A photograph of a person wearing a traditional conical hat and a light-colored long-sleeved shirt, seen from behind. They are on a narrow river or canal, surrounded by dense tropical vegetation, including palm trees. In the distance, another small boat with several people is visible. The water is calm and reflects the surrounding greenery.

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## MOUNTAINOUS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN CRETE: LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract:** Mountainous tourism is perceived as an effective catalyst of socio-economic development and is relied upon as a means of addressing the challenges that peripheral rural communities in Crete are facing, primarily those related to the decline of traditional industries. Studies elsewhere show that it has the potential to assist local communities, such as the mountainous village of Anogia, which is the area of research in this paper. This study examines residents' perceptions regarding the impacts of tourism development. The limited knowledge in relation to the residents' perspective of tourism development in mountainous areas was the driving force for undertaking this study. A qualitative method was employed for the purpose of this study. A purposive sample of 50 residents was interviewed using semi-structured and conversational interviews. The analysis of the collected data shows that mountain tourism can produce significant negative impacts as well as the expected positive outcomes. A significant finding of this study was that residents in Anogia support tourism development, but it is their view that such tourism should be responsible to, and respectful of their local traditions and customs.

**Keywords:** Mountainous tourism development, village tourism, local residents, impacts, responsible tourism, Crete

### Introduction

Mountainous communities in Crete have been going through considerable changes over the past decades. Many of the primary industries on which communities are dependent have been declining, leading to economic hardships and a drive to explore alternative development strategies (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Avgeli & Wickens, 2009). Mountainous tourism is perceived as a growing sector of the alternative economic activity, representing a significant source of income to rural and mountainous communities (Hummelbrunner & Miglbauer, 1994; Fleischer & Felsenstein, 2000; Avgeli & Wickens, 2009).

Alternative economic activities in the form of rural and mountainous tourism are born from two different demands (e.g., Anderson, Bakir & Wickens, 2014; Papastavrou, 2003). The first demand seeks new tourism "horizons" as an alternative solution to mass tourism, which would utilise unspoiled landscapes found in the countryside, particularly in agricultural and mountainous environments, such as Anogia. The second demand centres on a push for a sustainable development of tourism businesses as a complementary activity to agricultural businesses (Papastavrou, 2003).

Rural tourism is perceived to contribute to the economic growth of local communities such as those found in Anogia. It also revives the traditional cottage industries that would otherwise vanish, as well as, preserving local customs and traditional festivities (Tsartas, 1989; Getz, 1997; Roberts & Hall, 2001; Sharpley, 2001; George et al., 2009). It is argued that the future of this form of tourism is dependent upon the inclusion of the local community in determining the type and scale of this economic activity to ensure its compatibility with local needs and acceptability to stakeholders (Hall & Jenkins, 1998; Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004).

## Setting the Scene: The Village of Anogia

Situated 55 kilometers from Rethymno, in the southeast, in the Mylopotamos Province of Rethymno Prefecture, Anogia is a remote village with approximately 2,500 permanent residents. It is located in the northern reaches of Psiloritis, at an altitude of 700-790 meters (see illustration 1).

**Illustration 1: Anogia on the map of Crete**



The landmark of Zominthos and archaeological findings in the area of Idaion Andron where, according to the Greek mythology, Zeus was born (Psiloritis Tourist Guide, 2010) point to the prehistoric roots of the village of Anogia. The village has a prominent tradition of resistance against dominant rulers of the area, as is the case with many other villages of the island of Crete. Anogia has a history that is both powerful and tragic. The village participated in the revolts against the Ottomans who burned the village. The independent spirit of Anogians is again demonstrated in resisting the German occupation during World War II, resulting in a total destruction of the village and the seizure and execution of every Anogian male who could carry a gun (Spanakis, 1991).

The archaeological site of Zominthos close to Nida plateau has become a tourist attraction. Excavations have brought to light the ruins of a Late Minoan settlement. The most interesting buildings of the area are the “mitata”, dry stone vaulted constructions used by farmers as provisional dwellings, and as places of storage for the local cheese left there to mature (Psiloritis Tourist Guide, 2010). The church of Saint Yakinthos, the protector of lovers is another tourist attraction found in Anogia; it is used for housing cultural traditional festivals. Religious and artistic events such as Yakinthia take place every year in the first week of July in the Cretan village of Anogia (Psiloritis Tourist Guide, 2010).

The mountains that surround the village of Anogia represent the defining characteristics of the Anogians and their everyday activities. Stockbreeding is the main source of wealth in this particular area due to its mountainous morphology. Agricultural production is mainly based on the cultivation of olive trees, called ‘koroneiki’. The production of olive oil from these trees is considered as a protected variety particular to this region. The region of Psiloritis is also well-known for its wild herbs, such as thyme and oregano.

## **Tourism Development in Anogia**

Local communities of Anogia, have recognized the importance of tourism in bringing social, cultural, environmental and economic changes (Beeton, 2006). People who previously were occupied with stockbreeding and agriculture have undergone a dramatic change with the coming of tourism. The spread of tourism businesses offered new job opportunities to the locals and was facilitated by the development of modern infrastructures. Rural tourism units, restaurants, workshops of folk art, shops selling souvenirs to the visitors offered new prospects for the area. The area of Anogia has been a visitor attraction for both Greek and international tourists. The archeological sites, churches and monasteries, the scenic mountain routes and the rich cultural celebrations have made Anogia a tourist destination predominantly for domestic and international visitors during the summer and winter seasons.

## **Methodology**

The study used a qualitative research approach to explore issues concerning tourism development in the village of Anogia, located in the Mountains of Mylopotamos in Crete. This decision to adopt a qualitative approach was influenced by this study's aim, which was to gain an understanding of participants' perspectives of tourism development, and by a growing trend to use qualitative methods to study leisure and tourism (Wilson, 1996; Wickens, 2002; Bowen, 2002; Sealy & Wickens, 2008).

Interview Guides with open-ended questions were used for the purpose of this research. Fifty semi-structured interviews were conducted with residents, followed by conversational interviews. This allowed interviewees the opportunity and freedom of expressing themselves and discussing any other issues they thought were relevant to the study; it also allowed the local voice to be heard. The fieldwork was carried out during June and July 2009 and during June, July and August 2010. Thematic analysis was used to examine the masses of data. This is the most common form of analysis in qualitative research to gain insights into a specific research area. The method is very useful in identifying and organizing the data into themes (Alshaibani & Bakir, 2016). In this study, a rigorous thematic analysis produced insightful findings concerning the perspectives of different local stakeholders, enhancing our knowledge in this under-researched area. However, the study recognizes the shortcomings associated with this method. A reflective journal was used to record the steps undertaken in order to maximize the study's credibility, trustworthiness and transferability (Denzin, 1997; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Hammersley, 1992; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The collected data was abstracted to meaningful themes; these themes are discussed below.

## **Analysis and Discussion**

### **Respondents' profile**

All 50 interviewees were permanent residents of the village of Anogia. Fourteen respondents were 55 plus, ten between the ages of 45 – 54, eight between the ages of 35 – 44, five between the ages of 26 – 34, and thirteen below 25 years old. Half of those interviewed were stockbreeders, eight were in retirement, and the rest were housewives, and employees in the private and public sectors. It is worthy to note that thirty-eight residents interviewed were males and twelve females. This is because it is very rare for women to occupy a public space in Anogia. It is uncommon for a tourist visiting the village to see women walking around unless they have specific chores to do. Women do not sit in the local kafeneios, unless there is a festival, a wedding, a christening or a type of celebration taking place. Most of the women were interviewed in their homes.



## Visitors in Anogia

The charming village of Anogia is visited by domestic and international tourists. Most tourists are day visitors, with a small number of domestic visitors staying between two and seven days. Fieldwork shows that the length of stay is one of the major challenges for sustainable tourism development in the village. Most of the residents reported that day visitors are “... *mainly international visitors, visiting the village through organized excursions; .... tourists arrive in tour buses in the village squares; ... they stay for coffee in specific kafeneios in a particular square; .... They visit the gift shops selling traditional crafts and textiles; ... staying for one or two hours and then they get back on the buses and they leave*”. As one resident remarked: “... *they leave without understanding anything about the village’s history, culture, customs or traditions*”. When asked whether the residents of Anogia would like to see year-long tourism in their village, the majority answered positively: “*tourism will increase our income*”; “*locals will be able to earn more money and they will be able to survive*”; clearly, they see tourism development in economic terms.

## Impacts in Anogia through Tourism Development

### *Socio-economic impacts*

One of the research objectives was to find out residents’ perceptions of the impacts of tourism in this village. All fifty residents expressed positive views of tourism; they concurred that tourism can help the village financially; they reported: “*The only thing we have in this village is stockbreeding and the mountains... we need tourism, it can be a great help to us...*”; “*People here find it difficult to survive, tourism can ‘bring’ money to locals and support our village financially*”.

Residents seem to consider the benefits of tourism not only for themselves, but also for the local entrepreneurs, as one respondent stated: “...*we are all dependent, both directly and indirectly*”, thus recognizing the positive economic impacts of tourism. When asked whether tourism provides a valuable source of income for locals, all respondents answered positively, as one stated: “...*the only thing we have here in Anogia is stockbreeding.... we have nothing else; there are no prospects for another type of development and only tourism can provide a significant income to the locals*”.

Overall, respondents were positive as to whether the benefits of tourism are spread broadly around the community, as this respondent stated: “*It is circular dependency; everyone gains either directly or indirectly*”. Another expressed it as: “*we all benefit from tourists; but most of the tourists are Greek; we would like to see more international visitors... in order to increase the economic benefits Anogia gets from tourism*”. This tourism dependency is illustrated by this respondent, who told us: “...*lately benefits have become less for us...., no tourists, no good for the village*”. A serious indication of the severe economic situation of the village was articulated by several residents; as one commented: “...*the benefits from tourism indeed spread around the community*” but only “*when tourists visit the village*” or “*due to the economic crisis we don’t have tourists and those who visit do not stay for long*”.

However, several respondents pointed out that “*only those who have a business in tourism and come in contact with tourists, like shops selling traditional products, hotels, tavernas and kafeneios*” benefit from tourism. When asked as to whether tourism could help sustain the village socio-economically, all respondents answered positively; as one respondent put it: “*Anogians are very sociable people, we like to meet new people, make new friendships and learn what is*

*happening outside our village” or “we meet new people from different cultures and we exchange news and ideas”.*

Although Anogians were very positive of the social benefits of tourism, some voiced concern that *“international tourists do not know our customs and traditions and do not stay long to understand and experience our authentic village culture; our food, customs, costumes...”*; or *“this cannot easily happen with international tourists, it is very difficult for them to interact with, and understand the locals”*. Throughout fieldwork we frequently met men wearing the Cretan traditional baggy trousers, tucked into their boots.

### ***Environmental impacts***

Participants have positive perceptions of the environmental impacts. Fieldwork shows that: *“tourism can help sustain the environment.”*; *“...due to tourism, locals themselves know that they must take care of the image of the village and the environment”*. This is also echoed in another participant’s comment: *“...this feeling is already developed in the residents of Anogia”*. An interesting point is made by a respondent that *“...tourists are more careful with, and respectful of the village’s environment compared to residents”*. There is a consensus among Anogians, articulated by a number of them that: *“... part of the profits from tourism should be invested in the village itself”*; *“both residents and tourists look after the environment”*, and *“Anogians themselves, each one of them, constitutes a guardian of the area”*.

However, some concerns were raised by the residents as to whether an increase in tourist numbers visiting Anogia would have negative impacts on the natural beauty of the village. Concerns were also expressed on *“inappropriate tourist behaviour...”*; *“...we don’t want shameful things and behaviours in our village”*. These statements demonstrate that residents appear to be aware of both positive and negative effects derived from tourism development. Residents in Anogia support tourism development, with an overwhelming majority expressing positive feeling for tourists, as long as visitors *“comply with our rules... and do not through their behaviour ...treat our village in a disrespectful way”*.

### **Anogia’s Distinct Attractiveness**

Residents’ perceptions as to what tourists find more attractive about Anogia, focused on: natural and physical attractions, cultural attractions, heritage and peoples’ authentic and distinctive hospitality. The natural and physical attractions mentioned by respondents included: *“...the altitude and fresh air”*, *“the mountain Psiloritis”*, *“the scenery”*, *“the natural beauties of the village”*, *“being located in the mountains and our idiosyncratic character, making us different from the other Cretans...”*.

The cultural and heritage attractions singled out by residents comprised: *“local customs and traditions”*, *“the traditional Anogian cuisine”*, *“the archaeological site of Zominthos”*, *“the museum of Nikos Xylouris”*, *“old churches in the village”*, *“Saint Yakinthos and the Yakinthia festival”*, *“the mitata on the mountain Psiloritis”*, *“Idaion Andron (where Zeus was born according to the Greek mythology)”* and *“the local weavings and local products”*. As one resident stated: *“...tourists come here because of what they have heard about Anogia. Our reputation brings them here. Those who come for one day visit, leave disappointed; those who stay more understand more about Anogia, the way we behave, our local customs and traditions, they come to our festivals and attend our weddings..., those tourists never leave disappointed and they always return”*.

Another respondent, pondering over Anogian heritage, enthusiastically spoke about *“the shining history of our village, the house of Nikos Xylouris, in my view ...the best known lyra-player in Greece.... Anogia has produced many worthy people like politicians, musicians, singers, they are all part of our heritage”*. Anogians are very proud as far as their heritage is concerned, as another resident commented *“There is nothing worth noticing concerning the structure and architecture of our village. It is mostly our history, the local dialect and the Anogians’ difference, if you know what I mean”*.

One Anogian encapsulated the overall essence of residents’ perceptions of Anogia’s attractiveness and uniqueness: *“the authenticity of the locals, the traditional way of dressing, the traditional pronunciation of mountaineers, the characteristic hospitality, the sense of humor, teasing each other in a witty way, and even use sarcasm amongst themselves. The mountainous air provides confidence; struggling with the elements of nature in the harsh environment we have to survive”*.

