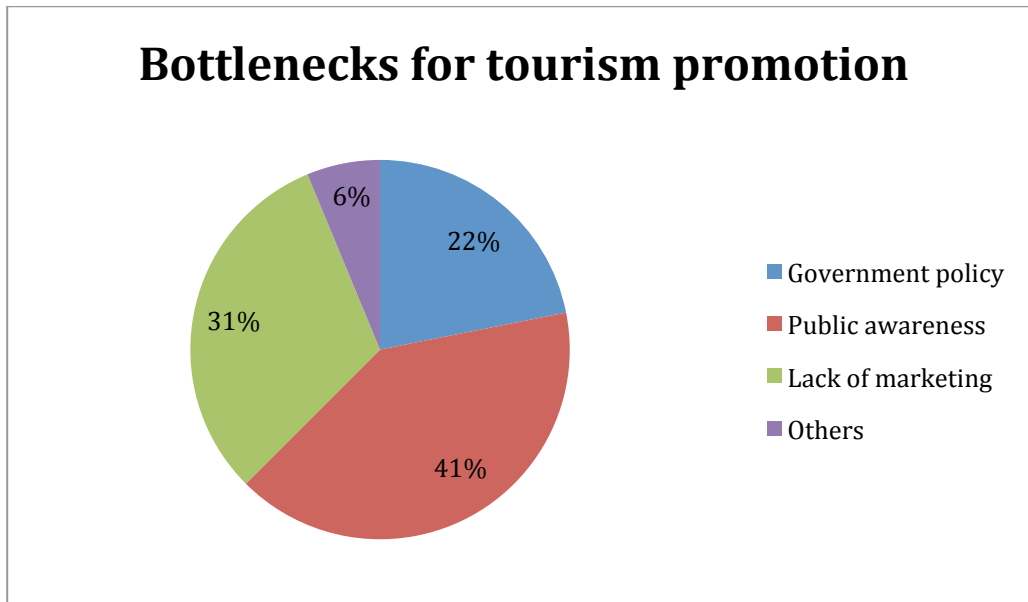
GRAPH 17. Main causes of lagging behind

This chart (GRAPH 17) explains the reasons that the district is lagging behind comparing to other similar districts despite of abundance of natural and cultural resources existing in the district. Among the options provided, 39% of the respondents chose lack of proper marketing as the main reason. Also 35% of the response supported two other options lack of resources and government policy respectively. The rest of the respondents mentioned all the three options as the causes of the district lagging behind. It is understood that marketing is the most important tool for developing Parbat as a rural tourism destination.



GRAPH 18. Development activities in the Parbat district

The diagram (GRAPH 18) depicts the development activities that are carried out in Parbat district for tourism development. The number of respondents that agreed on the statement is 15 in number, which is 50% of the total respondents participated in the survey. On the counterpart, those who disagreed were 11 in number, which is 37%. There were also some respondents who did not answer at all, which is 4 in number. It explains that development activities in Parbat district are satisfactory, although many more things could be done for the sustainable rural tourism development.



GRAPH 19. Major bottlenecks in promoting tourism activities in the Parbat district

This chart (GRAPH 19) describes the bottlenecks for tourism promotion in the district. The majority of the respondents agreed on lack of public awareness as the prime obstacle of tourism promotion. Besides, lack of marketing and government policies were also other options that were given in the question. These two elements hold 22% and 31% of the space in the chart respectively. The rest of the responses were related to other reasons. This shows that public awareness issues need to be noticed and should be looked after to foster tourism in a small district like Parbat.

The last question asked in the questionnaire was about the comments and suggestions of the participants regarding the survey. The suggestions from them covered different sectors such as government bodies, private entrepreneurs and investment in tourism sectors and increase in quality life of people. Majority of the respondents suggested the government policies to be made strong and given equal level of importance for the development of rural and urban district.

