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**The Impact of Tourism on the Cultural Heritage of Bhaktapur Durbar Square:
Perspectives of Local Residents**

Master's Thesis, Spring 2024

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ABSTRACT

Bhaktapur Durbar Square, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Nepal has witnessed a notable growth of tourism over the past decades. This thesis investigates the significance of the cultural heritage of the site from the people's perspectives residing in the area, along with the importance to preserve them. The study also delves into the impacts caused by the growing tourism, and some sustainable practices implemented by the local community in the midst of such growing tourism. The research was conducted using qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and data analysis with six people living and owning business in the area. The increase in tourism has brought substantial economic benefits, including the creation of employment opportunities, the growth of small businesses, and the enhancement of local infrastructure, significantly contributing to the local economy and quality of life for residents. However, the rapid growth of tourism has also presented challenges, such as overcrowding, pollution, and cultural clashes. The findings highlight the need for a balanced approach that prioritizes cultural preservation alongside economic development. The local community has been implementing some sustainable tourism practices, including heritage conservation through eco-friendly methods, promoting responsible waste management, and encouraging authentic cultural experiences. These efforts reflect a commitment to preserving the cultural and historical significance of Bhaktapur Durbar Square while accommodating the growing interest of tourists. In conclusion, by focusing on sustainable tourism and prioritizing cultural heritage preservation, it is possible to achieve a harmonious balance between tourism growth and cultural conservation, safeguarding the historical and cultural value of Bhaktapur Durbar Square for future generations and enhancing the tourism experience.

Keywords: tourism growth, impacts of tourism, cultural and heritage tourism, preservation, sustainable tourism, community participation

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAU: Aalborg University

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

SAARC: South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme

UNESCO: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNWTO: United Nations World Tourism Organization

USA: United States of America

WHS: World Heritage Sites

WTTC: World Travel and Tourism Council

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The demand for cultural and heritage tourism has become a crucial segment of the global travel industry (Greg, 2000, p. 9). This type of tourism, which involves visiting cultural and historical sites, is one of the most prominent and rapidly expanding areas within the tourism sector. Heritage tourism, in particular, is witnessing a faster growth rate compared to other forms of tourism, especially in developing nations (Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009, p. 18). These heritage sites are considered valuable cultural, educational, recreational, and economic treasures, preserved and passed down from generation to generation, showcasing the rich legacy of past and present societies (Blessing Nonye, 2016).

According to the World Tourism Organization, 37% of international tourism is driven by cultural motivations, with an estimated annual growth rate of 15%. This surge in interest underscores the importance of cultural experiences in travel decisions and highlights the evolving nature of tourism. The growth of cultural and heritage tourism is a key element of the "new tourism," reflecting a shift towards more meaningful and immersive travel experiences (Greg, 2000, p. 9). This trend not only enhances the appreciation of cultural heritage but also supports the preservation of these invaluable sites for future generations. Nepal's rich historical and archaeological heritage makes it a significant destination for international tourists eager to explore its ancient culture and history. Among these, Bhaktapur stands out as a focal point for tourism development due to its cultural richness and mesmerizing heritage sites (Karki, 2007, p. 2). Since 1979, two of Bhaktapur's landmarks—the Changunarayan Temple and Bhaktapur Durbar Square—have been recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, underscoring their global significance (Pradhananga, 2020).

Bhaktapur, often referred to as the "City of Devotees," "the living heritage," and the "city of culture," is celebrated for its exquisite art, vibrant festivals, traditional dances, and the indigenous Newari community's lifestyle (BhaktapurWikitravel, 2022). This historic city preserves a unique blend of northern art and southern mythological philosophy, showcasing a rich tapestry of aged arts, architecture, and cultural traditions handed down through generations (Badal, 2020, p. 5). Tourism plays a pivotal role in Bhaktapur's economy, driving substantial revenue and creating a wide range of opportunities for the local population. The influx of tourists has not only spurred the creation of markets for traditional crafts but has also led to both direct and secondary employment opportunities. This economic stimulation, through the income and employment multiplier effect, highlights the significant impact of tourism on Bhaktapur's economic landscape (Shahi, 2012).

Heritage encompasses the treasured characteristics of a society, preserved and passed down consciously from generation to generation (Blessing Nonye, 2016). These cultural, educational, recreational, and economic treasures reflect the rich legacy of past and present societies. Local communities residing within or near heritage sites, often referred to as core communities, are integral to this preservation process. Their daily activities and rituals are closely linked to the local cultural heritage, fostering a profound sense of identity. This connection makes them essential stakeholders with an interest in sustaining the heritage's functions and meanings (Krishnamurthy, Roders, & Wesemael, 2020, p. 4).

In developing regions, particularly in South Asia, local communities often display significant resilience and capability, even when governmental support is limited. Despite facing various challenges, these communities have the potential to effect meaningful change. Their active participation in governance and management of local resources is crucial, as it promotes democratic principles and empowers citizens to contribute to decision-making processes (Lekakis, Shakya, & Kostakis, 2018). In the context of cultural heritage, community involvement not only helps to preserve cultural significance but also reinforces local identities through the continuous use of heritage sites in daily life (Krishnamurthy, Roders, & Wesemael, 2020, p. 4).

The importance of restoring and revitalizing both tangible and intangible heritage is particularly evident in places with UNESCO World Heritage Sites. These sites, which include entire towns and their cultures, are recognized for their Outstanding Universal Value and require careful preservation to maintain their historical and cultural significance. For instance, Bhaktapur is renowned as a "living heritage" or "museum," where local communities actively preserve cultural significance and reinforce their identities through the ongoing use of these heritage sites (Joshi, Twayana, & Rajbanshi, 2020, p. 16).

1.1 Sustainable tourism in World Heritage Sites

Sustainable development typically encompasses three broad principles: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, and social sustainability (Basiago, 1998). These principles are applicable to World Heritage Sites (WHS) for guiding sustainable tourism development (Pirlone, 2017). Sustainable tourism is defined as tourism that considers the current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005).

Environmental sustainability involves protecting biodiversity, geodiversity, and ecosystem integrity to conserve natural heritage and maintain essential ecological processes. Economic sustainability seeks to provide economic benefits for all stakeholders, ensuring stable employment and income for local communities to alleviate poverty. Social sustainability involves economic growth constrained by the requirements for equity, empowerment, cultural identity, and institutional stability. However, the main challenge for sustainable tourism is to balance the environmental, economic, and inclusive social dimensions of sustainable development over time (Bramwell, 1993).

The adoption of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage by UNESCO in 1972 marked a significant effort to promote the identification, protection, and sustainable development of cultural and natural heritage sites worldwide. The WHS are intended to be of outstanding universal value and contribute to sustainable development by preserving cultural and natural properties for future generations. The WHS brand, which complies with UNESCO's standard certification of place quality, helps attract international tourists and enhances the site's recognition as an iconic destination (King, 2014; Yang, 2010).