Fieldwork shows that when questioned about the unique selling points that differentiates Anogia from other villages in Crete, the cultural and heritage characteristics were always emphasized, with most respondents identifying the hospitality and authenticity of local ways of living. They view their culture as *“unique”* and believe they are *“descended from the Minoans”*, or as a resident mentioned *“a large percentage of the residents in Anogia come from the Venetians, as our village appears in 1200 A.C.”*. Others perceived Anogia as: *“... divine, something which is difficult to determine or define”*. Further commenting that what differentiates Anogia from the rest of the villages in Crete is *“the mentality of the locals (the unique way they think) and their differentiation from the rest of the residents of Crete”*, *“the sense of honor, dignity and generosity Anogians have”*. There is a deep sense of community spirit of mutual help that characterizes the residents of Anogia.

There are several contrasting views that can be detected from the findings of this study. International tourists spend less time in Anogia than domestic tourists, as persistently echoed by the locals we interviewed. This finding is clearly demonstrated in their comments: *“... unlike international tourists, Greek tourists do not visit the village for half an hour, and they spend more money”*; *“Greek and Cretan tourists because they stay more, and they leave more money in Anogia”*. There were also concerns about mass tourism development, as echoed in their responses: *“we don’t want mass tourism”*, *“we don’t want to become like Hersonissos and Malia”*. They further commented: *“...all tourists are good as long as they spend money when they visit the village”*, *“we want everyone; tourists wherever they go they will leave something, they will spend some money”* and *“first of all Greek tourists, but we want international tourists as well, we want all our visitors to become ambassadors of Anogia”*.

## **Conclusion**

A significant finding of this research was that residents of Anogia demonstrated an extreme emotional attachment to their village and a pride regarding their origin, customs and traditions. They are very proud of their culture and feel different from the rest of the Greek population in terms of their history and unique mentality. While residents believe that tourism creates economic and cultural benefits for their village, they are also aware that tourism could have negative influences on their community. Anogians appear to remain unchanged over the years, passing their culture, traditions, customs and values from one generation to the next. They support further tourism development as long as it is responsible and respectful of their local traditions and customs. Although they are also aware that tourism creates dependencies, nevertheless, they are willing, for economic reasons, to welcome more visitors to the village.

Fieldwork shows that Anogians reject mass tourism and viewed destinations such as Hersonissos and Malia as bad examples of tourism development. They would prefer tourists to spend more money when visiting the village and stay longer. This research paper shows that Anogians view tourism development as a viable economic tool, a type of development that would help sustain their village financially, socially and environmentally. Although they are aware that tourism development is likely to have both positive and negative impacts on their village, they are confident that they can limit the negative impacts and control the number and type of tourists, and tourism development. Their expectation is that social change would be minimised as they would not allow or accept mass numbers of tourists who would disrupt their way of life, their customs, culture and traditions; displaying the Cretan independent spirit and Anogians' idiosyncrasy. The majority of the residents, young and old, are aware of the local reality and talk about it on a daily basis through their special ways of communications that they have inherited and continuously reproduced in the kafeneios. This research note shows that Anogians display several contrasting characteristics which have constrained tourism developments over the years.

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## POTENTIAL OF HEALTH TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NEPAL: LITERATURE REVIEW AND FUTURE VIEW

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**Abstract:** Traveling for health and wellness is one of the most important tourist patterns of economic returns generated by the tourism industry, tourist destinations, and the health sector. The paper studies the potential of health tourism development in Nepal. Health tourism in Nepal especially based on natural healing resources that are mostly combined with the medical, preventive and wellness programs. They are not being used well enough, even though they are the key factor in positioning Nepal as a recognizable health tourism destination, which can generate economic growth and income. On the other hand, the trends in the world tourism predict further growth of health tourism, mostly due to the changes in people's lifestyle. Although health tourism, a burgeoning and lucrative tourism market, has gained, increased attention in recent years, particularly in developing countries, only a few academic studies of the sector have been published. Given the scarcity of academic literature in this area, the aim of the present study is to offer a comprehensive theoretical framework for future research. Yoga, Ayurveda, meditation, and natural healing-based tourism are a new form of niche tourism, which has been rapidly growing in recent years.

**Keywords:** Health Tourism, Wellness, Tourism Development, Potential, Nepal

### Introduction

The history of healthcare tourism in the Indian subcontinent is very old. With the popularity of Meditation, Yoga, and Ayurveda, around 5000 years ago constant streams of medical travellers and spiritual students flocked to Indian subcontinent countries to seek the benefits of the alternative healing methods. In many countries, the way of seeking wellness varies with the prevalence of varieties of wellness therapies. These therapies include physical practices (Yoga, Panchakarma) along with the use of natural/herbal products (Ayurveda, Spas). Most of the western and European countries (Brazil, Spain,) focus on the Spa's while the eastern countries (Nepal, Srilanka, India, and China) lay emphasis on the various practices like traditional Medicine, Meditation, Yoga, and Ayurveda.

Health tourism is a specific branch of tourism that includes professional and controlled use of natural healing factors and physical therapy in order to maintain and improve the health and quality of life. Today there is substantial growth in demand for health tourism, which is generated by the crisis in health care systems in the developed countries, high prices of health services, long waiting lists, and the aging of the population. The trends in the world tourism markets forecast a further growth of health tourism, mainly due to changes in people's lifestyle. The aim of this paper is to study the potential that Nepal has in health tourism and point out the potential of development of health tourism in Nepal.

Nepal has a variety of ethnic, cultural, and religious groups. Traditional healthcare providers in Nepal can be divided into medical providers and faith healers. Ayurveda, an ancient system of medicine is based on the Tridosha Theory of disease. Ayurvedic medicine is inherent to Nepal and was strongly encouraged in the medieval period of her history. Ayurvedic hospitals, dispensaries, and medicine manufacturing units were established (Shankar, Paudel and Giri, 2006). Today, Ayurveda is a popular form of treatment for many people around the world. Its use is widespread in Nepal, India, and Sri Lanka. The value of many Ayurvedic herbs and

therapies is now becoming recognized and clinically validated, and there is increasing interest in Ayurvedic systems of healing in the western world. This is because it is a holistic, natural, and effective healing system. It recognizes the individual as unique, as more than only a physical body, and with an inherent healing capacity. Health tourism in Nepal has emerged as the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry, despite the full support from the government of Nepal. Busy and stressful working lifestyle in developed countries, particularly the USA, Canada, UK, and Russia, have been forcing patients from such regions to look for alternative and natural based healing destinations to get their mentally and physically treatment done. The Nepalese health tourism industry is presently at a nascent stage but has an enormous potential for future growth. The main reason for the growing importance of health tourism in Nepal is the uniqueness and originality of its services and healing techniques than offered by any other developed countries. Other competitive countries health tourism is based on the sea and Nepal is only that country whose health tourism is based on mountains. In addition, the mountains are the best sources for medicinal herbs.

### Research Objectives

Health tourism based on healing factors is the oldest type of health tourism. This type of tourism focuses on the revitalization of the psychophysical abilities and is being performed in different climates, mountains and healing destination using by Ayurveda, Yoga, Meditation, and other traditional healing systems. The followings are the objective of this research:

1. To find the present condition of health tourism in Nepal
2. To find the potential of health tourism development in Nepal

### Research Methodology

A qualitative research method was adopted to collect data from representatives of private and public health providers, government bodies, and tourism providers. The research methodology included direct interviews with stakeholders, review of currently available papers on health tourism and books, which formed the theoretical bases of this paper. We have conducted some in-depth interviews with stakeholders in Nepal between December 10, 2017, to December 27, 2017. We interviewed 38 people from different government agencies, health tourism providers, tourism providers, and other stakeholders.

S.No.	Organization	Status	Respondent No.
1	Nepal Ayurvedic Medical Council	Governmental Organization	1
2	Nepal Ayurvedic Research Centre	Governmental Organization	2
3	Health Ministry Ayurveda Department	Governmental Organization	2
4	Health Ministry Health Dept	Governmental Organization	2
5	Nepal Tourism Board	Governmental Organization	1
6	Tourism Ministry	Governmental Organization	1
7	Nepal Ayurvedic Doctor Assoc	Governmental Organization	2
8	Government Ayurvedic Hospital	Health Provider	2
9	Private Ayurvedic Hospital	Health Provider	10
10	Yoga and Naturopathy	Health Provider	6
11	SPA Centers	Health Provider	2
12	Tours and Travel Agencies	Tourism Provider	4
13	Hotels (Health Resorts)	Accommodation Provider	3

For this research, the methodology is partly exploratory, partly descriptive. For this study secondary data and information has been collected with the help of health providers and

government agencies. For primary data and information, we have conducted a face-to-face interview. In addition, interview data analysis, we used SWOT analysis methods.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Concept of Health Tourism**

Health tourism is becoming an upward trend in our globalized world. Health tourism can be simply defined as traveling of individuals to other countries for the purposes of improvement and/or maintenance of their health. While at the same time touring, vacationing, and fully experiencing the attractions of the countries that they are visiting. Actually people travel to avail of such facility because of cost, Quality, or those treatments such as Ayurveda or Yoga therapies, which are not available in one's own country. Many countries focus on the health tourism issue for the last decades, as it has become a remarkable service for export. Health tourism encompasses both medical tourism (based on western medicines) and wellness tourism (based on traditional therapies such as Yoga, Ayurveda, and SPA).

According to Magablih (2001), "health tourism is the movement of a patient, with the purpose of getting services that help in recovering his ailment, or at least in stabilizing his medical case, outside his own country for a period of time not less than 24 hours and up to 1 year, each time, and the patient has no intent to work or reside permanently." He also stated, "This is a direct and narrow concept of health tourism." The holistic concept includes those healthy people, who accompany the patient to help him during his stay outside his usual residence. Health tourism is defined as traveling to other countries for no less than a day and no more than a year to get the treatment they need to get better (Barca, Akdeve & Gedik, 2013).

There are a few studies, which discuss the differences between health tourism and medical tourism. The literature refers to medical tourism as the act of traveling to foreign countries to seek 'western-style' medical treatments and procedures (elective surgeries such as cosmetic, dental and plastic surgery as well as specialized surgeries such as knee/hip replacement, cardiac surgery, cancer treatments, fertility, orthopaedic therapy etc.). 'The phenomenon of people traveling from their usual country of residence to another country with the expressed purpose of accessing medical treatment' (Connell, 2013).

In the last two decades, medical tourism has been recognized as the new socioeconomic trend in the world, (Connell, 2006; Hancock, 2006; MacReady, 2007) that was initially associated with traveling to another country but only in relation to the treatment or procedure (Bookman & Bookman, 2007; Leahy, 2008). Medical tourism is often characterized as the phenomenon of the 21st century (Bookman & Bookman, 2007), a form of transnational health care (Botterill, Pennings & Mainil, 2013), kind of offshore medical service (Liberska, 2012) and one of the effects of globalization (Juszczak, 2012), industrialization and the development of mass culture (Connell, 2006).

Wellness tourism, on the other hand, refers to authentic or location-based experiences/therapies such as SPA, Meditation, Yoga, and Ayurveda, use of local medicines or herbs etc. According to Koncul (2012), In Asian countries, many spiritual activities such as yoga, meditation, and massages are considered important daily activities. The term 'wellness' refers to an alternative understanding of the traditional model of health. In the traditional model, health is simply defined as the absence of disease. This understanding has been criticized to neglect the individual as a whole and to overemphasize the role of diseases, instead of focusing on positive human functioning (Boruchovitch & Mednick, 2002; Shank & Coyle, 2002). Within the wellness paradigm, one is concerned with the questions of 'Why do people



stay healthy' or 'How do they become healthier' rather than 'why do people get sick', which would reflect the traditional health paradigm.

In the literature about the concepts of wellness and medical tourism are lacking and their definitions and understanding vary extensively. The terms wellness tourism (Nahrstedt, 2004; Smith & Kelly, 2006; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006), health tourism (Douglas, 2001; Hall, 2003) health care tourism (Goodrich & Goodrich, 1991; Henderson, 2003), well-being tourism (Inside Story, 2007), holistic tourism (Smith, 2003; Smith & Kelly, 2006), medical tourism (Connell, 2006) and spa tourism (Puczkó & Bacharov, 2006) are sometimes used interchangeably but often describe different concepts.

### **Health Tourism Development Factors**

The global health tourism industry has undergone significant growth in the past years, attracting health tourists from all over the world to health providers located in every global region (Connell, 2011; Hopkins et. al. 2010; Johnston et. al. 2010). Facilities in these regions are being built, renovated, and staffed with a full spectrum of health human resources in attempts to attract these patients, often competing with one-another for health tourists (Pocock & Phua, 2011; Turner, 2007; Crooks et. al. 2011).

As stated in recent studies (Connell, 2006; Laing & Weiler, 2008; Deloitte, 2009; Eissler & Cohen 2012), the development of health tourism is driven by various factors, some of them are Low cost and others are quality of Health Care Service, Shorter waiting periods, Originality of Service and easier access to health care, more affordable international travel, Communication improvement through the internet and growth of Health facilitators and Unavailability of quality health care in home country of health tourist.