6.4 Findings and conclusions

Parbat district holds the importance of its rich natural and cultural heritage. However, the heritages and resources have not been looked after in a proper and defined way to preserve it. Rather, some of them are in the zone of extinction. Therefore, public awareness about the importance of rich natural resources, support from the private as well as government sectors to abet the sustainability, proper budget allocation on different sectors, a repeated and rigorous check in improving the people's quality of life and most importantly the feedback from the local communities about their needs and support for developing the tourism are seen as sectors to be taken into consideration. In addition, conducting surveys concerning development and making an impersonal approach and to meet up local people to discuss their needs and supports seem to be highly important for the development of rural tourism in a small districts like the Parbat district.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Tourism in itself is a huge industry that is directly and indirectly responsible for the development of small destinations or the nation as a whole. It plays a vital role not only for economic sustainability but also concerns the minor to major development aspects that bring out a massive change in small areas. Three different major impacts of tourism have also been discussed in the thesis for the sustainable development of the study area: Environmental impacts, Socio-cultural impacts and Economic impacts. The main objective and aim of this thesis was to find out the possible measures to make rural tourism a sustainable business in the context of Nepal. Sustainable development of rural tourism has been taken into consideration as a major theme of discussion in this thesis research work that focuses on the small district Parbat, Nepal; which is well recognized for its rare and endangered natural herbs for medicinal purposes, for its cultural heritage, traditional values and various ethnic groups residing in the area. A destination is unveiled and unnoticed until and unless it is revealed. The district that has been discussed in this thesis has a great deal of value in perspective to culture, history, adventure and medicine.

Parbat district is taken as the case study in this thesis. To complete this thesis the author has taken into consideration different types of books, journals, articles and Internet sources. All the sources that have been derived in this thesis are easily available on the Internet; this made the flow of the thesis systematic, organized, appropriate and accurate. Most of the internet sources utilized in this thesis are taken from reliable and authorized government sites, which provide the thesis with reliability and validity for the author to complete this thesis. The research was conducted using quantitative research methodology. To conduct the research a set of questionnaires were distributed among entrepreneurs and locals of the Parbat district. Research revealed that the rural tourism is an emerging and new concept in Nepal, which has significant role for the development of tourism industry as a whole. The practically based research also gathered various opinions and insights from the participants in the survey, which projects that the development model in the district could be carried out through various means and methods. However, insufficient infrastructure, proper marketing policy and lack of government resources were the major bottlenecks for development activities in the studied area.

In a nutshell, any form of tourism activities can be carried out in a destination. However, for the development of sustainable tourism in a specific destination the tourism activities should be carried out regarding the principles of sustainability. The author of this thesis has a clear view for the sustainability of village tourism in Nepal. Nepal being a country with over 3,000 villages could be turned into a good destination for village tourism. Nepal has a high potential in the development of its tourism industry; therefore, village tourism could be the ultimate source or the backbone that could enrich the tourism industry from the root.

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Making Tourism in Parbat district a sustainable business

The purpose of the research is to reveal the current development of tourism activities in the district and to figure out possible ways to make it sustainable. This is a structured questionnaire model survey. This survey is conducted among entrepreneurs in the Parbat district.

The survey is anonymous and you will not be identified in any way. Thank you for your valuable time and participation.

1. Gender

Male Female

2. Age

15-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56 and above

3. Nationality

Nepalese other, please specify: _____

4. What are the major attractions in Parbat district in your opinion?

Natural attraction Cultural attraction
 Sports and recreation other, please specify: _____

(One or more answers)

5. Is infrastructure sufficient to host tourism activities in this district?

Yes No Don't know

6. If your answer was No to question number 5, please specify what kind of infrastructure is insufficient.

7. Should home stay be promoted to increase the flow of tourism in the Parbat district?

Yes No Don't know

(Home Stay= Tourists living in Private houses)

8 The level of local participations in promoting tourism activities is satisfactory.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
 No response

9 Parbat district is ready to provide security and medical services required for the travelers.

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
 No response

10 Hospitality and service sectors in the district are enough and they are well organized.

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
 No response

11 Is tourism a main business in the Parbat district?

- Yes No Maybe

12 How can you make tourism business sustainable in the Parbat district? (Mark one or more options)

- Local awareness Government policy Sustainable marketing policy Co-ordination between stakeholders of tourism

13 How do you rate the participation of private sectors and local entrepreneurs? Excellent Good

- Satisfactory Poor

14 What could be done by the government to make tourism in Parbat sustainable?

15 Establishment of a tourism information desk in the district is essential. Do you agree?

- Agree Disagree

16 Parbat district gets strong economic benefits by the tourism activities.

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
 No response

17 Tourism activities in Parbat district have negative impacts on the environment.

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
 No response

18 Marketing and promotional activities carried out in this district for the development of tourism are satisfactory.

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
 No response

19 Why is the Parbat district lagging behind compared to other destinations?

- Lack of resources Lack of proper marketing Government policy
 All above

20 Level of development activities carried out in this district is satisfactory.

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree
 No response

21 What are the major bottlenecks in promoting tourism activities in the Parbat district?

- Government policy Public awareness Lack of marketing
 other, please specify: _____

22. Your valuable suggestions and comments regarding the survey are always appreciated.

Thank you for your valuable time!!!