WHS provide several benefits, including revenue generation, job creation, water supply, and food security. The economic value derived from WHS often exceeds direct monetary benefits, thus contributing to the well-being of local, national, and global communities (Kim, 2007). However, there are critical issues challenging the sustainable development of WHS. Management agencies have been criticized for underutilizing the World Heritage brand, which impedes recognition of its importance by visitors and local communities (King, 2014). Raising awareness and educating people about WHS are fundamental to achieving sustainable development, yet heritage has long been absent from mainstream sustainability debates despite its significance (Drost, 1996).

1.2 Background of the study

Tourism, increasingly acknowledged as a key economic driver, has become a vital contributor to development in many regions. It generates 10% of global employment and accounts for 10.4% of the world's GDP (WTTC, 2018). By promoting tourism, destinations can attract regional investment, create commercial opportunities, and support ancillary industries (Lin,

2015). For instance, tourism often leads to improved local infrastructure and amenities, which in turn enhance healthcare, education, job opportunities, and income levels (Zaei, 2013).

In the least developed countries, tourism can significantly aid poverty reduction by providing employment opportunities for unskilled laborers in remote areas (Dillimono, 2015). Moreover, tourism development in developing countries often benefits the social fabric of host communities. Sociocultural advantages include a stronger community identity, better engagement with local environments, and increased social capital due to an influx of tourists (Ramos et al., 2016). For example, in Indonesia, tourism has positively influenced local residents' attitudes towards diversity, improved their understanding of different cultures, and promoted healthier lifestyles (Pramanik, 2018).

However, the rapid growth of tourism can also have detrimental effects on developing countries, which have gathered growing scholarly attention (Piuchan, 2018). One major concern is the potential erosion of local culture and traditional values due to acculturation and development processes (Kabote, 2015). This impact is notably observed in the dynamics of seniority and relationships within families and communities (Sroypetch, 2016). Changes in values or behavior can threaten indigenous identities and disrupt the fabric of community life, family relationships, traditional lifestyles, ceremonies, and morality (Ghaderi, 2013). For instance, in Koh Samui, Thailand, tourism had some negative sociocultural impacts like demographic shifts, increased poverty, the growth of slums, higher crime rates, and issues such as drug abuse, pornography, prostitution, and the spread of HIV/AIDS (Soontayatron, 2010). Additionally, tourism can increase income disparities, leading to conflicts and dissatisfaction between those who benefit from tourism and those who do not (Ramchander, 2003).

1.3 Tourism growth in Bhaktapur

According to the statistics extracted from MyRepublica (2023), *the inflow of tourists to Bhaktapur has witnessed a substantial rise, with a notable increase in the last fiscal year 2022/23, where a total of 167,652 foreign tourists explored Bhaktapur. Comparing the data of fiscal year 2022/23 with the preceding fiscal year (2021/22), there was a remarkable surge of 114,092 more tourists, with a total of 53,560 visitors to Bhaktapur in 2021/22.*

The statistics extracted above emphasise a significant flow of tourist inflow to Bhaktapur, particularly evident in the fiscal year 2022/23. The remarkable increase of 114,092 tourists

compared to the preceding fiscal year showcases the growing appeal of Bhaktapur as a tourist destination.

Breaking down the figures for the latest fiscal year, 86,334 tourists arrived from non-SAARC countries, while 81,318 tourists came from SAARC countries and China. The tourism fees collected during this period amounted to over 184 million NRs. Notably, non-SAARC tourists contributed more significantly, with over 143.4 million NRs in fees, compared to 46 million NRs collected from tourists originating from SAARC countries and China. In contrast, fiscal year 2021/22 saw a lower tourism fee collection of more than 48.9 million NRs, while the municipality experienced a boost in revenue in the fiscal year 2022/23, reaching 133.1 million NRs from tourism fees alone.

The breakdown of tourist demographics further interprets the composition of visitors, with a substantial majority originating from non-SAARC countries. This differential in tourist origin is reflected in the differences in tourism fees collected, with non-SAARC tourists contributing significantly more compared to their counterparts from SAARC countries and China.



Fig 1: Tourists enjoying the cultural heritages in Bhaktapur Durbar Square (Retrieved from Internet)

Bhaktapur Municipality currently operates 14 counters, including Khauma, Sano Byasi, Thulo Byasi, Mahakali, Bekhal, Muldhoka, Kamalbinayak, Chyamasingh, Jagati, Bhelukhel, Ram Mandir, Barahi, Bansagopal, and Bharwacho, where it collects tourism fees from foreign tourists. Tourists attempting to enter Bhaktapur without paying the fee face immediate arrest and are required to settle the fee. Mayor Sunil Prajapati emphasized that the tourism service fee collected from visitors is the primary income source for the municipality. He highlighted

the crucial role these funds play in supporting essential community services, including heritage preservation, education, healthcare, sanitation, and various development initiatives within Bhaktapur.

Moreover, the substantial increase in tourism fees collected in the fiscal year 2022/23 sheds light on the economic significance of tourism for Bhaktapur Municipality. The revenue generated plays a pivotal role in funding essential community services and development initiatives, as emphasized by Mayor Sunil Prajapati. The implementation of tourism fee collection through 14 counters underlines the municipality's proactive approach in managing tourist arrivals and ensuring sustainable revenue generation. The strict enforcement of fee payment, as highlighted by the consequences faced by tourists attempting to neglect payment, reflects the municipality's commitment to maximizing revenue while upholding regulatory compliance.

The data provided explains the transformative impact of tourism on Bhaktapur's economy and community development. The substantial increase in tourist arrivals and revenue generation not only validates Bhaktapur's appeal as a tourist destination but also emphasizes the imperative for strategic planning and sustainable management of tourism activities to maximize economic benefits while preserving cultural heritage and promoting community welfare.

1.4 Problem formulation and research questions

Bhaktapur Durbar Square, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, stands as an extreme evidence to Nepal's rich cultural heritage and historical significance. Renowned for its architectural magnificence and cultural vibrancy, the site embodies a crucial part of the nation's cultural identity. In the recent years, Bhaktapur Durbar Square has witnessed a substantial increase in tourism, attracting visitors eager to experience its cultural legacy. However, there are some understudied aspects like the impacts from the growing tourism, and the sustainable practices implemented in the site. The lack of perspectives from the residents regarding the significance of cultural heritages and their preservation has also contributed to a gap in the literatures.

Thus, this study first seeks to understand the perspectives of local residents regarding the significance of their cultural heritage. Then, this research will investigate the positive as well as negative impacts of tourism on the cultural heritage of the site. It will also examine the strategies and measures implemented by the community to promote sustainable tourism practices, as well as their aspirations for sustainable tourism in future. Through this exploration,

the study aims to provide insights into how local efforts can balance the dual goals of heritage preservation and tourism development, ensuring the longevity of Bhaktapur Durbar Square for future generations.

1.5 Research questions

1. What are the significances of cultural heritage for the people living in the site?
2. What are the positive and negative impacts caused by growing tourism in the cultural heritage of the site?
3. What are the measures applied by the local community to implement sustainable tourism practices?