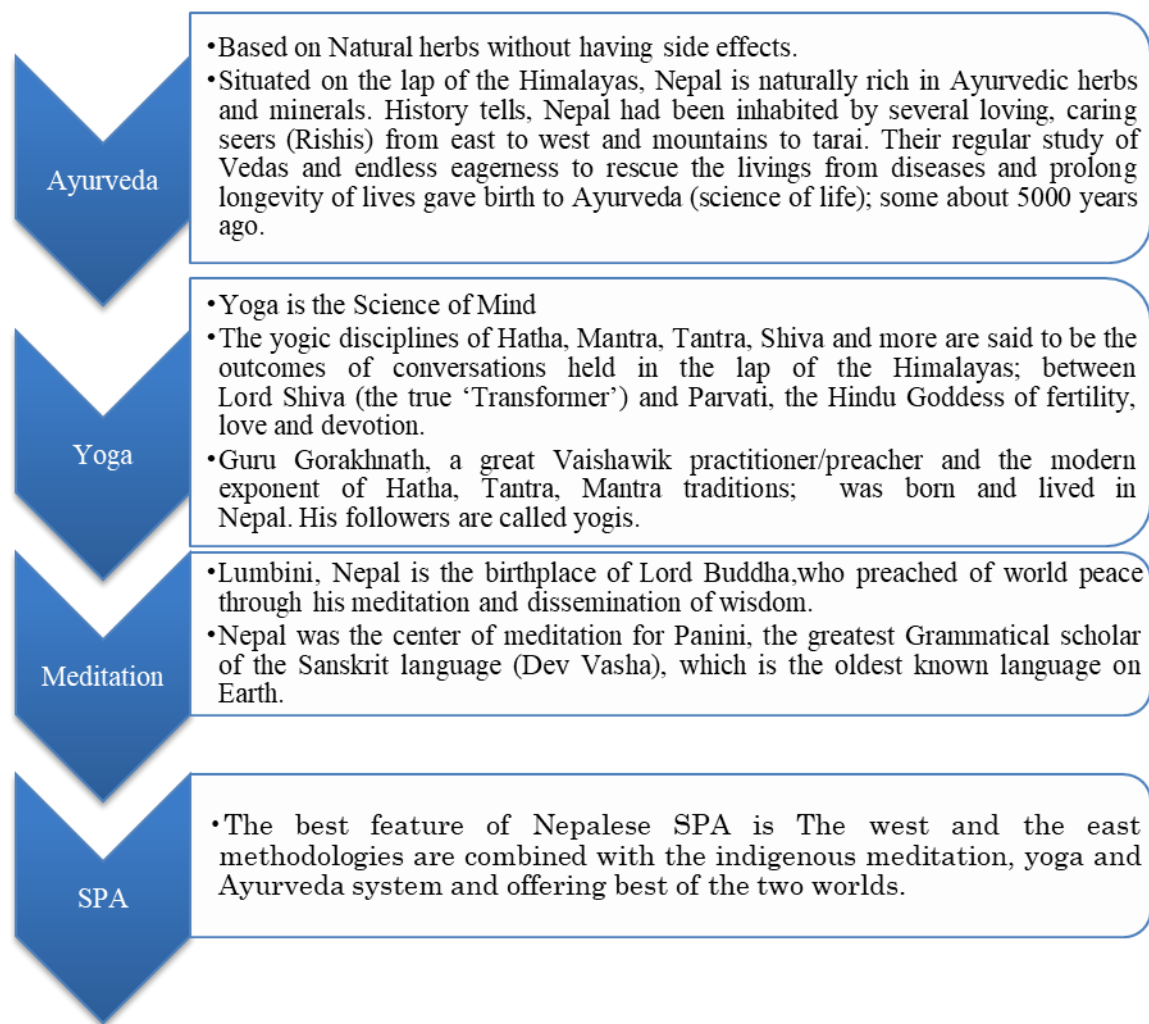
Many European and Asian countries encourage the development of health tourism, but there is a lack of serious research on the subject. However, the conclusions of some statistical reports suggest there is a growing demand for those services, and investments in the health sector confirm that there is a need for the improvement of the current health offer.

Many of the research is focused on health tourism behaviour factors and interest, health tourism branding, health tourism services. There is a lack of health tourism development factors research like human resources, medical resources, government policy, and promotion factors.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

#### **The base of Nepalese Health Tourism**

The health system in Nepal, which started 122 years before, based on the primary health care approach. Large differences in diseases are observed among plain area, southern area, and northern high mountain area. Health services are provided both by the government and non-government (profit and nonprofit) bodies. Tibetan medicines, Ayurveda, yoga, meditation, SPA, faith healing, naturopathy, homeopathic and western medical systems are mostly used in medical practices in Nepal. Health tourism in Nepal is mostly based on natural healing factors that combine different kinds of medical treatment, preventive and wellness programs adapted to the needs of specific tourist groups.



**Figure 1.** The base of Nepalese Health Tourism. Compiled from various sources.

Figure 1 shows most of the health tourists in Nepal using Ayurveda, Yoga, Meditation and SPA services in Nepal. In addition, we find most of private health provider company focus these services to the foreign health tourists and public health providers are not involved in health tourism. Public health providers mainly focusing their services to domestic patients. Here are some factors for driving health tourism in Nepal:

1. Many of skilled Ayurvedic doctors and specialists, with Nepal and international experience.
2. Strong value proposition on cost, quality of treatment and services.
3. Diverse geography with numerous tourism destinations to suit the health tourist's schedule and health.
4. The originality of the treatment, use of alternative medicines, wellness, and rejuvenation programs for complete healing.

### **Nepal Present Scenario**

Foreign health tourists in increasing numbers are now coming to Nepal for their private health care using Yoga, Meditation, SPA, and Ayurvedic treatment. They come from the US, Canada, UK, Germany, Russia, and many other countries for lifestyle disease treatment procedures that are not available in their home countries.

Factors	Private Health Provider	Public Health Provider
Human resources	Nepalese doctors/therapist Indian doctors/therapist	Only Nepalese doctors/therapist
Skill/Education	Ayurvedic medical education with basic allopathic courses	Ayurvedic medical education with basic allopathic courses
Health Tourists	Primary: International tourists with less-high WTP Secondary: Nepalese Citizen with high WTP	Primary: Nepalese citizen Secondary: International tourists with less WTP
Location	Mainly based in big cities, Like; Kathmandu, Pokhara, Biratnagar, Bhairawa, Banepa etc.	All Cities
Cost of service	Relatively high	Relatively low
International insurance	Accepted in the case by case	Not accepted
Basic Infrastructure	Relatively good	Very poor
Overall infrastructure	Very poor	
Medical resources	Medicinal Plants mainly export to India & China and produced medicines imports from India	
Promotion	Web-based only e.g. Company web site and TripAdvisor	Not at all
Interested Ministry	Tourism Ministry	Health Ministry

**Table 1:** Present Scenario of Health Tourism in Nepal. Compiled from Various sources and stakeholder interviews.

Table 1 shows the Nepal present scenario of health tourism. The private health providers in Nepal have made some impressive practice in the health tourism industry. They have a skilled workforce and good infrastructure compare with public health providers. Due to the lack of a skilled workforce in the health tourism industry in Nepal, some private health providers hire Indian doctors. Moreover, they are also promoting their services through their company website and using TripAdvisor. However, most of the public health providers only concern domestic patients. Basic infrastructures are relatively good in private health provider, compared with the public health provider. Both private and public providers have skilled human resources in terms of medical skill, but they have a lack of hospitality management skills.

It should be noted that, for the first time, health tourism is clearly defined in the national tourism strategy 2016-2025 documents. However, there is not any clear vision and strategy for development, the health tourism industry in Nepal. Health tourism providers failed to provide services in such a way as to meet the expectations of health tourists who want to get quality in treatment, equipment, employees' look planned organization of cultural and heritage programs, co-operation, friendliness and translator's services, patient safety and airport pick up services including road safety measures and the quality of roads offered to them to reach their destination.

### Nepal's Competitiveness of Health Tourism

Nepalese health tourism offers Ayurveda, naturopathy, yoga, meditation, SPA, and many other treatments that are beneficial for health rejuvenation. People from more than 120 countries visit various Ayurveda centres, meditation centres, yoga centres, and SPA hotels & resorts spread across the country as a part of their health tourism in Nepal.

The following Table 2 compiled through various sources highlights the Nepal competitive position with its competitors in health tourism:

Factors	Wellness	Integrative Medicine System	Medical Tourism	
			Cosmetic Surgery	Advance Life Saving Health Care
Service Offered	Meditation, Yoga, SPA, Stress relief	Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Naturopathy, Tibetan Amchi	Plastic surgery, Breast enhancement, Dental Care, Skin Treatment Etc.	Hip & Knee Replacement, Open Heart Surgery, Cardiovascular Surgery, IVF, etc.
Key Competitors	Thailand, India, Philippines	India, Srilanka	Thailand, S. Korea, Singapore	Thailand, India, Singapore, Malaysia
Nepal Strength	High	High	Low	Low
Economic Contribution to the Community	High	High	Low	Low

**Table 2:** Nepal's competitiveness of Health Tourism. Compiled from Various Sources.

Primary competitors to Nepal in terms of development stage and the quality of health tourism promotion are India, Srilanka, and Thailand. We can say that due to the vicinity and the Nepal outbound market, India is the most significant competition in Nepal.

It becomes evident from the above table that the area of cosmetic medical tourism and life-saving medical tourism in Nepal is not competitive, while in wellness-based health tourism and integrative medicine-based health tourism, Nepal stands before the international community with high competitiveness. Not only the competitiveness is high, but also this tourism gives a high economic contribution to the community.

### **Medicinal Herbs in Nepal**

As per WHO estimates, traditional, complementary, alternative or non-conventional medicines are used by 70-95% of the global population, particularly in developing countries for their healthcare (WHO 2011). Traditional medicines vastly depend on the usages of plants, compared to other natural resources.

Nepal has significantly diverse ecosystems (Chaudhary, 1998; Subedi, 2000, 2004), producing a wide range of unique and valuable medicinal plant resources. Representing only 0.01% of earth's land area, Nepal is gifted by nature with 2.6% of all flowering plants, 9.3% birds, and 4.5% of mammals of the world. Out of the estimated 9,000 species found in the eastern Himalaya as a whole, 39% are endemic to this mountain range (Myers 1988; Myers 1990; Bajracharya et al. 1998; IUCN 2000). "Nearly 7,000 species of higher plants are found in Nepal, of which 5% are endemic to Nepal and 10% are medicinal and aromatic plants. 75 vegetation types ranging from dense tropical forests to alpine vegetation that covers over 50% of the total geographical area of the country forms the land resource base for the provision of medicinal and aromatic plants" (Subedi, 2010).

"Traditional medicine in Nepal has a strong cultural and religious background; indigenous and local communities have been using traditional and indigenous knowledge for centuries under local laws, customs, and traditions" (Koirala & Khaniya 2008). WHO (2002), defines traditional medicines as "including diverse health practices, approaches, knowledge, and beliefs incorporating plant, animal, and/or mineral based medicines applied singularly or in combination to maintain well-being, as well as to treat, diagnose or prevent illness".

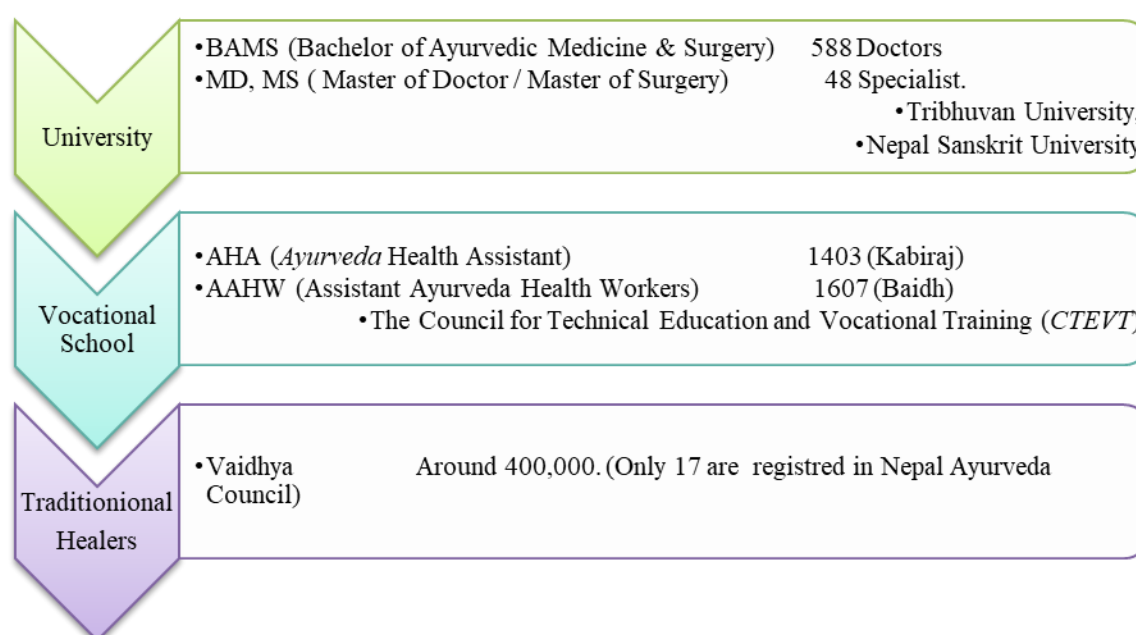
Medicinal plants play a substantial role in the life support systems of local communities of Far-west Nepal. With increasing acceptance and use of medicinal plants in traditional therapies, and with increasing commercial demands over the years, the consumption and collection of medicinal plants are accelerating and thus endangering the extant populations. However, most of the medical plants are exported to the Indian and Chinese markets now- a- days, then import produced medicines from India.

### **Human Resources for Health Tourism Industry**

"Ayurveda practitioners in Nepal can be divided into two categories" (Koirala & Khaniya 2008). First, Ayurveda based-traditional healers, who have been practicing it as a family profession for generations. Second, academic Ayurveda practitioners trained in educational institutions, training centres, colleges, and universities. The former is mostly concentrated in the informal sector, whereas the latter operate in the formal sector. The estimated number of traditional healers in Nepal is 400,000(Koirala & Khaniya 2008).

Figure 2 shows the Ayurveda education system in Nepal. It started about 75 years ago when the Nepal Rajakiya Ayurved Vidyalaya in 1933 was started in Kathmandu for the training of Ayurvedic health workers (Dixit, 2005). As per data available from Nepal Medical Council, formally trained Ayurveda practitioners number around 3646, including 636 Ayurveda Doctors (graduates/post-graduates), 1403 Ayurveda Health Assistants (with certificate-level or equivalent education), and 1607 Ayurveda Health Workers (with the training of at least 15 months).

At present, there are 293 government run Ayurvedic centers all over the country, and 13 Ayurvedic medical colleges under Tribhuvan University and Nepal Sanskrit University and also many vocational schools under CTEVT and a few regulating bodies established in the public sector. Many of these activities and institutions are run by private sectors.



**Figure 2.** Ayurveda Educational System in Nepal. Data received from Nepal Ayurveda Medical Council.

The first health service organization and medical institution established in Nepal were Ayurveda Hospital and Ayurveda College, respectively. Now the country has dozens of modern hospitals and teaching institutions related to medicine. The Nepal Ayurveda Medical Council was established (The ***Ayurveda Medical Council Act 1988***) to provide and observe necessary standards of Ayurvedic education, service, and registration of practitioners. Ayurveda practitioner must be registered in Ayurveda Medical Council to hold him/herself as a practitioner. Recently above medical education, providers have provided following yearly quotas to produce medical human resource:

1. For Ayurvedic Doctors: 120 Quotas per Year.
2. For Ayurvedic MD: 2 from Nepalese University and 20 from Indian University.
3. Ayurvedic Health Assistance (AHA): 120 Per Year
4. Assistance Ayurvedic Health Workers (AHW): 440 Per Year

However, there are some important issues and concerns related to health tourism. One of the interesting facts is that there are more young professionals engaged in the health tourism sector, and there is increasing pressure in their skill-set due to fierce day-to-day competition.