1.6 Research objectives

The thesis is focused on the perspectives of local people in Bhaktapur Durbar Square regarding the importance of cultural heritage and impacts of growing tourism on the cultural heritages of the area. To explore the research topic, following objectives have been outlined for the research:

- To identify the perspectives of residents on the importance of preserving cultural heritage in the site.
- To explore the impacts caused by growing tourism in the site.
- To investigate the measures applied by local community to enhance sustainable tourism practices.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is comprised of seven chapters, which examines the subject matter, with each segment serving a specific purpose. The first chapter provides a quick introduction to the thesis, followed by the problem formulation, research objectives and research questions. The second chapter conducts a thorough literature review on the preservation of cultural heritages and impacts of growing tourism. Chapter three outlines the methodology used for the research, including the philosophical basis of the study and research methods. Chapter four analyzes the collected data and discusses findings, collected from the semi-structured interviews. Chapter five summarizes conclusions drawn from the research. Chapter six provides recommendations for future researchers and the final chapter outlines the limitations of the research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEWS

This chapter will focus on the importance of preserving cultural heritages by exploring existing literatures and scholarly contributions. Also, the positive as well as negative impacts of growing tourism are explored in this chapter and the role of community participation to implement sustainable tourism practices. By critically analyzing the existing literatures within the mentioned headings, the literature aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of growing tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square. The insights gained from the review will contribute to the knowledge based on cultural heritage, and practical approaches to promote sustainable tourism practices, which can benefit the local community.

2.1 Cultural and Heritage Tourism

According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation as cited by Nyaupane (2019), Cultural Heritage Tourism can be defined as the act of traveling to engage with places, artifacts, and activities that authentically portray the stories and people of both the past and present. It encompasses cultural, historic, and natural resources. Dallen J. (2011) says that the essence of heritage tourism lies in establishing a personal connection with the objects or locations being explored. Specifically, there's a notion that heritage tourism revolves around tourists seeking to expand their knowledge or enrich their lives in some manner.

The terms "cultural tourism" and "heritage tourism" are commonly used interchangeably in the tourism industry and academic discourse, although they represent distinct yet interconnected phenomena. Cultural tourism typically refers to individuals visiting or participating in contemporary cultural expressions such as art, music, or living cultural practices, as delineated by Dallen J. (2011). It involves tourists seeking to learn, explore, experience, and enjoy both tangible and intangible cultural attractions in a destination, including heritage sites, literature, music, arts, and architecture, as well as living cultural traditions and lifestyles. Some argue that cultural tourism is more prevalent in urban areas and is less confined to specific locations, whereas heritage tourism often focuses on ancient artifacts and tends to occur in rural regions with a stronger sense of place. Despite differences in context, both forms of tourism cater to individuals seeking cultural enrichment and the fulfillment of their cultural interests through visits to historical, archaeological, and religious sites, as highlighted by Nyaupane (2019).

According to Nyaupane (2019), visitors to heritage sites have diverse motivations and expectations, necessitating considerations such as site conservation, preservation of authenticity, infrastructure development, visitor management, and hospitality. Hence, cultural heritage tourism not only involves the identification, management, and protection of heritage values but also the understanding of the tourism's impact on communities and regions, financial contributions to preservation efforts, and the generation of social and economic benefits, as well as effective marketing and promotion strategies (Ismail, Masron, & Ahmad, 2014).

2.2 Preservation of cultural heritages

There has been a notable evolution in the concept of cultural heritage over a couple of decades, leading to a significant shift in how we approach conservation. Previously, "cultural heritage" was limited to a select group of notable places recognized for their historical significance. Conservation efforts primarily focused on preserving the physical elements perceived to embody these values and preventing their deterioration. However, the definition of cultural heritage has since expanded to encompass a broader array of elements, including architecture, gardens, industrial facilities, cities, and entire landscapes. Harvey (2001) argues that heritage and its preservation have become prominent areas of academic inquiry and public discourse, yet there remains no universally accepted definition of what constitutes "cultural heritage." Today, conservation is understood as an ongoing social process involving the identification, valuation, and stewardship of heritage, as well as determining how it should be utilized, cared for, and interpreted (De La Torre, 2013).

In a research paper by Lusetyowati (2015), the author highlights Palembang's historical significance as a hub for political and economic activity in Southeast Asia, attracting foreign traders from China, the Middle East, and Persia. It emphasizes the potential of cultural heritage tourism in Palembang to preserve urban heritage, create economic opportunities, and enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors by linking tourism with cultural preservation efforts. This is followed by another study by Silva (2021) whose research underlines the significance of cultural heritage preservation amidst the growth of tourism, particularly focusing on the potential risks posed by visitor influx on historic monuments.. It highlights the necessity of assessing and managing the impact of tourism on conservation efforts, as demonstrated through a simulation model revealing risks to indoor air quality and structural degradation.

According to UNESCO, cultural heritage conservation involves measures aimed at prolonging the life of cultural heritage while reinforcing the transmission of its significant messages and values. Conservation efforts seek to maintain the physical and cultural characteristics of objects to ensure their enduring value and relevance (Unesco Institute for Statistics, 2020). While cultural and heritage tourism acknowledges the economic benefits and infrastructure improvements brought about by tourism but also emphasizes the challenges faced in terms of sustainability, preservation of cultural heritage, and the impact on local communities. A study by Timilsina (2022) has highlighted the cultural richness and significance of Nepal, particularly focusing on Kathmandu as a prominent cultural tourism destination. However, there are some issues that need to be assessed in the implications for cultural tourism in the Kathmandu valley.

Various approaches to cultural heritage conservation have been explored. Smith (2006) discusses the material-based approach, also known as "authorized heritage discourse," which prioritizes preserving the physical fabric of heritage sites with minimal community involvement. In contrast, a values-based approach, as discussed by De la Torre (2005), emphasizes the values attributed to heritage by different stakeholder groups. This approach, which emerged in the 1980s as part of post-processual archaeology, emphasizes engaging stakeholders throughout the conservation process, considering subjective values, and resolving conflicts. Community involvement is central to this approach, with methods like consultation and joint management schemes employed to ensure inclusivity and subjectivity.

Examples such as the World Heritage Sites of Kakadu National Park in Australia and Chaco National Historical Park in the USA are often cited as successful applications of a values-based approach at an international level (Poulios, 2014). The author concludes that key principles of heritage conservation, derived from both material-based and values-based approaches, include recognizing conservation professionals' responsibility for managing heritage sites, associating authenticity primarily with the physical fabric of sites while acknowledging intangible elements, and viewing heritage as a monument of the past to be safeguarded for future generations, even if it means restricting present community access.

2.3 Impacts of Tourism

According to de Carvalho (2021), tourism being a significant socio-cultural phenomenon, can bring both positive and negative impacts on destinations across social, cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions. These impacts are shaped by the interactions between tourists and the host community and can have short and long-term effects.

2.3.1 Positive Impacts of Tourism

A study by Karaus (2022) has utilized the Kano Model and Analytic Hierarchy Process to determine and evaluate residents' expectations regarding tourism impacts, primarily focusing on economic dimensions. It has highlighted the importance of understanding resident expectations for informing decision-making in destination management and shaping policies and strategies to enhance resident satisfaction and the success of tourism activities. Thus, it can be drawn from this study that that residents' expectations regarding tourism impacts predominantly revolve around economic dimensions. According to Deery et al. (2012), tourism development can cause both positive and negative impacts on destination communities simultaneously. On the positive side, sociocultural benefits, including enhancements in social services (Andereck et al., 2005), upgrades to transportation and recreational facilities (Marzuki, 2011), and the establishment of additional facilities catering to tourists, which can also serve the local inhabitants (Gursoy et al., 2002). Moreover, tourism fosters cross-cultural exchanges (Andereck et al., 2007), initiates favorable shifts in values and traditions, and fosters cultural interactions favourable to harmonious intergroup relations (Andereck et al., 2007).

These collective positive impacts contribute to an augmented quality of life for local residents, corroborated in a study by (Kim et al., 2013). Quality of life encompasses both material standards and subjective well-being (Kim et al., 2013). Additionally, tourism generates employment and income prospects for destination communities (Andereck et al., 2007), thereby enhancing their quality of life by augmenting access to modern amenities in the form of goods and services (Deery et al., 2005). In a research performed by Shahi, Bijay Kumar(2013), tourism in Bhaktapur has created diverse opportunities for local residents, including the development of markets for traditional crafts and part-time employment for students, leading to both direct and indirect job creation and stimulating the local economy through income and employment multiplier effects. However, there is still potential for further enhancing the economic impact generated by tourism in Bhaktapur. Furthermore, tourism

presents opportunities for enhancing existing infrastructure, such as outdoor recreational facilities, parks, and roads (Marzuki, 2011). According to the study done in Malaysia by Marzuki et al. (2015), the author writes that the swift expansion of tourism in Langkawi, for instance, encouraged the Malaysian government to bolster essential services like law enforcement, healthcare, and utilities for the benefit of tourists and locals alike.

Additionally, tourism can support a stronger sense of cultural identity among destination communities, fostering appreciation for local heritage and aiding in the preservation of traditional arts and crafts (Jashveer et al., 2011). The demand from tourists for historical and cultural experiences can serve as a catalyst for safeguarding local cultures and upholding the cultural identity of indigenous communities (Kreag, 2001). Furthermore, the sustained promotion of local cultural offerings bolsters residents' pride in their heritage (Kim, 2002), while also contributing to the revival of traditional art forms within host societies, driven by the demand for traditional arts, crafts, and souvenirs (Haralambopoulos and Pizam, 1996).

2.3.2 Negative Impacts of Tourism

The adverse sociocultural consequences of tourism development can be broadly described across four main domains. Regarding the value systems and social norms of local inhabitants, tourism development has the potential to fundamentally alter their way of life, leading to lasting changes in community dynamics, familial ties, and moral sensibilities (Andereck et al., 2005). Tourism may also incite cultural clashes arising from disparities in culture, religion, values, lifestyles, languages, and economic statuses between tourists and locals, as well as among migrant workers and local residents (ZamaniFarahani and Musa, 2012). Asserate (n.d.) argues in their article that *the cultural fault lines between these cultural entities and assumes that, due to our profound and different values, we are almost forced to live together in a state of conflict.*

There is a chance of ethical dilemmas being arise due to heightened instances of public alcoholism, escalating crime rates, drug abuse, and prostitution (Sharma et al., 2008). The physical impact of tourism on destination communities can manifest in overcrowding and traffic congestion, particularly during peak seasons, causing strain on natural resources, causing environmental degradation, and driving up infrastructure and property costs (Andereck et al., 2005). A study by Postma (2017) proposes a conceptual model to assess conflicts

between residents and tourists in cities, focusing on factors such as the number of tourists relative to residents and visitor behavior. It examines the situation in Hamburg and suggests strategies to manage tourism balance, highlighting the importance of understanding and addressing conflicts for sustainable city tourism development.

2.4 Community Participation and Sustainable Tourism Development

Local residents' perceptions of both the positive and negative aftermaths of tourism development significantly influence their engagement in tourism-related activities and the sustainability of tourism aspirations (Marzuki et al., 2012). Community involvement is often perceived as pivotal in determining the success or endurance of tourism initiatives (Jaafar et al., 2015). Therefore, it is important to understand the balance between local residents' perceptions of tourism development and their participation in community affairs (Ko and Stewart, 2002).

According to UNWTO (n.d.), sustainable tourism considers its economic, social, and environmental impacts, aiming to balance these dimensions by conserving natural and cultural heritage, ensuring economic benefits for all stakeholders, and fostering cultural understanding. It requires the participation of stakeholders, strong political leadership, continuous monitoring, and aims to provide meaningful, satisfying experiences for tourists while promoting sustainability awareness. In a study by Tong (2024) in China, the importance of community participation in achieving sustainable tourism development is highlighted. It discusses how tourism empowerment, facilitated by system construction, can positively influence community participation, ultimately contributing to the balanced distribution of interests and promoting sustainable tourism. The study suggests strategies such as creating interest linkage mechanisms, introducing oversight mechanisms for tourism enterprises, and strengthening community participation through educational and informational support to ensure the sustainable development of rural tourism destinations.

Community participation involves collaborative efforts among community members to achieve common objectives, enhance their local environment, and pursue individual benefits (McCloskey et al., 2011). Murphy (1985) introduced the notion of community involvement in tourism, stressing the importance of residents actively participating in planning and decision-

making processes to address conflicts that may arise during tourism development. In terms of tourism development, community participation denotes a process where the community actively shapes the trajectory of tourism initiatives rather than merely receiving their outcomes passively. Such participation bolsters communities by fostering interpersonal connections within, thereby nurturing a sense of belonging, trust, and credibility among members. It also serves to accommodate conflicts between residents' needs and interests, balancing improvements in quality of life with economic development endeavors (Jaafar et al., 2015). In a research by Neupane, Ramesh, et. Al.(2013), the authors assess the tourism potential of Bhaktapur Durbar Square using the Weighted Sum Method, highlighting its rich cultural, historical, and religious heritage, favorable location, and positive local image, while identifying weaknesses such as inadequate infrastructure and management. Their recommendations include promoting the site through events and improving tourist services to maximize economic benefits for the local community. Thus, community participation in events and decision-making can promote sustainable tourism by ensuring local engagement, equitable distribution of benefits, and preservation of cultural and environmental resources.

Furthermore, within the sphere of tourism planning, community participation emerges as an attempt encompassing all tiers of stakeholders, including local government, residents, developers, and private enterprises. This inclusive approach ensures that problem identification and decision-making are shared responsibilities, with stakeholders collectively vested in the sustainability of development (Jaafar et al., 2015). Both communities and tourism developers stand to gain from this engagement, as it fosters appreciation for the traditional lifestyle and values of the destination community (Lindberg and Johnson, 1997). Given their historical insight into community adaptation and their status as the group most affected by tourism, destination communities should play an active role in tourism planning, especially given the expectation that they will be integral to the tourism product (Marzuki et al., 2012). The study by Ginting (2023) also aimed at determining forms of community participation to develop the economy and achieve sustainable tourism in Balige, emphasizing the potential benefits of active community involvement in tourism activities. Thus, telling community participation in the planning process holds the promise of mitigating some negative impacts of tourism while maximizing its positive effects.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The following chapter explains the methodology used in this study. It begins with a detailed analysis of the philosophy behind the scientific approach adopted, thus providing a framework for understanding the scientific process and its methods. This philosophical foundation is helpful for analyzing and interpreting the collected data. Next, the research methodology is described, focusing on systematically identifying and addressing research questions. The discussion on methodological selection includes the use of various techniques and tools for data collection and analysis. The chosen methodological approach is crucial, as it significantly affects the accuracy and reliability of the study's results.