Our study shows that they have good knowledge and skills of the technical field of health services, but lack of skills and knowledge in hospitality management.

### SWOT Analysis

Many European and Asian countries encourage the development of health tourism, but there is a lack of serious research on the subject. However, the conclusions of some statistical reports suggest there is a growing demand for those services, and investments in the health sector confirm that there is a need for the improvement of the current health offer.

Strength	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nepal is the only country which health tourism services are based on mountains. Most of the herbs are coming from the mountainous area.</li> <li>2. BioDiversity in Nepal offers the possibility to explore original and high-value health tourism products.</li> <li>3. Nepal has good potential for medicinal herbs and medicinal plants.</li> <li>4. Ayurvedic doctors and therapist provide health services. In addition, Nepal has many colleges and universities who provide medical education for Ayurveda and other health professional.</li> <li>5. Ayurvedic doctors are trained both Ayurvedic Treatment with allopathic treatment.</li> <li>6. Many Famous tourist attractions and trekking routes are lies in Nepal.</li> </ol>
Weakness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of skilled workforce for health tourism.</li> <li>2. Lack of promotion globally or target markets.</li> <li>3. Lack of government support in terms of policy and regulation.</li> <li>4. Lack of R&amp;D activities in the field of Health tourism.</li> <li>5. Lack of public-private health provider partnership.</li> </ol>
Opportunity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increasing Global demand for the health tourism industry.</li> <li>2. Increase awareness of Yoga and Ayurveda in developed countries like Japan, USA, Canada, and the UK.</li> <li>3. The cost of health service in developed western world remaining high, they compare western service providers with Nepali service providers and find Nepali health care cost most effective.</li> <li>4. Fast Paced lifestyle increases the demand for wellness tourism and alternative cures.</li> <li>5. Globalization and Internet technology, providing visibility to service providers.</li> </ol>
Threats	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Competition from India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.</li> <li>2. Facing some legal question from European countries for some Ayurvedic herbs and medicine.</li> <li>3. Lack of International accreditation – a major inhibitor.</li> <li>4. Low investment in health infrastructure and general infrastructure is not impressive.</li> </ol>

**Table 3:** SWOT Analysis of Health Tourism industry in Nepal.

Table 3 shows strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat of Nepalese health tourism industry. The entire intensive development of health tourism is not possible without permanent and target-oriented support of relevant institutions such as the relevant ministries and the other government institutions since they are responsible for removing barriers and encouraging investments. On the other hand, the operational support through professional management of health providers with the functions of market research, information, education, and promotion.

### Key Findings

Factors	Questions	Answers
Cost	Health tourism costs are high or Low	Low
Language and Communication	Foreign language can be a problem or not	Not
Investment Potential	Investment chances in Health Tourism Industry	High
Expertise/ Human Resources	Health Tourism requires expertise and specialization	Yes Lack of skilled HR
Promotion	Promotion of Health Tourism is sufficient or not	Not
Policy and Regulation	Related policy and regulation are sufficient or not	Not
Government Attitude	More governmental support is needed	Yes
Infrastructure	Is there sufficient infrastructure or not?	Not
Tourist Attractions	Is there a tourist attraction as a health tourism destination?	Yes
Quality Standards	Need to improve quality standards to meet international standards	Yes Need Accreditation

**Table 4:** Key findings of Research based on Stakeholder Interviews.



Health care facilities providing medical tourism services in Nepal are characterized by a lack of interest in health tourism, and most of them do not have international certification. The services are currently provided by a small number of specialized, internationally established doctors and private institutions. There are positive steps towards multidisciplinary associations combining health, catering industry, travel agents, and science in order to establish a destination value chain.

Here are some key findings of this study:

- I. Most of the health providers in Nepal dedicatedly are serving the health tourists with lifestyle caused disease, and are offering yoga, Ayurveda, SPA and meditation-based treatment.
- II. Various health providers and big hotels are coming forward to invest in the health tourism sector to build a good image of Nepal as a health tourism destination and to attract foreign health tourists.
- III. Every health provider of Nepal is now well occupied with English speaking staff and thus removing the problem of communication gap between health tourists and the health providers.
- IV. Affordable costs of health tourism services lower than the costs in India, Sri Lanka and Thailand, make Nepal highly appeal to foreign tourist as a health tourism destination.
- V. Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Banepa, Pokhara, and Lumbini receive the maximum number of international health tourists, compared to other cities of Nepal because of their natural scenes, tourist attractions, yoga, meditation, and Ayurvedic techniques of healing.
- VI. Lack of skilled workforce in terms of hospitality and management skills.
- VII. Lack of full support of the government in terms of policy, regulation, and promotion.

## **Conclusion**

One of the latest trends in health tourism is the fact that has been a recent surge in the interest level amongst youth all over the world. In order to tap this growing interest in health tourism, it is crucial that steps should be undertaken to coordinate closely all the various aspects of health tourism under an institutional framework. This would pave the way to maximize the opportunity for growth and progress of this niche tourism product in the future.

Health tourism has not yet been researched very extensively in Nepal even though it is an important and growing sector. In recent years, health, wellness, and medical tourism have grown quickly. This includes visits to spa and wellness hotels & resorts, Ayurveda, Yoga and meditation, hospitals and clinics for surgery and medical procedures, as well as spiritual or holistic retreats. One of the most important challenges for health tourism in Nepal is the problem of registration and evidence of service providers in health tourism. Even there is not any health tourism department in the government sector.

Here are some other challenges such as poor cooperation and coordination between the health ministry and tourism ministry, lack of specialized human resources in the health tourism industry, lack of an information gathering system, the inefficiency of the public-private-partnership, lack of required infrastructure and legal frameworks for development in health tourism hamper development of Nepal's health tourism industry.

Most of the patients at the government-run Ayurveda hospital in Nepal are Nepali nationals. The inflow of foreign patients is negligible, though the exact numbers are not available. The few foreigner visitors are patients with jaundice and chronic diseases. Most of the foreign visitors at private health provider.

## Recommendations

The following suggestions laid down the future path for Nepal to attract health tourists. These suggestions largely draw from the discussions with various stakeholders as well as observing the other countries' health tourism practices.

### A: Role of the Private Sector

#### 1. Research and Development

Health tourism is one of the growing segments in the tourism industry. Research on health tourism and related topics should be done continually in order to obtain up-to-date information about the industry. In addition, research on health tourism should be conducted in the area of development of health tourism, products and services provided and organizations that control health tourism in each country.

#### 2. Health Tourism Products and Services

Because of the high competition in the health tourism market, health tourism provider should design the theme for products and services provided to make those products or services different from others. However, each product and service should be developed under the concept of health tourism.

#### 3. Public-Private Partnership:

The government, the health care providers, and the tourism industry have to work together for improved health tourism industry in Nepal.

#### 4. Promotion:

The health providers can encourage the tourists to recommend their health care centers to others as mouth-to-mouth information is effective and does not any money.

#### 5. Health Insurance:

The health providers should ensure that they cover all kinds of health insurance provided in different nations, and encourage health tourists to take up health insurance, as this will simplify the transaction process.

### B. Role of Government

#### 1. Policy, Rules, and Regulation:

The government needs to make related plans; policies, rules, and regulation improve the health tourism industry in Nepal. In addition, need to promote from the government side.

#### 2. Quality Control and Accreditation:

The government of Nepal must act as a regulator to institute a uniform grading and accreditation system for hospitals to build consumers' trust and improvement of the healthcare industry.

#### 3. Necessary Visas:

A simplified system of getting medical visas should be developed in order to make travel across borders smoother. Visas can be extended depending on the condition of the patients. The Nepal government can play a significant role in enhancing the benefits of health tourism. Health tourist should grant a quicker visa or visa on arrival.

#### 4. Human Resources:

Need human resources with good skills in hospitality and management. For short term, its fulfilled by regular training of existing workforce and for the long term, hospitality and management education include with their health education.

#### 5. Infrastructure:

There is also a need to develop supporting infrastructure such as transportation, accommodation, and communication and information channels to facilitate health tourism.

## 6. Country Branding and Promotion:

The government authorities are required to check out an effective marketing exercise in branding the country as well as executing marketing strategies in expanding the health and wellness tourism market in Nepal. The government and private sector need to work earnestly and with a commitment to develop Nepal, The most attractive health tourism destination.

## 7. Establish a National Health Tourism Department:

To promote health tourism and to regulate (Certificate, Licenses) as well as the implementation of international standards of quality and health certificates, the government needs to establish National Health Tourism Department partnership with the health ministry and tourism ministry.

## Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations to this study; the most important are listed below:

- I. The complication of this research is mainly a health provider and the Governance side study (Supply and government side), therefore no experimental investigation was attempted or complied with the demand side.
- II. While the researcher tried to review all literature available on health tourism, some research may have been overlooked.

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ECOTOURISM IN THE EYES OF THE BEHOLDER  
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**Abstract:** Ecotourism is very much in vogue and widely contested and debated. Understanding ecotourism and its impacts is subjective and depends on one's perspective whether it is a genuine approach for sustainable development of a destination or a marketing ploy. Past interpretations place the concept on a spectrum of opinions offering both positive and negative conclusions and indicating lack of clarity of what ecotourism is and how it can be operationalised. Early studies neglected the negative aspects of this form of tourism, viewing it as a panacea for the ills of mass tourism. More recently, our attention has been drawn to the need for the protection of the natural and social environments as well as ecotourism's contribution to the economic development in a more sustainable way. The debate on sustainable ecotourism is still ongoing and its complexities are now being recognised. The aim of this conceptual paper is to identify the main differential characteristics of ecotourism. In so doing, it looks at past studies attempting to distinguish ecotourism from other forms of tourism, and explores the relationship between ecotourism and sustainability, often taken for granted. The paper argues that positive expectations associated with ecotourism depend on how its operationalisation and development are planned and implemented.

**Keywords:** Ecotourism, ethical planning, sustainable development, ecotourism operationalisation, tourism impacts, overtourism, extractive industry

## Introduction

Ecotourism is often used as an economic and cultural diversification tool most commonly applied in the developing destinations as a means to protect ecosystems, preserve local cultures, and spur economic development, and is often positioned as an alternative to mass tourism. It has also been applied in mass destinations like Crete as a technocratic solution for product diversification in a more sustainable way. The debate on sustainable tourism development usually focuses on small-scale tourism practices, such as rural tourism or ecotourism, inappropriately referred to as 'alternative' tourism, judging by the problems they also create. Mature destinations, such as Crete, Greece are a classic example of inappropriate environmental practices and of disregard for the principles of sustainability. However, the restructuring processes in traditional destinations led to a more complex reality in which sustainability has become an unavoidable reference, both as a competitiveness factor and as a growing social demand (Coccossis, 2001; Saatsakis, Bakir, and Wickens, 2018; Saatsakis and Papas, 2006; Spilanis and Vayanni, 2003; Terkenli, 2005; Tsartas, 2003).

The rapid and uncontrolled increase of tourist arrivals has produced major negative impacts on the natural and built environment. In many cases, the phenomenon is so intense that, in combination with the low quality of services, it contributes to the continuous degradation of the tourist product and the reduction of profits for host communities and for the national economy. If this trend continues, the sustainability of the tourism industry, including ecotourism, is uncertain (Butler, 2017; Hunt et al., 2015; Weaver, 2016).

The emergence of new tourism destinations has increased the competition among existing mass tourism destinations catering for sun, sea and sand (3Ss). There has also been an increased differentiation of tourist demand and a trend to new forms of active, special interest tourism,

such as, ecotourism and cultural tourism. These forms of tourism are based on the unique characteristics and resources of each area. In the last two decades the growth of environmental concern and policies has also encouraged the increase in environmental friendly products and services. The terms 'sustainability' and 'sustainable tourism' are now widely used in the literature and in most development programmes, even though there is much confusion surrounding the interpretation of these concepts (Butler, 2017; Liu, 2003).

The last decade has witnessed a growing recognition of the importance of the sustainability imperative in tourism. The emerging view is that tourism can no longer be viewed as a commercial activity that has no significant impact on the natural and socio-cultural environment in which it is situated. Instead tourism is increasingly regarded as an extractive industrial activity which operates by appropriating environmental resources and transforming them for sale in consumer markets. Neglect of conservation and quality of life issues threatens the very basis of local populations and the viable and sustainable tourism industry (Anderson, Bakir & Wickens, 2014; Wearing, 2001).

The purpose of sustainable tourism development is to respond to the failures of past forms of tourism development (Buckley, 2012; Gladstone, Curley and Shokri, 2013; Tang, 2015). Whether mass or alternative, all forms of tourism cause some form of alteration of the environment, as tourism is inextricably linked to, and dependent on the use of resources of a destination. However, carefully managed ecotourism encourages an understanding of the impacts of tourism on the natural, cultural and human environments (Sharpley, 2006; Stronza, 2007). In its most general sense, alternative tourism can be broadly defined as a form of tourism that sets out to be consistent with natural and social values which allows both host and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interactions and shared experiences. Ecotourism is thus a responsible form of travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and sustains the wellbeing of the local people (Anderson et al., 2014). However, such positive expectations depend on how development is planned and implemented. The aim of this conceptual paper is to identify the main differential characteristics of ecotourism. In what follows, past studies are examined attempting to distinguish ecotourism from other forms of tourism and explores the relationship between ecotourism and sustainability.

### **Past Studies: Ecotourism and its Main Differential Characteristics**

Ecotourism is a fast-growing segment of tourism; often conceptualised as an alternative to mass tourism (Fennel, 2003, 2014). It is seen as a panacea for the protection of nature by some authors (See Anderson et al., 2014), whereas others view any kind of tourism as a threat (e.g., Nygard & Uthardt, 2011), arguing that the revenues derived from ecotourism are too insignificant for supporting conservation on a large scale. It has been viewed as travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people (Cater, 1994; 2009). It is claimed that it is concerned with natural beauty, geology, flora and fauna of a destination along with its indigenous cultures (Fennel, 2003, 2014; Weaver, 2001).