The chapter also explains why a semi-structured interview approach was chosen. A detailed explanation of the data collection process is provided, covering the steps of gathering, organizing, and analyzing relevant information. Finally, the chapter covers the ethical considerations taken during the research, such as protecting participant confidentiality and privacy, and avoiding any harm or distress to participants. The discussion also points out the limitations that may have impacted the study, such as the sample size, available resources, or external factors that may have influenced the results.

3.1 Philosophy of Science: Constructivism

Researchers must consider philosophical assumptions related to their research questions to select appropriate data collection methods. These assumptions are related to the researcher's beliefs about the nature of reality (ontological standpoint) and their beliefs about how knowledge is acquired (epistemological standpoint). It is important to align these philosophical assumptions with the research approach, data collection and analysis methods, to develop a coherent research design. Wright et al. (2016) emphasize that synchronizing these elements is essential for ensuring that the study is well-designed and effective.

This study adopts a social constructivist perspective to explore the impacts of tourism in the cultural heritage of Bhaktapur Durbar Square. According to Bryman (2012), the social constructivist view is that social phenomena whose meaning is continuously shaped by the contexts of individuals' lives and interactions. Bhaktapur Durbar Square might be impacted by tourism in several ways. The local community may also be dealing with a number of challenges brought on by tourism, but understanding these issues requires taking into account the perspectives and significances of many participants.

Bryman (2016) describes social constructivism is an interpretive framework that helps individuals understand their world and develop their meanings, asserting that meanings are not natural but are created through interaction with others. They suggest that researchers adopting a constructivist approach should emphasize the perspectives of the individuals being studied. This approach is typically associated with qualitative research, based on the ontological assumption that reality is constructed through the diverse meanings and interpretations created by social actors. According to Saunders et al, (2007), reality is not a fixed entity but is shaped by social interactions and interpretations. Consequently, this research will focus on gathering and analyzing participants' viewpoints regarding the significance of cultural heritages, and impacts caused by tourism in the research area, as this approach aligns with the constructivist paradigm and the underlying assumptions of social constructivism.

3.2 Research Approach: Inductive

In an inductive research approach, the research begins with the collection and analysis of specific observations and data to identify broader themes, patterns, and theories. This method involves drawing conclusions and formulating generalizations based on the data gathered throughout the research process (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). In this research, I have tried to explore the importance of cultural heritages to the local people of Bhaktapur Durbar Square, and the impacts caused by growing tourism in the area. Some sustainable tourism practices have also been explored which have been implemented in the research area by the local community. The collected data were analyzed, and explanations of the phenomena were developed from the related theories.

3.3 Methodological choice

It is important to select an appropriate research approach after establishing the research philosophy and strategy. There are three research categories according to Kauda (2012): qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodology. The qualitative approach develops and explains social phenomena by asking questions like “what, why and how”. This approach helps to investigate people’s experiences, their relationship with the surrounding and their meaning-making processes (Leavy, 2017). Quantitative approach primarily examines the relationship between variables using statistical techniques and numerical data (Saunders et al., 2009). This approach generally follows deductive logic, where the researcher starts with a hypothesis,

collects statistical data, and tests whether the hypothesis is supported by the data. Finally, the mixed-method approach combines qualitative and quantitative methods to address research questions. In this study, the qualitative method will be employed, as it is best suited to understanding the experiences and perspectives of the people from the research area.

3.4 Qualitative Research Method

Qualitative research method will be utilized for this research, as it will be suitable for me to understand the importance of cultural heritage of Bhaktapur Durbar Square for the local people as well as the impacts of growing tourism in the area. I will also be able to understand the experiences and viewpoints of individuals involved in the community who are trying to implement sustainable tourism practices to support the growing tourism. Qualitative methods aim to address questions about experiences, meanings, and perspectives, often from the participant's viewpoint (Hammarberg, et al., 2016).

One of the qualitative techniques employed is semi-structured interviews, which involve using a set of open-ended questions or topics to guide the discussion while allowing interviewers the flexibility to ask additional questions and explore specific responses in more depth. This approach combines the advantages of both structured and unstructured interviews, providing valuable insights into focused topics, the views of key informants, and background information or institutional perspectives (Herbert & Irene, 2011). In this research study, a qualitative approach was applied using semi-structured questions to interview the local people who reside inside Bhaktapur Durbar Square.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Data collection is a systematic process of acquiring and examining reliable information from various sources to address research questions, identify patterns and probabilities, and assess potential outcomes. Researchers must determine the nature, origins, and methodologies for gathering data during this process. Data can be categorized into qualitative and quantitative forms, with qualitative data pertaining to descriptive aspects like color, size, quality, and appearance (Simplilearn, 2023). After establishing the methodology, researchers must decide on the approach to data collection. This study utilized both primary and secondary data.

Primary data were gathered directly through interviews, while secondary data were collected from sources like articles, journals, websites, and government statistics (Kumar, 1999).

3.5.1 Primary data

To learn more about the impacts of tourism and the challenges faced by the local community in the area participant observation has been carried out. In a similar regard, as a researcher, I interviewed six different participants to obtain data for the analysis of the research problem. There were semi-structured questions in the interviews. This will, in my opinion, enable me to better understand the background of the study and ensure the analysis is relevant and focused.

Tourism stakeholders like local people and local business owners were interviewed. I conducted the interviews using semi-structured questionnaires to gather information about the overview of sustainable tourism practices in the area and, impacts as well as challenges faced by the local community due to tourism. The research has been limited to a specific region and time-period to maintain data confidentiality.

3.5.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are preferred for their ability to offer better consistency and control, along with ease of comparing responses (Finn, 2000). Additionally, this method allows researchers to ask specific questions while also facilitating deeper probing for clarification and elaboration on participants' thoughts, aspirations, and emotions. This adaptability enables the generation of detailed, context-rich qualitative data (Long, 2007). The interviews could also be extended to cover additional topics not initially on the checklist, aiding in addressing the study's research questions.

For the semi-structured interviews, I as the researcher had prepared a set of open-ended questions to guide the conversation. Initially, 8 participants were randomly chosen. I had to explain them about the meaning of sustainable tourism practices before proceeding with the process. The interview questions were shared with them a couple of days before the actual interview. It was done to let the participants be prepared with all the questions for the actual interview. They were provided with the right to walk away from the interview if by any reasons, they wanted to. However, only 6 participants were fully interviewed as two of them thought that the questions were bit difficult for them to answer. The interview allowed for an in-depth

exploration of the research topic, while still ensuring that key themes and questions were addressed.

During the interviews, participants were motivated to share their perspectives, insights, and experiences regarding the impact and challenges of tourism on cultural heritage in Bhaktapur Durbar Square. The whole interview was revolving around the sustainable tourism practices they have been experiencing in the site. This encouraged me to capture the perspectives of the participants and to explore emergent themes and insights that may not have been initially anticipated. It provided a valuable opportunity to engage with the participants as well as to gather rich and detailed data on the proposed research objectives.

3.5.1.2 Participant observation

An ethnographic research method was used through participant observation, to gain an in-depth understanding of the cultural dynamics at the research area. The historic site, located in the heart of Bhaktapur is renowned for its rich architectural heritage and vibrant cultural practices. I as the researcher, aimed to explore the interactions, behaviours, and daily life of the local community as well as the visitors. This was done to provide an interesting perspective on how the heritage site has been functioning as a living cultural space.



Fig 2: Crowd of people during the pulling of chariot during Bisket Jatra (Source: Author)

I spent three days in the research area, observing the people who have been living, visiting, and owning their businesses in the area. In those three days, I interviewed 2 participants each day and spent the rest of my time observing the area. While just three days were not an adequate amount of time to immerse myself completely within the community, I came to know a lot of things during that period. The period when I visited was also the time of a festival, *Bisket Jatra*. Due to this reason, the timetable of the activities of the people was also different compared to normal days. For instance, when I spoke with people there, their early morning starts with prayers and rituals at nearby temples, sell vegetables in the local markets, artisans start their workshops in the late morning, local tourist guides also start their schedule, traditional music and rituals are played at the temples, in the evening and the shops are closed at night. This was the normal routine of the people living in the area. The neighbours also know each other very well and there is a frequent interaction among them. However, at the festive time I visited, the temples were very crowded from the morning, along with the markets. There were intense religious activities and a lot of preparations for the day's events. The schools and government offices were closed, and the artisans also reduced their working hours. The streets were filled with the event like construction of chariots, and in the evening time, whole square was filled with crowds, where a lot of them were pulling chariots in their traditional way. There were a lot of people until late night, and it was a vibrant atmosphere.



Fig 3: Group of people playing traditional musical instruments in the evening (Source: Author)

I could understand from the observation that the people are very much attached to their traditions, and that have been followed by numerous generations. The people whom I interacted were friendly and I was also permitted to take some field notes and pictures.

3.5.2 Secondary data

Secondary data refers to information obtained from published sources, including existing literature or knowledge gathered by scholars without active data collection (H. R. Ganesha & Aithal, 2022). It serves to provide support or confirmation for the background behind formulating research questions, particularly in the introduction section of research articles or theses. Various sources can be used to collect secondary data, such as published printed sources, books, journals, electronic sources, websites, diaries, government records, and web blogs (Veal, 1997). Despite being collected for different purposes; secondary data is valuable in establishing the foundation for a research project.

For the research, I have used a lot of existing literatures, research studies, historical documents, government reports, and tourism statistics related to Bhaktapur Durbar Square. These data provide with background information, context, and insights related to the research and helped to contextualize the findings. I have also investigated the articles, especially in the AAU library, related to sustainable tourism practices in different parts of Nepal. They provide evidence for the primary qualitative methods' data collection which helps to contextualize the research, inform the methodology, and support the analysis and interpretation of findings.

3.6 Qualitative data analysis

Thematic analysis was used as the technique for the qualitative data analysis in this study. Five out of six interviews were done in Nepali language and only one was done in English. The interviews were subsequently transcribed into English language. Thematic analysis was then performed on the transcribed data. Six steps of theme analysis have been applied to the interview's findings: reading through the data, developing preliminary codes, looking for themes, analysing themes, defining themes, and labelling themes are the tasks, as inspired by Braune and Clarke (2008).

The process begun by carefully reviewing and getting familiar with the transcripts of the interviews. I read the written data several times and listened to the audio recording at least once

to become familiar with the datasets. The main themes were pre-determined according with the research questions which were importance and challenges of preserving cultural heritage, impacts of growing tourism, community participation and sustainable tourism practices. The sub-themes, which served as the foundation for the analysis and interpretation of the interview data, were identified and labelled.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in qualitative research involve adhering to norms for conduct to ensure ethical behavior and prevent harm to participants (Smith et al., 2020). Throughout the research process, principles such as honesty, reliability, caution, respect for others, discretion, nondiscrimination, and social responsibility were followed. Participants were invited to select their preferred language for the interview and ensure comfort in sharing their experiences. Participation was voluntary, and participants were assured of the confidentiality and security of their personal information. They were informed of their right to refuse to answer any questions they found inappropriate and to end the interview at any time. Additionally, all information gathered was properly referenced to credit the appropriate authors and/or owners.

3.8 Limitations of the methodology

Several challenges were faced by me during the data collection process. Only six individuals were interviewed for the main set of data, which may have limited the diversity of perspectives. this may also restrict the findings as there could have more data collected if there were more participants. As I had just over a week for the whole process, this sample size feels appropriate given the time limitations. The data is also collected only from the people residing inside Bhaktapur Durbar Square, which may not be relevant to other tourism destinations. One of the notable limitations was the language barrier. As the local people speak Newari language as their mother tongue and Nepali is just the second language, some of the sentences they were trying to elaborate were difficult to understand., resulting in the loss of some responses.

One thing is important to mention that because of my schedule restriction, the time of data collection was a festival period called *Bisket Jatra*. The government offices were closed due to this reason, and I was not able to contact any government officials for further data collection. So, the collected data have been limited only as the local people's perspectives. In terms of the

sustainable tourism practices, where the municipality could have been planning other future plans, I was not able to reach out with them. The chosen participants were the ones who got involved in the day-to-day activities of the community. This has created bias in the selection of the participants in a sense that only the limited sample size was target as the participants. Also, since the research relies on the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews and other secondary sources, it does not demonstrate the experience and perspective of entire community.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the findings will be discussed to give answers to the research questions, which I collected in the form of data through the interviews and literature reviews. There are many tangible as well as intangible cultural heritages in Bhaktapur Durbar Square, which I came to know from the data collection. The collected data have been analysed according to the importance of cultural heritages for local people, growing impacts of tourism in the cultural heritages, challenges faced by the local community in its preservation as well as various sustainable measures implemented to support growing tourism in the area.

4.1 Tourism growth in Bhaktapur Durbar Square

In this part of the findings, people were asked about the growth of tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square, over the years. They were asked about the growth and changes which they have noticed within the square. The main purpose was to make a foundation towards learning about the positive and negative impacts of growing tourism in the destination.

Dallen J. (2011) argues that cultural and heritage tourism fundamentally involves creating personal connections with historical sites or artifacts, where tourists are motivated by a desire to enhance their knowledge through these cultural experiences. This type of tourism emphasizes a deeper engagement with the past, aiming for personal growth and learning.

Participant 1 “Over the years, I’ve seen a significant increase in the number of tourists visiting Bhaktapur Durbar Square. This has led to more shops and guesthouses opening up in the area.”