Past studies suggest that one of the reasons for the increasing demand for ecotourism is the influence of environmentalism of the past three decades in response to the negative environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts of overtourism. There is concrete evidence to suggest that consumers have shifted away from mass tourism towards more environmentally friendly experiences that are more individualistic and enriching (Holden, 2003; Mihalic, 2000; Sharpley, 2006). The public is becoming more aware of threatening environmental trends such as global warming, ozone depletion, pesticide contamination, overpopulation, mass migration, global trade, and the deforestation of the rainforests. For instance, the media and the environmentalists have drawn the public's attention to the seriousness of these issues through

their regular coverage and commentaries. The efforts towards environmental protection have also been supported by themed publications such as the Brundtland report (1991) together with several governmental reports in conjunction with the eagerness to achieve sustainable development by any means, and the potential employment opportunities in natural areas. Governments have firmly placed the environment on their international agenda by undertaking more environmentally friendly initiatives (e.g., The Paris Agreement, UNFCCC, 2016). Furthermore, environmental proponents, notably David Attenborough, have documented the fragility of the natural world raising awareness about the gravity of environmental degradation and climate change, sending a message of the challenges that we have created and the desperate need for acting now.

Four decades ago ecotourism was regarded as a small-scale niche product which was a specialized form of nature-based or adventure tourism (Lindberg et al., 1998). Since then ecotourism became a popular notion featuring in studies with a variety of definitions, applications and evaluations, based on the assumptions that ecotourism is a 'politically correct form of mass tourism'. However, since the concept first emerged, it has been seen as a saviour for the environment, but it has also been arguably viewed as a marketing ploy (Saatsakis, 2018; Saatsakis, Bakir & Wickens, 2018). The concept has been operationalised with the purpose of increasing tourism traffic and economic impacts. There is little doubt that ecotourism is increasingly becoming a significant source of revenue for the international tourism industry and governments. In fact, the relevance of ecotourism as an emerging market can be exemplified by the fact that in 2000 the United Nations declared that 2002 was to be the 'International Year of Ecotourism'. The main purpose of this and subsequent events was to be the setting of an agenda and a set of recommendations for the development of tourism activities in the context of sustainable development (see, UNSDG, 2017).

The grounds on which ecotourism operates are claimed to be alternative forms of tourism or special interest travel and the associated products generated from these segments. A debate exists among researchers on whether the growth of tourism, including ecotourism, is driven by supply or by demand. Some analysts consider the growth of ecotourism as being supply led (e.g., Saatsakis, 2018). However, others argue that ecotourism can also be demand driven (e.g., Perkins & Grace, 2014). Analysis of past studies adopting the supply led view of ecotourism suggests that ecotourism is a marketing ploy. A demand led understanding of ecotourism, on the other hand, favours the view of ecotourism as a remedy to the ills of mass tourism and hence its understanding as a sustainable development.

Many scholars have written about the challenges of conceptualising ecotourism. As such, the concept has acquired a broad range of meanings that impedes its operationalisation as an instrument of environmental management. The major challenge for scholars is how to translate the concept of ecotourism into relevant and usable principles and criteria. However, there is a broad agreement amongst thinkers that ecotourism is primarily related to nature with a secondary cultural component. It promises an appreciation of the natural environment and activities which are perceived as being benign. There is a view which indicates that the environmental, economic and social aspects should be all given equal weight, recognizing their interdependence and integrated nature (Anderson, et al., 2014). Sustainability is used as a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for everyone while preserving environmental and socio-cultural systems (Saatsakis, 2018). Conceptualised as a nature- and culture-based tourism, ecotourism embodies environmental responsibilities including fostering a conservation ethic among the local community and hence distinguishing it from other forms of tourism. This key defining characteristic makes ecotourism distinct from other tourism types, as the tourists' experience is nature-based, ecologically sustainable, environmentally educational, locally beneficial and participatory. The interrelationship between the natural and



the social environments within ecotourism adds an important ethical dimension which makes it distinct.

In contrast, critics argue that ecotourism could be perceived as ideologically biased (Cater, 2006). Tourists often demand the exclusivity of the visited ecotourism destinations and the comforts of the perceived authenticity found in the nature of the environmental bubbles associated with it. Often described as an elitist form of tourism, critics point out that ecotourism destinations are promoted as 'exclusive' nature resorts where the indigenous population is excluded, and where few benefits are accrued for the protection of the local environment. It is further argued that ecotourism often possesses anti-democratic tendencies and has questionable sustainable nature as it lacks repeat visitations and the active support of national political planning (Anderson et al., 2014).

Conceptualised as visiting scenery, protected areas, wild plants, and wildlife, ecotourism is currently one of the most popular and fast-growing segments of the tourism industry, generating over \$20 billion in economic activity and representing 5% to 10% of the overall travel markets. The growth rates for ecotourism are estimated to vary between 10% and 30% annually compared to 4% for tourism overall (Duffy, 2006; Mehmetoglu, 2008; Saatsakis, 2018; UNWTO, 2004).

Ecotourism is thus engulfed by fuzziness and ambiguity, encompassing education, environmental awareness, cultural revitalisation, and rural development (Burns, 2005; Burns & Barrie, 2005; Saatsakis, 2018). Ecotourism attributes that have been identified in past studies include: empowerment, local participation, education and environmental learning, ethical development, sustainability, conservation, an interest in nature and nature-based activities, the provision of long-term benefits for locals, and environmental appreciation (Saatsakis, 2018).

Our analysis shows that ecotourism viewed as a wide spectrum of opinions with a variety of understandings, each attempting to define it from a specific stance or associated with a specific product, has led to its ambiguity and fuzziness (Saatsakis et al., 2018). Thus, it is a complex and synergistic set of social, ecological, and economic dimensions that represent a common 'main idea' (Bjork, 2000; Donohoe and Needham, 2006; Weaver, 2005). This main idea is based on the view that ecotourism acts as both an economic and policy tool for achieving sustainable development (Fennell, 2002; Lai and Shafer, 2005; Williams, 2006). In addition, in terms of the environmental debate, ecotourism fits well with notions of 'sustainability-lite', where sustainable development can be achieved within existing political, economic and social structures and through the operation of the market. The absence of a clear definition and the vagaries and ambiguities that surround the term make it, as some would argue, almost meaningless as it is used indiscriminately to describe anything related to nature or unrelated to conventional tourism. Unsurprisingly, terms such as "hard" vs. "soft", "deep" vs. "shallow", or "active" versus "passive" ecotourism are thus abound in the literature (Orams, 1995; Stem, Lassole, Lee, and Deshler, 2003; Saatsakis, 2018). A more careful consideration of ecotourism should therefore include both: *supply factors* (nature and resilience of resources, cultural or local community preferences, types of accommodation) and *demand factors* (types of activities and experiences; degree of interest in natural or cultural resources; degree of physical effort) (Anderson et al., 2014). For instance, Saatsakis et al. (2018), pointing to the supply and demand side of ecotourism, argue that as an industry it must be concerned with the visitors' experience, host community, the resource base, and tour operators. They also add that because ecotourism involves several quite different social and ecological aspects, it is important to distinguish between these in clarifying the concept.

These authors recognise that understanding ecotourism as a continuum or spectrum has a number of challenges and implications for its operationalisation for the purposes of product development and marketing. The difficulty for selecting a single definition is in the intrinsic nature of ecotourism, being a complex, interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral phenomenon. This paper acknowledges that ecotourism is an intellectual concept, socially constructed to question whether the planning, development and management of tourism can be undertaken in a more sustainable way. Ecotourism offers economic benefits through natural resources preservation, providing potential benefits for both conservation and development (Anderson et al., 2014; Boo, 1993).

Planning and decision-making should involve local populations for ecotourism to succeed (Saatsakis, 2018). It requires planning which balances economic, social and environmental goals. Ecotourism demands a managed approach by the host country or region which commits itself to establishing and maintaining the sites with the participation of local residents, marketing them appropriately, enforcing regulations, and using the proceeds of the enterprise to fund the area's land management as well as community development. The key characteristic of ecotourism is characterized by small scale development planned to attract tourists to natural environments that are unique and accessible, use its revenue to achieve nature conservation and produce employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for the host community.

Planning and development must start with the people first, as it is from this basis that the industry will flourish, and their involvement will allow them to avoid many of the pitfalls already associated with conventional mass tourism (Saatsakis, 2018). Hence, ecotourism would not become just an 'industry' operated in the natural environment but an experience that people have that affects their attitudes, values and actions. It thus involves environmental education, fostering of attitudes and behaviour that is contributing to maintaining natural environments, and empowerment of host communities. Ecotourism development can therefore be said to include at least three key dimensions: sustainability, conservation and empowerment of host communities. Its perceived potential as an effective tool for sustainable development is the main reason why destinations are now embracing it and including it in their economic development and conservation strategies (Saatsakis, 2018; Stem et al., 2003). As we have been reminded by Brundtland (1991), sustainable development should always meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

## **Conclusion**

Ecotourism is one of the most advocated concepts in the tourism literature, yet there remains considerable debate on what the meaning is, or what should be. There is a broad set of ecotourism attributes that are widely promoted, including; environmental conservation and education, cultural preservation and economic benefits. A careful examination of the theoretical discourse shows that the concept of ecotourism is seen as a magical solution to all tourism problems; economic development, environmental conservation, cultural preservation. The discourse suggests that ecotourism is an intellectually attractive term, often presented as a responsible form of travel; yet others view it as a marketing ploy to expand the tourism market. This paper has argued that ecotourism is highly contentious, and the debate is still ongoing on whether it can deliver the expected economic and environmental benefits to indigenous communities and destinations. As a complex concept, ecotourism remains much debated and contested. Lack of clarity of what ecotourism is has led to its fuzziness and undermined its operationalisation.

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TRANSFORMATION OF HIMALAYAN PILGRIMAGE: A SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL  
ON THE WANE

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**Abstract:** Despite years of discourse, many tourism scholars hold that pilgrim and tourist are the same while others believe that a pilgrim (religious tourist) and a tourist (secular pilgrim) are distinct in their motivations, behaviours and use of services. Some call them 'quasi-pilgrim' or 'half tourist' due to lack of understanding. This paper is an effort to re-examine the two epithets by using the case of Himalayan pilgrimage, which was systems based, i.e. had respect for the integrity of ecosystems, and prophylactic in nature, maintaining culture and values. This traditional pilgrimage system worked on the principle of pilgrim economy, which was based on austerity and principles of ethics and equity within the religious framework, violation of which was an act of blasphemy. With the onslaught of modern tourism this age-old traditional Himalayan pilgrimage system has been transformed gradually. This paper pleads to revitalize the old Yatra practice before it comes to an end. The revitalization process should be according to the diktat provided in Hindu scripture namely *Skand Puranas*. Traditional pilgrimages by their very nature were designed to be sustainable in terms of resource use. A pilgrim and a tourist are made of different virtues – the pilgrim being pious and humble while a tourist may be a pleasure-seeker. Before this land of gods transforms into pleasure dome, the concerned stakeholder, the Badrinath temple committee in particular should cry halt to this process of transformation. The grand *dhamas yatra* should be considered as national heritage.

**Keywords:** Pilgrimage, transformation, pilgrim economy, Hindu *Tirtha*, sustainability, mountain communities.

## Introduction

This paper is an effort to re-examine the two epithets: *tourist* and the *pilgrim* using the example of Himalayan Pilgrimage. In common parlance they are viewed as one and the same while they have little semblance and are diverse semantically (Cohen, 1979). It is for this reason that scholars address the issue with 'dichotomous undertones' (Olsen and Timothy, 2006: 6). The popular notion about a tourist is that they are a pleasure seeker while pilgrims are religious devotees who journey to a shrine or scared place (Moscardo, 2015). The former generally are outdoors consuming worldly joys and a diverse experience than what they find at home, the latter are religiously and or spiritually inspired persons who passionately desires to be with their *Guru*. Both have some likeness in their patterns of service, though their motives are grossly antipodal. The researchers argue that pilgrims, like tourists engage themselves in travelling, transportation, visitor attractions, sightseeing and purchasing souvenirs, nonetheless they are different personalities – a tourist is a tourist and a pilgrim is a pilgrim. It is just playing with the language, pronouncing them as 'quasi tourist' or 'half pilgrim' and count them in arrival figures. A tourist is an outcome of the socio-economic compulsion of a society whereas a pilgrim is a bi-product of spiritual needs. A tourist may be more interested in an opera show, though a pilgrim may like to involve in religious rites and rituals. Thus, we can see the marked variation in their motivation, behaviours and activities. Yet, the UNWTO included a pilgrim in the category of a tourist.

## Is Tourist a Secular Pilgrim?

A pilgrim is an antithesis of a tourist (Singh & Kaur, 1985). Turner and Turner (1978:20) coined an amusing phrase, “A tourist is a ‘half pilgrim’ a pilgrim is ‘half tourist’”. The fact is that both are made of different virtues, behaviours and values of life. Generally, a tourist is considered a vacationer seeking thrills of entertainment and joys of life; to a pilgrim the glimpse (*darshan*) of his deity is the end all and the be all. Tourist on the other hand may be buoyant and frolicsome in nature while the pilgrim may be God-fearing, simple and single-mindedly ethical. A tourist may violate the environmental guidelines with impunity, to a pilgrim trespassing the code of conduct is an act of blasphemy.

Eade (1992) however believes that religious traveller goes to pilgrimage to gain “emotional release”. A pilgrim expects a spiritual or emotional experience; some may seek for miracle or supernatural episode. Hindu gods in India are said to have supernatural powers. Austerity, simplicity and devotion (*bhakti*) are some of the main attributes that a pilgrim should possess. On their religious journeys, many pilgrims prefer to walk than to enjoy animal ride. In olden days devotees in India used to tread several months to reach the shrines or *dhammas* (religious destinations) (Singh, 1975). Most *gurus* love to set their centre on high mountains, not easily approachable by pedestrians. Single-mindedly pilgrim crossover all impediments. Generally, a pilgrim is humble, and a tourist is arrogant. If one is frugal the other may be prodigal (Cohen, 1979). Before starting this essay a few words on the sacred mountains may be in place.

## Sacredness of Mountains

It has been observed that most mountains of the world are considered sacred and have a spiritual dimension, irrespective of the fact that they exist in the North or South; the simple explanation would be that they are extra-ordinary in their earth features: verticality, immensity and picturesque; saints and sages seek such ethereal environment – where subtle mystique pervades all through them. Seekers of such environment are metaphorically called secular pilgrim.