Participant 5 *“I have noticed tourists preferring authentic experiences and interactions with the local community, rather than just visiting tourist spots. Recently, there was a tourist asking a lot of questions to a Khukuri maker about its making. Maybe the tourist had only seen the production of khukuri in the internet and was experiencing in real time then.”*

Participant 6 *“Me and my friends used to and still spend a lot of our leisure time here and I can experience myself that that has been a noticeable increase in visitor numbers, especially with the growth of international tourism. I can see at least 20 different tourists everyday clicking pictures.”*

The participants have been observing a significant increase in the number of tourists, resulting in the expansion of more shops and guesthouses in Bhaktapur Durbar Square. The growth of tourism has been leading to more commercial establishments, which is also a common pattern in many tourist destinations. The increase in businesses like shops and guest houses can benefit towards local economy from tourism. Also, positive interactions with tourists have been promoting cultural exchanges since the tourists seek authentic experiences and interactions with the local community, according to participant 5. The participant shared that she has noticed a tourist asking a lot of questions to a *Khukuri* maker about its making. She said maybe the tourist has only seen the production of *khukuri* in the internet and was experiencing in real time then.

The theoretical insights and empirical data suggests a strong relationship between cultural tourism and local community. The increase in tourism at Bhaktapur Durbar Square has led to economic benefits through the expansion of commercial establishments. Simultaneously, the desire for authentic experiences among tourists fosters cultural understanding and preserves traditional practices. The observations indicate that tourists’ interactions with local artisans and communities contribute to a shared knowledge base, enriching both the tourists’ and the locals’ understanding of cultural heritage.

4.2 Significance of cultural heritage and its preservation

In this part, the value of the cultural heritages in Bhaktapur Durbar Square is studied, according to the local people. It is necessary first, to know about the importance of cultural heritage as it provides me a foundation to learn more about the necessity to its preservation. This will allow

me to analyse the importance of cultural heritage and tourism in the area, simultaneously and the views of the local people towards this phenomena.

The literature by Lusetyowati (2015) and Silva (2021) emphasize the potential of cultural heritage tourism not only to preserve urban heritage but also to stimulate economic growth and enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors. They also suggest that conservation is recognized as a social process involving identification, valuation, and stewardship. To make the literature more meaningful, the participants have mentioned about the importance of cultural heritage in Bhaktapur Durbar Square and how much connection they have maintained.

Participant 1 *“Bhaktapur Durbar Square holds stories of our ancestors. It's like a treasure chest of history. Preserving it means keeping those stories alive for our children and grandchildren. It's our identity.”*

Participant 2 *“Our ancestors built these temples and palaces. They left their mark here for us to remember them. By protecting this place, we honor their hard work and sacrifice. It's like keeping a bond alive with those who came before us.”*

Participant 5 *“This place is not just stones and buildings; it's a sacred place. Our temples are like homes for our gods and goddesses. When we protect this place, we keep our spiritual connection strong. It's where we come to pray, to find peace, and to feel closer to the divine.”*

Participant 6 *“Our Durbar Square is like an open book of history and culture. When we preserve it, we provide a place for schools and students to learn. It's not just about books; it's about experiencing history firsthand.”*

The participants provided their view towards the cultural heritage in the area and their feelings were almost mutual. They opened about what sort of value and importance the cultural heritage carries within their community. The square has not been just a historical site but a living connection to the past, including the legacy of ancestors and serving as a cultural identity for the local community. They have a strong belief that preserving the heritage will keep the stories alive for their future generation. There are a lot of temples where people go and pray and that keeps their spiritual connection strong. It has also been serving as an educational resource, offering insights into history, art, and architecture for schools and students.

The theoretical perspectives of the authors are related to the observations of participants in Bhaktapur Durbar Square. The participants' reflections underline the social, cultural, and educational significance of preserving heritage sites. The preservation of Bhaktapur Durbar

Square not only maintains historical and spiritual connections but also serves as a catalyst for community identity, economic growth, and educational enrichment. The mutual sentiments expressed by participants about the importance of preserving their cultural heritage reveal a collective commitment to safeguarding their cultural identity and history. This goes along with the literature's argument that conservation is a social process that involves the community actively engaging in the identification and valuation of their heritage. The participants' strong belief in the importance of maintaining their heritage for future generations highlights the intergenerational value of such efforts.



Fig 4: People worshipping in the local temple as a part of their tradition (Source: Author)

4.3 Positive impacts of tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square

In this part of the findings, I have discussed some of the positive impacts caused by the growth of tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square. Karaus (2022), in their research has outlined the importance of understanding resident expectations regarding tourism impacts, especially in economic terms, to inform decision-making in destination management. Additionally, Deery et al. (2012) have highlighted the positive and negative impacts of tourism simultaneously, with a focus on sociocultural benefits, infrastructure improvements, and economic opportunities.

Participant 1” *tourism has created employment opportunities for local residents in various sectors. Many families has operated homestays and small businesses focused to tourists, which has increased household incomes.*”

Participant 2 *“Maybe you noticed there are many tourist guides who have been employed to guide tourists here. Most of them are the locals. So, we can say tourism has been boosting local economy from it....”*

Participant 3 *“Tourism has motivated local people here to start their own business.....”*

Participant 4 *“.....The money spent by the tourists increases the economy and it is utilized in the maintainance of the place.”*

Participant 6 *“.....tourism has played a role in the growth of small businesses like local artisans and craftsmen. They have benefit from increased demand for traditional handicrafts and souvenirs, providing them with a sustainable source of income.”*

Participant 1 and Participant 2 have highlighted about the creation of employment opportunities for the local people in their interview. Tourism have facilitated the establishment of homestays and small businesses which have helped in the increase of household incomes. It was also explored that most of the tourist guides working in the area were local people. I think it is also beneficial because local people possess a lot of knowledge about the place, including the culture and tradition that have been prevailing since a long period. This has been helping the tourists to get authentic information about the square, and also this has been boosting the local economy. Participant 3 shared that tourism has been motivating local people to start their own businesses, indicating the rise in entrepreneurial activities. It was normal to see a lot of business like souvenir shops, potteries and *Newari kitchens* spread over every corners of the square. The economy generated from tourism is utilised in the maintainance of the place such as establishment of public toilets and maintainance of the monuments, as another participant mentioned. This reinvestment is crucial for sustainable tourism, as it helps maintain the cultural and historical integrity of the destination, which in turn attracts more visitors and generates further economic benefits.

From the literature and the empirical findings, it is explored that the growth of tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square has led to several positive impacts, including economic benefits, employment opportunities, entrepreneurial activities, infrastructure improvements, and support for local artisans. These findings relate with the theoretical perspectives of Deery et al. (2012), highlighting the positive impacts of tourism with a focus on economic opportunities and infrastructure improvements.



Fig 5: Pottery is an important source of local economy and tourism attraction (Retrieved from internet)

4.4 Negative impacts of tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square

The participants were also asked about some of the negative impacts caused by tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square. (Zamani, Farahani and Musa, 2012) mentioned in their research that cultural clashes evolving from disparities in culture, religion, and lifestyles between tourists and locals may create tensions and misunderstandings within the community, thereby compromising social cohesion and harmony.