A casual look at the pilgrimage map of the world shall reveal that mountains are generally numinous landscape dotted with pilgrim centres. A few examples are cited here from the world of mountains for better understanding. The Buddhists traditionally believe that the spirit of the dead goes to the Mount Tai-Shan. People of East Africa bury their dead facing the sacred peak of Kilimanjaro. The Buddhists of South west China regard flora of their holy hill as the garden of gods (Bernbaum, 1990: 41). Nepal’s Gaurishanker peak embodies the Hindu god ‘Shiva’. Tibetan pilgrims worship the Mount Kailash and believe it to be the seat of God. Interesting myths and exciting anecdotal narratives are woven around the place to enhance the faith of devotees. A large number of pilgrims visit Monserrat (Spain). The Mount Sinai mentioned in Bible is known to the world as Moses received the Ten Commandments. People seek blessings and draw spiritual power from their deities who possess supernatural faculties

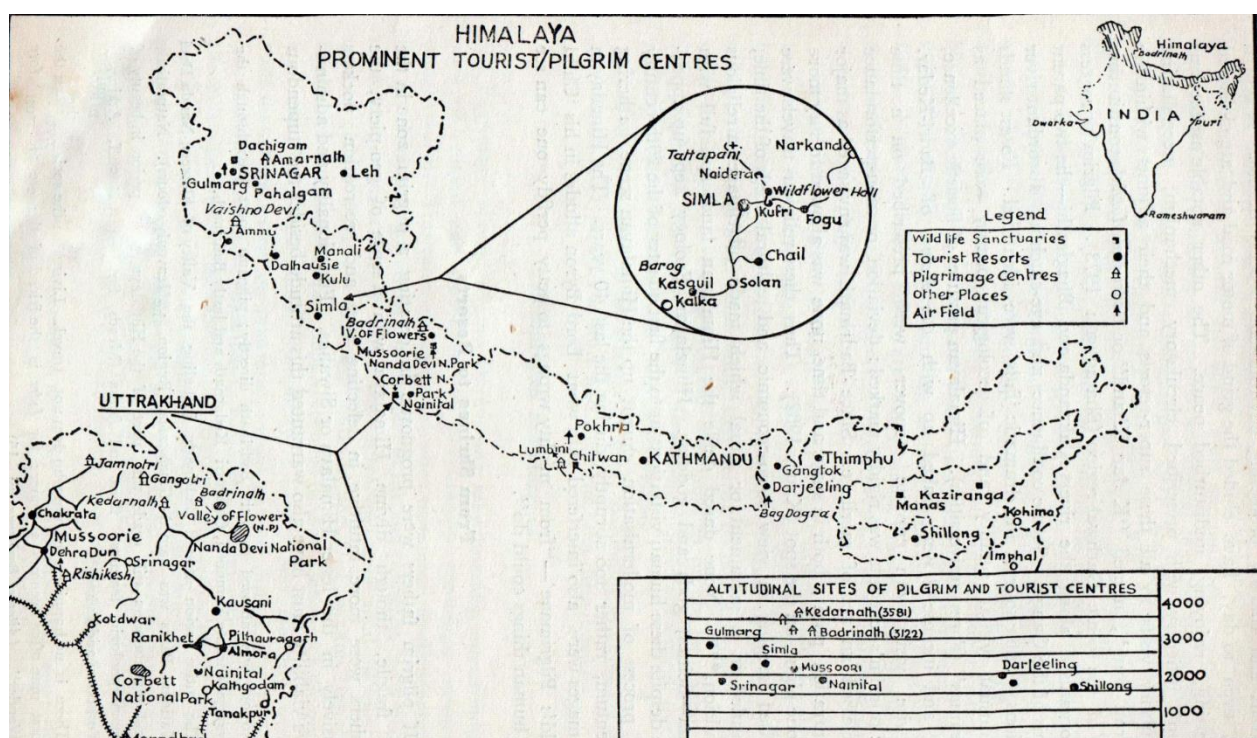
## Pre-pilgrimage

Given such a divine environment of benevolent Himalaya, people gave apotheosis to their snow-covered peaks, white waters of the rivers, caves and green meadows. They must have flocked to the majestic sites. It is difficult to imagine who these people would have been: oral history, anecdotes and folklores tell us these were tribes who had entered from the northwest Himalaya and settled in Garhwal and Kumaun Himalaya (now Uttarakhand) (see Figure 1). The most prominent among them were *Kols*, who were the first to arrive in the Northern hills (Kaur, 1985). Some of them were *khosas*, *kiratas*. These tribes survived for long in the forest

of Garhwal before the arrival of Aryans (Kaur, 1985, p.27). Myriad myths, legends, religious beliefs and rituals existed among pre-Aryan inhabitants. Some of them are mentioned in *Puranas* (Kalyan Tirthank (in Hindi), Volume 31). Overtime waves of humanities started coming to India; many of them moved to difficult to access valleys (Mabbet, 1968). Traces of the presence of *Kiratas*, *Nagas*, and *Khasas* tribal can be found even today. The pre-Dravidian people are seen today, represented by *Bhotia Culture* (Nand and Kumar, 1989). Later, Aryans arrived between 1000-1200 BC and contributed significantly to the framework of travel (Kalyan Tirthank Volume 31).

Aryans were over-awed by the Himalayan natural landscape, particularly the Garhwal ranges. These tribes were untiring rambler and loved serendipity and wanderlust. They moved to the head of Garhwal's holy rivers Yamuna and Ganga. They held Lord Shiva as the supreme among the gods. As a mountain god, he is deified and worshipped all over India.

**Figure-1: Prominent Himalayan Tourist/ Pilgrim Centres**



**Source:** The Author

### Seekers of Knowledge

Aryan settlers (1000-1200 BC) were clever people who aptly assimilated the ways and values of the indigenous societies. They studied the enchanting space most appropriately for religious activities and consecrated the region as 'Dev Bhumi', the land of Gods. Sages, saints, poets, and thinkers gradually came to know awe-inspiring space in the Himalaya where they created Hindu classic literature.

Kaur (1985) observed that around 700 BC there was a rise of a new class of Hindu society that followed the path of knowledge (*Gyan Marg*) who wandered in quest of knowledge and focused on this revered space. These wandering societies and hermits, perhaps, were the first pilgrims of Garhwal Himalaya. Saint Vyasa compiled the *Puranas* near Mana village. Gradually this



region became known far and wide. People from far-off places visited this area. Banks of rivers thronged by rambling societies and hermits; *Badrika* and *Kanava* ashram were established as renowned seats of learning. However, the concepts of pilgrimage as we see today did not exist. As time passed by pilgrimage experienced transformation, though Uttarakhand remained the sanctum of the Hindus.

The selection of the Himalaya for this study was purposeful for they are considered holy, inspiring and benevolent; a refuge of thinkers, philosophers and religious erudites, for example, sage Vedvyas composed Hindu scriptures, *the Vedas*, *Bhagwad Gita* and the *Mahabharata* on the high Himalayas. Above all, the unique tradition of *Tirtha-Yatra* (religious travelism) began from the Garhwal region several centuries ago. Another important reason for selecting Himalaya is that the Ganga, the most sacred river originates from Gaomukh in the high Himalaya. We shall see how the holy river transformed the character and psyche of mountain people, particularly of Hindus what Kaur (1985) termed as the 'Gangaization' process (P. 29).

## Discussion

According to the *Rig Veda*, Tirtha-yatra is crossing of a place, 'a ford' where one may cross over to the far shore of a river or to the far shore of the world of heaven (Eck, 1981). Of all the objects, water, particularly the Ganga water is held most sacred among Hindus that washes away the sin. The concept of *Tirtha-yatra* (travelism) seems to have been evolved from the sanctity of water and ritual bathing. The act of crossing in the *Upnishad* is transition and transformation from the world of *Brahma*. In *Upnishad Puranas* and epics the word 'tirth' means as 'spiritual ford'. Attractive points of rivers' junctions were given high respect as a *tirth*, for example, *Deva Prayaga*, where the *Alaknanda* and *Bhagirathi* rivers meet, from this point the river gets its name *Ganga*. Again, the meeting point of *Yamuna* and *Ganaga* and hidden *Saraswati* rivers is named *Prayaga*.

With the rise of modern civilization and tremendous increase in India's population, the holy waters are mindlessly polluted, yet millions of devotees bathe religiously. Speaking metaphorically, the Ganga is the soul of India, giving birth to famous religious centres like Badrinath, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Prayaga, and Kashi where millions of pilgrims assemble for taking religious bath. At *Prayaga* on national bathing festival (Kumbha) a sea of humanity can be seen bathing in the Ganga waters. Table-1 shows tens of thousands of visitors, of them 80 per cent are pilgrims. This not only pollutes water but creates the problem of managing mass-pilgrims.

Let us have a close look at the Himalayan Pilgrimage. Being considered as the most ancient art of travel, it was unique in planning, system-based and much closer to today's much talked about concept of 'sustainability'. It emphasizes the fact that 'unless a society is sustainable, travelism cannot be sustainable' (Singh, 2017). Saints and seers had native intelligence, spiritual power and deep understanding of ecosystems. Indefatigable traveller as they were, they did a close reconnaissance of the Himalayan weak or resilient spaces that would endure for ages and can withstand natural shocks such as seismic threats endemic to these regions of beauty. Since the Himalayas were far off from the human settlement, only few could visit the place. Those who could reach there were bound by the rigid Hindu code. It may be noted in passing that trespassers of the environmental code may walk away with impunity but breaching religious code of conduct would wrong the entire *yatra* and its merits (*Moksha*).



**Table-1. Numbers of Tourists visiting Badrinath (2006-2016)**

Years	No. of pilgrims
2006	741256
2007	901262
2008	911333
2009	916925
2010	921950
2011	981000
2012	985998
2013	497744
2014	180000
2015	359146
2016	624745

**Source:** www.badrikedar.org

Pilgrim-fathers marked a four spiritual *Dhama* circuit along with Badrinath at the apex (Vishnu Puranas 5.24, 6). This spiritual zone was named *Badri ka Ashram*, locally called *Gandhmadan* (Hindu Elesium).

Badrinath Tirtha was considered supreme with three more Dhamas namely Dwarika, Rameshwarm and Puri as satellites. Similarly, Kedarenath has five *kedars*. Though Badrinath (Raj Badree) must be visited to earn full merits of the *yatra*, but only on the last leg of the *yatra*. The Hindu *Tirtha* itinerary followed a circulatory mechanism in clock wise order so that a pilgrim has the reward of long and cumbersome journey. He has been ordained to pay his obeisance to all these holy places, then he is entitled to 'cross the ford'. A pilgrim had to be clean from within and without. He should be righteous, humble and honest. Violation of Hindu code would deprive the pilgrim of heavenly joys.

### **Badrinath: The Pilgrim's Highway**

The gifted makers of *Tirtha* were forward-looking people in creating 300 km long *Tirtha*-route from Rishikesh to Badrinath. They placed *chattis* (temporary shelter) after tracking 6-8 km a day where the pilgrims were provided sleeping spaces and given food provisions. Unique to this programme was the introduction of *Panda-system*. *Pandas* were picked from local people, trained in elementary pilgrim services. He would explain code of conduct to pilgrims, such as a pilgrim shall not cut trees, shall not pluck flowers, shall respect the environment, shall not disturb wildlife, should be a vegetarian and taken no intoxicants (Kalyan Tirthank, in Hindi, volume31). The *pandas* were superb in native hospitality and meticulous in keeping visitors' records, such as the visitors' contact, days of stay, money spent or borrowed. Rishikesh had a pilgrim's bank that facilitated money transaction for pilgrims. With the modern technological mechanism, the *panda system* has vanished altogether from the Himalayan pilgrimage.

Access to the beauty is critical. This happened with the construction of Badrinath road that opened way to vehicular traffic. This highway made Badrinath accessible, ignoring the five prayagas. A metalled road was considered essential for the development of this socio-economic backwardness of the region. It introduced new mobility to people, goods and services. Furthermore, it opened doors for tourism. Road to high Himalayas was also important on defensive measure after the Sino-Indian clash in 1962. Road network generally boosted the economy, but the pilgrim economy pitted against the tourist economy which was gradually penetrating into the system.

One can imagine the challenge of sighting a *tirtha* in the primitive environment. Since the rivers Ganga and Yamuna were most sacred, their sources and neighbourhood were awesome and solitaire in naturalness; the waters were pure; virgin place and untrammelled by humans. Tranquil environment at the head of these rivers were considered most holy. The Alaknanda had clusters of *tirthas*, particularly as the junctions such as *Deva Prayag*, *Nand Prayag*, *Karana Prayag*, and *Rudra Prayag*. All these places of beauty were declared Tirthas sites. The old yatra route ran parallel to the Ganga, leading to the supreme Tirtha – Badrinath.

### Literature Review

Thus far, we were attempting to collect threads to knit a yarn for understanding the evolution of the Tirtha concept. Since history is mute about the facts that happened several thousand years ago, most of the stories have been weaned out of oral history, anecdotes, folklore and videos. Eck's (1981) chapter on *Tirthas of India* was immensely useful. The tradition of pilgrimage is still alive despite the assault of modernity. One can witness the crowd of devotees moving to the Tirtha shouting loudly '*Bam Bhole*' carrying their bare belongings on their shoulder. Austerity is their core trait, they are still seen moving bare-footed, and half-fed, because pilgrimages are panceas to atone your sin (Eck, 1981). The harder you suffer, the better would be divine reward. On the *Ghats* of Ganga, on the great bath (Kumbha), one can see India in its microcosm. There are strong elements of resilience in the institution of Tirthyatra that it outlives mortality. Much of the precious material exists in *Rig Veda*, *Skand Puranas*, *Manusmriti* but these are not easily accessible. However, this shortcoming was compensated by a very exhaustive chapter by Eck. Kaur's (1985) research, Himalayan Pilgrimage is scientific account. Most interesting work was *Ghumakkar Shastra* by Rahul Shankaratayan. A wealth of information was found in a special issue of Hindi magazine *Kalyan Tirthank* by Geeta Press, anecdotal and folklorish narratives were assembled from the pandas of Badrinath. Bernham (1990) provided more information on the sacredness of mountains.

The scene changes as we enter into the post-industrial era that witnessed a different kind of traveller called 'tourist' who was seeking pleasure, had a quest to know the *Other*, discovering some newness and novelty; loved consumerism; attitudinally ostentatious; cared little for ethics, least interested in the environment. Those who were *for* tourism, named it 'secular pilgrim' (Margry, 2015, p.5). There is a wide wedge between a tourist and a pilgrim. The former is free from all constraints – "do as one pleases, eat and spend money as he likes" (Krippendorff, 1987, p. 33). On the contrary a pilgrim was found simple, frugal and pious (Cohen, 1979). Eck (1981) believes that a pilgrim is *Tirthyatri* – a separate class of traveller!!

Indian *Tirtha* crossing in sacred geography found in history of religion 20(4), page 323-340. Not less informative was the special issue of *Kalyan* Vol. 31. It has now appeared in book form. For conceptual framework Bhardwaj (1973) was helpful. Of all the books, Kaur (1985) was mine of information. It was very close to our theme. Amongst the research journals *Tourism Recreation Research*, *Journal of Heritage Tourism* and *Annals of Tourism Research* (special

issue) provided thematical approach. Among the most valuable books was *Tourism, Religion and Spirituality* (Timothy and Olsen, 2006). Recently, Richard Butler and Wantanee Suntikul (2018) have come out with a well- documented book on tourism and religion which has many useful references.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

Despite years of debate and discussion some scholars still hold that a pilgrim should not have been in the category of a tourist. Many countries outside of UNWTO subscribe to this fact. To illustrate this idea, we have selected the case of Himalayan Hindu pilgrimage that are famously known for developing the art of travel in the past ages. The Himalayan scholars identified fascinating sites. Saints and sages were great travellers. Incredible, as it seems, they walked bare foot on ice and created niches for their expression of thoughts. It is a region in Garhwal where Vedvyas composed 4 *Vedas* and *Mahabharata*. Some of the battles scenes of the epic are located here. Manu the first Hindu lawgiver lived here and wrote *Manusmiriti*.

Their pathways overtime developed into long pilgrim routes. These pilgrimage routes were cautiously carved from Rishi Kesh to Gao-mukh, a 300-km long route. The guiding motto of a pilgrim was “harder you suffer, the better would be the divine gain”. This shows that a tourist is an antithesis of a pilgrim. In ancient days pilgrims treaded from Kerala to Badrinath or Kedarnath on the higher Himalaya.

Our forefathers, saints and sages were highly knowledgeable scholars. They had a reconnaissance of spectacular attractions and marked them for the development. The best sight for religious obligations and sacrament was called *dhama*. Pilgrim routes were carved after studying resilience of the ecosystem to ensure sustainability. The religious resort (dhama) were set up amidst nature’s excellences, such as, Yamnotri, Gangotri and their tributaries. All routes had to follow faithfully the code of conduct, for example, route to Badrinath was punctuated by *Chattis*. In his religious, diktat Adi Shankracharya laid down that every Hindu must visit the four dhamas during his lifetime. Badrinath among them was supreme as it paves the way to heaven.

Thus, a pilgrim followed the religious code of conduct faithfully and rigidly. Similarly, it was coded that no one shall overstay at Badrinath more than 48 hours otherwise his journey would be foiled. Shankracharya had the premonition that in times to come more people shall visit these *dhamas*, causing injury to the cultural/natural capital of the Himalaya. These *dhamas* are now full of the pilgrims. On an average 6 to 9 lakh visitors could be seen during the summer. It was given that no animal would be killed. This applied even to the king of the place. The waters of the Ganga were considered pure. Pilgrim take away waters in in bottles back home.

Gradually marked changes could be seen in variation and alteration of goods and services. Mountain communities are highly attached to their land hence the process of transformation was slow. Here lies the difference between change and transformation.

The aforesaid discussion brings home one point clearly that a pilgrim is a pilgrim and a tourist is a tourist and at occasion they can exchange characters, for example, a pilgrim to Badrinath may take a route to Mana, the *Bhotia* Village, located in the north of Badrinath. It is emphasized that living in this globalized world change is inevitable. To resist transformation, revitalization movement is considered necessary. Revitalization gives new life or vigour to the culture.

It is time that stakeholders of the temple committee with local community and government should launch revitalization process and protect that has remained as vestiges. This movement should start with young community members.

In Hinduism tirtha is a sacred place connected to holy waters, 'river ford'. It is also associated with sacred mountains, residence of a sage, or place made sacred by the presence of a saint. Considering on a broader scale, the *tirtha yatra* or pilgrimage is journey in pursuit of some moral or spiritual significance – journey to a shrine.

It is therefore difficult to define a tourist from a traveller – a traveller from a visitor, a visitor from an excursionist and a tourist from a pilgrim. Travel is a common factor in all these terms. It is advisable to remove this confusion. For a non-tourism student these terms are synonymous. Mark the paradox that all travellers are tourists, but all tourists are not travellers (Singh, 2015). Some movement is necessary to qualify for a tourist (Wall & Mathieson, 2006).

So often the terms travel and tourism are used in tandem, as synonyms. A lot of debate and discussions have taken place, yet the problem remains unresolved.

Surprisingly, the definition of a tourist also holds good for different personalities as discussed above. Nations were also disagreed on excursionist having the same definition except that s/he has to stay 24 hours in the country visited. Fretching (1976: 59) focused on three points to make the definition precise – unambiguity facilitated measurement and follows established usage very closely. Since then definition created refinement for precision.

Since a pilgrim is not a dollar spinner, nor is he a high spender, he is conveniently ignored. He is often clubbed with domestic tourists. There is a dire need of UNWTO to express concern on this issue. It is still arguable that a pilgrim is markedly different and unlike of a tourist – if a visitor is categorized as a tourist, a pilgrim should be given a respectable category. We suggest '*Tirth-yatri*' will be most appropriate though it sounds native and vernacular. It sounds better than pilgrim, tourist, quasi-tourist, half tourist or domestic tourist. History records that *Tirtha-yatra* represents the glory of Indian culture which must be preserved and revitalized if possible.

The Alaknanda route will be alive in use after its physical and spiritual renewal. This is an age of wellness where people take long walks for their physical fitness. Part of this pilgrim route can be developed for yoga training centres. All around Rishikesh the green environment offers this opportunity. Since Uttarakhand is now an independent state, tourism shall flourish. Ideal would be that as far as possible it should be *niche* tourism to compete neighbouring Himalayan states, particularly Himachal Pradesh. Lastly, the Alaknanda route which has a history of several thousand years should be designated as a national heritage site.

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**DIVERSIFICATION INTO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION  
IN RURAL AREAS: A CASE STUDY FROM DANANG, VIETNAM**

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**Abstract:** Tourism has been a focus of diversification for a considerable period of time and widely promoted as a supporting alternative for local economy in response to increasing agriculture values in rural areas. Rural tourism is likely to become a powerful force of change in the economy restructuring in Viet Nam. Research on diversification into tourism development and the significant roles of the local involvement and its community participation in rural tourism development in Central Viet Nam, a developing country, should be fully explored and assessed. This paper describes the diversification and development of this form of rural community-based tourism on the outskirts of Danang city, Hoa Vang rural district, based on 26 informants, highlighting the nature of the rural diversification, the background of rural community's participation/involvement in tourism diversification. In identifying this the paper contributes to a literature on how rural tourism products evolve in developing countries, for not only deeply understand and firmly grasp government' policies in building new-style rural areas, promoting rural residents' involvement, diversifying resources sustainably for new rural construction associated with agricultural structuring but in retaining rurally cultural patterns of life and raising awareness of the commercial and social values of traditions.

**Keywords:** Rural tourism, diversification, community participation, sustainable development, Vietnam

## **Introduction**

Tourism has been placed among the largest industries in the world so far and has the potential to contribute to sustainable rural development which is well recognized, particularly by job creating, including employment for rural women and marginalized groups, creating better opportunities for local people to gain larger and more balanced benefits from tourism development taking place in their localities (Tosun, C; 2000). Tourism has also been recognized for its ability to bring development to rural areas (Sharpley & Sharpley, 2004; Sharpley; R, 2006). Tourism development has affected the community in certain ways as it can be a source of conflicts and can potentially harm the environment as well as create adverse impacts on local values and on the increasing cost of living (Nunkoo; R & Ramkissoon; H, 2009) that seems vulnerable to these cultural, social, and environmental aspects. There is growing evidence that many tourism destinations are now reaching a stage of maturity which produces conflicts thus, communities are reacting negatively and even resisting further or continued development (Reid, D. G., & Sindiga, I. 1999). In particular, approach to rural community within tourism development has taken the concept of sustainable tourism that has emerged based on above aspects with the aim of reducing the negative effects of tourism activities and has become almost universally accepted as a desirable and politically appropriate approach to rural tourism development (Atun, R. et al; 2018).

There is a widespread recognition of the need to diversify the tourism product and develop alternative forms of tourism in rural tourism development in Viet Nam. The agriculture industry is the most important activity, by employment, in almost all of Viet Nam's rural areas, and much of rural life is carried on around agriculture. The development of rural tourism has been promoted as a supporting alternative and adding agriculture values for the local economy. In

addition, the core of the charm of rural tourism in Vietnam is agriculture production, rural lifestyles/values and culinary art from the participation of local's communities of rural areas.

Key research questions have been debated on questions regarding rural tourism diversification and community participation, this research mainly aims at “what types of diversification in rural areas”, the nature of awareness and preparedness of the rural community concerning the development of rural tourism diversification in their area, “how much participation/involvement of community or level of community participation at certain destination can have in the rural tourism development process sustainably? Is there a way that this situation can be rectified so that the needs and power of citizens and residents in a rural community can be satisfied and every-day life not diminished? These questions seem to be a research gap and have not been insightfully addressed in research on rural tourism in rural areas within the urbanization processes in rural areas in Vietnam Central. This paper presents the results of a qualitative study carried out among 26 informants of Hoa Vang, a rural district located in Danang city, Vietnam. The research on which this paper is based was interested in contributing knowledge towards an understanding of CBT development, community involvement in rural areas in Central Vietnam in general.

## **Literature Review**

The term diversification (from the Latin *diversus*, “different”, and *facio*, “to make”) means ‘simultaneous change and development of activities that are not connected with the company’s core businesses. Translated from the English diversification, from *diverse*, means ‘different (...) diversity; difference (...), a business technique (...) used to better serve the customers’ heterogenic cultures. Diversification includes enlargement of the scope of products, distribution of financial capital among different persons, penetration of banks through investments, development of new industries, etc. Diversification is also usually associated with changes to the characteristics of the company’s product, the company or the market, (...) development of new products that represent (...) a change in the structure of the product market (...) (Ansoff, I; 2010; p. 113). For the purposes of this paper, the term diversification into rural tourism development is a broad one and covers much more than developing in agriculture, forestry and fishery as rural development is a multi-dimensional concept that primarily connotes a phenomenon of positive change taking place in the rural areas (Singh 1999).

On the other hand, rural tourism as a diversification of rural economy provides opportunities for expanding rural economic activities, generates an influx of money from urban areas and from abroad, and maintains the service base in the region (Bojnec, S; 2013). Rural tourism is situated on the diversification of rural territories with natural and cultural attractions such beautiful lakes, mountainous, natural forestry parks and similar, whereas rural tourism is supplied by different profit enterprises and non-profit oriented organizations in rural community and rural areas. More rural than farm diversification is important for rural tourism development where important is concentration of tourist suppliers, tourist products and services and attractions that create positive beneficial externalities for rural tourist destination and for a single supplier. In particular, rural tourism diversification by its very nature draws outside capital into the local rural community which can lead to positive economic benefits that may be the essential attributes for the survival of a rural community undergoing economic transition (Hjalager, A. M; 1996) and as a process leading to sustainable improvement in the quality of life of the rural people, especially the poor” and a “communal” type of lifestyle.

Salazar (2012) has noted that the concept of ‘community’ can present a highly contested debate when applied to tourism, rural development and involvement of local residents, owing to its vague meaning. For example, the concept has been criticized for its presumed assumption that

communities are homogeneous entities with clear delineations and with in-built ability to reach consensus (Smit 1990). However, it has been argued that communities can represent very complex and heterogeneous structures wrought with deep rooted issues of conflict, power and power relations (Reed 1997). Taylor (1995) also notes that communities in developing countries may have different lenses through which they view the boundaries of their own sense of community. Literature addressing the importance of community in tourism planning and related activities continued to grow throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, participation is understood as 'not only about achieving the more efficient and more equitable distribution of material resources: it is also about the sharing of knowledge and the transformation of the process of learning itself in the service of people's self-development (Connell, D; 1997, p 250). Midgley (1986) did research on stages in the emergence of a participatory tourism development approach in the developing countries has indicated participation that "requires the voluntary and democratic involvement of people in (a) contributing to the development effort (b) sharing equitably in the benefits derived there from and (c) decision-making in respect of setting goals, formulating policies and planning and implementing economic and social development programs" (Midgley, 1986, p. 25).

Community participation which is a bottom-up approach by which communities are actively involved in rural tourism projects to solve their own problems, has been touted by various stakeholders as a potent approach to sustainable tourism development since it ensures greater conservation of natural, rural and cultural resources, empowers host communities and improves their socio-economic well-being. As such, neither a function of government alone, nor a single powerful rural tourism organisation can develop a successful tourism destination; instead, it is recognised that in tourism destination planning, decision-making and management, stakeholders must collaborate and participate (Bornhorst, Brent, & Sheehan, 2010). Within a tourism destination research, stakeholders can include: the government (international, national, regional and local); government departments with links to tourism; international, national, regional and local tourism organisations; tourism developers and entrepreneurs, tourism industry operators; non-tourism business practitioners, and the community including local community groups, indigenous people's groups and local residents (Saito, H., & Ruhanen, L; 2017). The local community as a majority, areas has been involved in the planning, development and management of the tourism destination areas (Pawson, S., D'Arcy, P., & Richardson, S; 2017). Viljoen & Tlabela (2006) posit that the strategy of using rural tourism to diversify underdeveloped areas arise out of the insufficiency of agricultural livelihoods and the attendant need to search for new sources of income and economic opportunity. As such, it is always important to understand the context within which tourism in the rural areas is presented as a diversification strategy (Mitchell & Ashley 2010) and to know if tourism is introduced to diversify the national or local economy with no specific efforts to make it benefit the local communities within which it develops; or diversification of the tourism product is meant to expand the profitability of tourism industry with local communities tagged in for populist purposes; or whether tourism diversification aims to meaningfully engage the local communities for their own benefit ahead of the interests of the wider tourism industry and national economy.

### **Study Area, Research Materials and Methods**

Hoa Vang is the only rural district of Da Nang city in the South Central Coast Vang is also the only rural district of Danang city. Da Nang city is in a strategic position as the middle of the country, it borders Thua Thien Hue province to the North, Quang Nam province to the West and the East Sea to the East. The city is 759 km away from Ha Noi to the North and 964km away from Ho Chi Minh city to the South. Da Nang is the largest transportation local point in



the Central Region in terms of railways, waterways, roads (National Highway 1A, 14B), and international air routes.

Agriculture, Forestry, Fishery, Trade and Services are the ones local people in Hoa Vang district are mainly engaged in terms of livestock breeding in small scale, cultivation of rice maize, potato, cassava, etc. This district is now building on its achievements in new rural development to boost economic growth and improve people's living conditions and it is one of the first rural districts in Vietnam to achieve the new rural development program. Additionally, considering economic development, a spearhead target, Hoa Vang has focused on restructuring, industrializing, and modernising agricultural and rural areas and prioritizing high-tech, safe, and clean agricultural products of high economic value.

Additionally, some types of tourism activities offered are typified outdoor recreational activities generally with famous attractions like Ba Na Hills, Than Tai Mountains, hot water springs; rural & ecotourism; and recently since 2018, model of rural community-based eco-tourism has been developed, including those related to the appreciation of nature and forestry and agriculture (e.g., hot spring and hill paradise, orchard tours, festivals and traditions of Co Tu ethnic minority group), educational activities (e.g., school tours, traditional trade villages) while agri-tourism is in the plan of the government to combine agriculture and tourism. Within 20 kilometres far from Da Nang city, eco-rural tourism activities, the striking points of this rural area, create attractive tourist destinations that engender visitors' experiences of a "simpler" time of which eco community-based tourism is now expected and likely to be the focus to become a key component for the local rural livelihood improvement. It has been found that visitors want to escape the hustle of city life and connect with natural and cultural traditional ones to enjoy a rich leisure experience that is often perceived as being "authentic". They want to learn, connect with meaning, and meet genuine people engaged in a rural/agricultural lifestyle (Kline et al, 2007). Hence, as in this study area, Hoa Vang rural areas provided products unique to a district as evidenced in Figures One



**Figure 1: Advertising tourism activities offered at Hoa Vang district, Danang city**

Past studies carried out by tourism researchers on rural community-based tourism have often used positivistic methodologies and quantitative approaches. This is not surprising given that tourism in general has been largely dominated by quantitative research designs and methods, and a fondness for surveys (Ballentyne, Packer & Axelsen, 2009). However, in considering appropriate research methodologies, it was apparent from the outset that quantitative, reductionist types of approaches do not reveal the complex attitudes, values and behaviours of those farm families who elect to diversify in a developing country such as Vietnam (Ainley, Phelan & Kline, 2011, Yin 2002).

A case study approach was adopted as being appropriate in situations where the researcher has little or no control over a contemporary set of events (Yin, 2002) and equally is pertinent where little is known about a subject and hence it is not possible to develop hypotheses for testing

(Ryan, 2012). As is not uncommon, once the data had been collected and analysis commenced other elements not previously considered emerged as possessing importance. Consequently, local knowledge and an ability to re-contact informants proved useful, and the additional data relating to educational background of the informants became part of the analysis reported in this paper. It should also be stated that currently the Vietnamese tourism authorities are specifically targeting the development of rural tourism as a means of combatting poverty (UNWTO, 2017a, VNAT, 2016) and in their efforts have identified the importance of community-based tourism. This present research therefore adopted a qualitative method based on in-depth interviews with providers/rural households while adopting a community approach, meaning that rural community-based tourism was considered within its local economic/social/environmental context. The approach was centered on a phenomenographic, or perhaps more correctly a quasi-phenomenographic approach. This is consistent with prior research into the nature of agri-tourism and community-based experiences of tourists and providers/farmers (for example, Ainley & Kline, 2014).

The more formal part of the study was to capture the lived experiences of the local community (Truong, Hall & Garry 2014), officials and leaders about rural community-based tourism diversification Hoa Vang district. In addition, published and unpublished secondary material sources were used. Total of 26 were carried out with members of communes, the researcher visited potential participants at their homesteads/ shops/restaurants and extended the invitations to any individuals fitting the set criterion at the time while others were met while taking a walk around the villages/communes who have taken part in tourism activities from tourism product diversification at their areas (mainly food & beverage services, tour guide festival supporters, villages' crafters ..) and have not run directly any tourism initiatives by their own. The choice of gathering participants together was to enable a flexible and relaxed environment where rich information could be shared through interactions and exchanges with others and the researcher has observed over time these communes often and find it easy to open up about their views and opinions and to enhance the quality of information gathered. The researcher used a guide comprising a list of themes to be discussed. A total of six key interviews were also conducted that included; tourism department's heads, District Office Development, commune's board chairpersons and tourism experts. These individuals were selected as key informants on the basis that they were presumed to be involved in the daily operations of tourism activities here and, therefore, to possess rich knowledge of the conditions of the rural community-based tourism development and diversification process.

## **Key Findings and Discussion**

### **Profile of Respondents**

The first finding emerged when asking about informants' socio-demographics. The majority of these informants (51%) have farming background in agriculture, forestry and fishing and their family members tend to shift and would like to work on tourism and service industry like food & beverage, transport, travel agency, small family businesses. Others (38%) are still keen on farming and agriculture development and tend to advance technology application in agriculture within the diversification activities. Two main generational distinction can be observed where the parents are the "traditional working farmer generation" and the next generations is likely to change to the "high – tech agriculture and business generation" and "service business" that also wish to retain the farm land located in a rural setting. Further similar themes from interviews indicated that farmers/rural locals are optimistic with the government' policies on diversification and "building new-style rural area program" in which rural residents have supports in healthcare and education. And the improved infrastructure may encourage more investment in high-tech farming and tourism into their rural areas and may increase their

livelihoods. They have these positive beliefs (a) residents/households are seemingly more involved in/aware of direct interactions/activities with commune's leaders on new-style rural area program and diversification, (b) are better able to understand the value of the rural resources/ farm land and a need for its protection which (c) they perceive as a new economy restructuring/development and diversification into tourism in their rural living areas and their livelihoods.

<b>Demographic of agri-tourism providers (N=26)</b>		<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	14	
	Female	12	
<b>Education</b>	Post-graduate	2	
	Degree/bachelor	8	
	High school graduate	10	
	Secondary and below	6	
<b>Sources of Household income</b>	Agriculture and Forestry/ Farming/fishing	14	
	Administration	3	
	Small business/service providers	6	
	Industrial workers	3	
	Others	2	
	Others	6	
<b>Age</b>	< 18 -25 years old	2	
	26-35	4	
	36-45	10	
	46-55	8	
	56-65	3	
	> 65 years old	0	
<b>Vulnerable households</b>	Poor households	0	
	Social Policy families	6	
	Households with disabled persons	3	
	Women headed households	10	

**Table 1. Socio-Demographics of the Respondents**

In terms of education, the majority of participants were high school graduates (40%) and approximately 38% of the informants had completed tertiary education mainly majoring in construction and vocational education. Data also showed that women headed households (40%) and men tend to join high-tech farming while women are likely to start small service business (open small shops, food & beverage). The typical feature is that there are nearly 34% of the informants are social policy families and households with disabled persons that they get annual supports from the government to prevent them from poor households. They tend to

increase the livelihoods thanks to the diversification of farming and off-farm income (part-time jobs/outsources at construction sites/ service industry). Nonetheless, it was stated by over half of the participants that the supports of government towards social policy families and household with disabled persons were an additional income and support for the family; though the amount was not too much but it was the encouragement and the priorities for them to make an ends meet and in business they have done or have plans to do in near future from different aspects that include education, healthcare and in farming.

It is interesting that, data showed that 75% of informants perceive how high demands in tourism is in their rural areas but they admit that they are not aware of how to get involved in tourism activities happening in their areas to see how benefits/advantages the tourism may bring although they are living nearby the famous tourists attractions.

Additionally, Hoa Vang district in Da Nang is one of 41 districts nationwide that have received the Prime Minister's certificate recognising it as a new-style rural area ahead of schedule. Hoa Vang was remarkably improved thanks to the national new rural development program. Since the end of last 2016, its poverty rate had fallen to just 2.3%. All of its communes have met all criteria for quality of education, healthcare, and culture and all rural residents are now covered by health insurance. Additionally, considering economic development, a spearhead target, Hoa Vang has focused on restructuring, industrializing, and modernising agricultural and rural areas and prioritizing high-tech, safe, and clean agricultural products of high economic value. Over the past years, the city has issued many specific policies on poverty reduction, creating favourable conditions for local businesses, armed forces, branches and authorities to mobilize all resources to support the poor directly. Thousands of local households contributed land, money, and labour to build clinics and roads and expand schools. Dang Phu Hanh, Vice chairman of the Hoa Vang district People's Committee, said: "There are a number of role models for new rural development in the community," and according to the Hoa Vang district Office of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, thousands of local people have benefitted and succeeded in escaping poverty.

The community awareness and preparedness for new-style rural development programs is enhanced and effective when agriculture practices are improved. As the results, about 11 communes have each typical agricultural product at each commune, contributing to economic development in the districts and local livelihoods improvement (Annual Report from Hoa Vang's People committee, 2019). The new-style rural area programs also encounter the diversification into tourism.

#### **Diversification into Rural Community-Based Tourism: Community Participation /Awareness and Preparedness**

Regarding the diversification into tourism, the rural community-based tourism is enhanced but having challenges, given the inherent lack of awareness among rural communities with no prior experience with tourism development towards the locals in Hoa Vang.

*"We appreciate the government policies in building new-style rural area program that improve our living standards in term of health care, education and livelihood improvements. We are aware of the demands of tourism development but we have no knowledge or experience in tourism industry at all ..... capital and the lands is also our concern..."*

*Other comments: "... Our district and communes look much better with large roads and lightings... we see many tourist sites have been developed from our natural potentials like hot springs, beautiful hills and amazing river.... but we wonder and we are not fully aware of the*

*meaning of rural community –based tourism. .... How can we get supports and to get involved in tourism industry in our commune and district....and get/see benefits when participating in community-based tourism..*

*Other comments: We are living in this beautiful rural area, but we seem not to have chances to visit famous tourist site located here/our area which is widely advertised on the Internet as we have to buy tickets to get to this site, too because this tourist site is invested by the certain Groups..... And we heard about community-based tourism development which is good, and we like to get involved here but we are not fully aware of our roles in tourism diversification and how ...*

It seems that the locals/communities lack information and awareness of tourism development and diversification. The participation of people in rural community-based tourism is still reluctant and passive. Local people are mainly involved in stages of knowing (informing) while the stage of discussing, being consulting or initially participating in implementation management activities is not fully aware. Findings reveals that it is necessary to attract and improve the quality of people's participation in tourism diversification in order to ensure the legitimate rights and interests of the people and to improve rural life quality toward sustainability. In particular, the community seems not to have full awareness and preparation on the context specific constraints that could militate against future growth of the project venture and not participate meaningfully in both the planning and implementation of tourism activities. With particular reference to the community-based approach, it is usually hoped that communities would be able to determine the nature and size of rural tourism development within their own locale (Campbell 1999). Rural community-based tourism development is that the interests of the local communities should be placed at the centre of its planning process (Ying & Zhou 2007). The local community expects the development of tourism; expand and create job opportunities for the local youth; generate income to be used in starting up other businesses as well as investments in infrastructural development.

Tourism is considered an alternative one for the local rural livelihood improvement. In some respects, rural tourism contributes positively to the innovation of the tourist product since its small scale, 'green' issues and special facilities differentiate the product from others. But the unleashing of real potential is hampered by the fact that farmers tend to give priority to traditional agriculture/forestry and by the fact that industrialized agriculture is not easily combined with the commodifying of agricultural traditions for tourism.

*“We have some concerns about the lands, livelihood assets and forestry resources as we both want to keep the lands for agricultural production in and also for tourism development/activities. We have unique traditional values here of the farmer and rural lifestyles in a rural surroundings/forestry and nice locals with the diversity of ethnic groups... We hope there is a balance for sustainable development”.*

Livelihoods often occur in vulnerability contexts (e.g. shocks from the economy, land loss, health, natural disasters, pests, conflicts; trends of the population, resources, technology, government action; seasonality of price fluctuations, production, and employment opportunities). The livelihood assets are both the centre and the starting point of each individual, household, or community. They must access these assets at a certain level. These assets will change through their interactions with the legal, policy, institutional and administrative environments. These environments will determine the people's livelihood strategy and generate livelihood outcomes (Kollmair et al., 2002). The challenges and concerns for long-term and sustainable development also identified included; poor income and employment creation; poor accessibility that has to encounter the local's livelihood towards

sustainability; Livelihood is a universal concern. Livelihood assets reflect the capacity for livelihood. Livelihood assets can increase or decrease. We need to pay attention to “livelihood assets” Although there is no data specifically on deforestation due to poor livelihoods, it is possible to see from the data above that most of these causes are related to livelihoods. For example, the conversion of forests and forested lands to agriculture or rubber plantations, shifting cultivation, and forest fires are all linked to livelihoods. Thus, it can be seen that improving livelihoods plays a crucial role in forest protection and development. Cooperative efforts in the field of tourism are hampered by the fact that the organizations have not been logically placed in the value chain.

## Conclusion

While the notion of diversification and rural community participation is not new in tourism studies, it continues to evolve and take forms not fully examined. For tourism to be meaningful in the process of rural development, local communities need to be involved in both the planning and implementation process (Murphy; 1985). Limitations at an operational level that may include the centralization of public management/ administration/government of tourism, as well as a lack of co-ordination or the lack of information among tourism developers, stakeholders with the local residents. Diversification into tourism in rural areas may be in the light of the notion that local and rural citizen participation must be accompanied by power redistribution in tourism development process and to explain the inherent evolutionary steps of this process. In particular, the local residents are actively involvement in process of planning, making decisions, performing and management of tourism activities in the rural areas. These points should be further identified, explored and solved in future research in rural tourism development in Vietnam. It concludes that formulating and implementing the participatory tourism development approach requires a total change in socio-political, legal, administrative and economic structure of many developing countries. This paper is an exploratory one for further analysis on the level/extent of participation among residents, the participation of the residents and consultation of community residents that can be recorded, measured and examined within two main processes of rural community participation: (a) involvement in the decision-making process and (b) by participation in the benefits of tourism for the rural sustainable tourism and diversification process/activities.

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