Participant 1 “.....like overcrowding. I can also see some tourists not following the waste management rules and thus, littering the area.”

Participant 2 “Once, while there was a cultural dance ceremony during a festival here, some tourists joined the dance. It looked so weird but was equally enjoyable. I don’t want to say it impacted our practice but looked unfamiliar. Other than that, I do not know any situations like that. Also, I would say pollution due to the influx of tourists, which affects the quality of life for residents.....”

Participant 1 highlighted the issues of overcrowding as well as littering and participant 2 mentioned pollution as one of the factors impacting the resident’s quality of life. Some of the tourists have also not been following the waste management rules, which illustrates that the tourists are responsible for this regard. The later participant also shared about a cultural interaction, while sometimes can be enjoyable can also lead to misunderstandings. In this case, the tourists joining the dance ceremony is not itself any problem but the participant mentions it as “unfamiliar” which could be considered normal while two different cultures meet.

Participant 4 “..... Of course the food is our tradition here and spicy is normal for us, but it was not for them. I don't say it impacted anything to our culture but it was sort of mismatched practices between them and us. Another thing I can think about is that the rising tourism has led to increased living and renting costs.....”

Participant 6 “I have seen a craftsman been producing more marketable bracelet rather than procuding the authentic Newari bracelet.....”

Participant 4, who is a restaurant business operator in Bhaktapur Durbar Square shared an incident when some tourists tasted *Chhoila* which is one of the spiciest food in *Newari culture*. He says that the spiciness is totally normal for the local people in general but it was not fot the tourists. A cultural mismatch can be experienced between the local people and the tourists from this incident. He also mentioned about the increase in the cost of rents and daily expenses. The houses belong to the local people in the area and the participant has only been operating the business for some time there. He thinks that due to the growth in tourism, the renting price has been increasing overe time. Participant 6 shared about some local craftsmen producing more marketable souvenir items instead of authentic ones. When asked, the participant had noticed a person selling some modified bracelets which looked fancy but lacked the proper value of *Newari culture*. He said that if the souvenir is made within *Newari culture*, it should only contain *Newari font*, which is the only authentic one.



Fig 6: A tradional Newari bracelet with Newari font (Retrieved from internet)

4.5 Concerns Regarding Future Impact of Tourism

After interviewing about the impacts caused by tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square, the participants were asked about the concerns regarding the future impacts of tourism in the

square. This was asked to know the insights of the participants upon the future challenges that they might face, with the rapid growth of tourism.

Participant 1 *“My major concern is the risk of over-commercialization of cultural practices, where traditions may be misrepresented. This could lead to a loss of authenticity of our cultural identity over time.”*

Participant 2 *“There's a risk of overdevelopment and strain on local infrastructure, which can negatively impact the quality of life for residents.....”*

Participant 4 *“I am concerned there is a risk of increased pressure on infrastructure and resources due to growing tourist numbers, leading to environmental degradation and disruptions in daily life for residents.”*

Participant 5 *“My concerns include wear and tear on historic sites and changes in local traditions.....”*

Participant 1 expressed the concern about the risk of over-commercialization, which might lead to the misrepresentation of cultural traditions. The participant would prefer to see tourists enjoying *Bisket Jatra* but would not like to see the change in the timing of festival, impacted by the arrival of tourists in the future. Participant 2 and Participant 4 discussed about the concerns from overdevelopment in the future, which could create a strain in the infrastructures. It might impact the quality of life of the residents negatively and also lead to environmental degradation. Their main focus was on the increased demand for water, electricity and waste management services, straining the local infrastructures. The current infrastructure was not designed to support high levels of consumption, which might eventually lead to shortages and decreased quality of services. Similarly, participant 5 raised the concerns about the potential wear and tear on historic sites due to the increased number of tourists. *Nyatapola temple*, a five-storied temple in the heart of Bhaktapur Durbar Square have been experiencing heavy foot traffic. The participant has seen people climbing the steps and touching the carvings. She says that continuous handling and exposure might degrade the carvings in the future.

4.6 Community participation and sustainable tourism practices

Murphy (1985) and Jaafar et al. (2015) in their research, have highlighted the significance of community involvement in decision-making processes to balance economic development with residents' needs. Neupane et al. (2013) also explains the importance of community engagement

in maximizing economic benefits and preserving cultural heritage. The participants were asked about some of the sustainable practices implemented by the community to preserve the cultural heritage of the site. UNWTO (n.d.) defines sustainable tourism as a type of tourism which takes full account of its current as well as future economic, social and environmental impacts, by addressing the needs of visitors, environment and the community.

Participant 1 *“One key project which involves educating local residents and tourists about responsible waste management and recycling.....”*

“.....There are some cultural workshops and demonstrations conducted by local artisans to showcase traditional crafts and skills.....”

“.....there are sometimes tree-planting activities to maintain the cleanliness and greenery of the area.”

Participant 2 *“.....practices like organizing guided tours led by knowledgeable locals to educate tourists about our culture and heritage.”*

“..... the community promotes local cultural events and festivals to engage tourists in authentic experiences while respecting our traditions and heritage.”

“The collaboration with municipality has been an important method for this. It has helped to implement waste management initiatives and promote recycling.....”

Participant 3 *“.....the promotion of souvenir shopping, encouraging visitors to buy locally made handicrafts and products that support local artisans and businesses.....”*

“.....establishment of a waste management system to keep the area clean.....”

Participant 1 emphasized the significance of heritage conservation through eco-friendly methods as well as the efforts to preserve and restore historical buildings using traditional techniques. Furthermore, he mentioned initiatives like awareness programs on educating both local residents and tourists about responsible waste management and recycling. Some cultural workshops conducted by local artisans serve to preserve and promote traditional crafts and skills, fostering a sense of cultural continuity. The community also organized tree-planting activities recently which demonstrates a proactive effort to maintain the environmental quality of the area. Participant 2 highlighted the practice of organizing guided tours led by knowledgeable locals, which serves to educate tourists about the local culture and heritage. This has not only enhanced the tourist experience but also promoted cultural awareness and

respect. The community also promotes local cultural events and festivals which can help tourists engage in authentic cultural experiences. The community has collaborated with the municipality to implement waste management initiatives and promote recycling. Elsewhere, Participant 3 shared that the community has been promoting responsible souvenir shopping and thus, encouraging tourists to purchase locally made handicrafts. This helps to support local artisans and businesses and this practice not only boosts the local economy but also ensures that tourism benefits are distributed within the community. Additionally, she pointed towards the establishment of the waste management system as a crucial measure to maintain cleanliness in the area.

The findings from the interviews reinforce the importance of community involvement and sustainable practices in tourism management as quoted in the literature above. These practices not only contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage and environment conservation but also ensures the equal distribution of tourism benefits within the community. The collaboration between local residents, businesses and local authorities like municipality is important to foster sustainable tourism development in Bhaktapur Durbar Square.

Looking towards the future, the participants were asked about their aspirations for the sustainable tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square. This could be essential for the future development of tourism in the area which is respectful and sustainable. This can eventually be able to ensure that tourism development benefits local community in a sustainable way while also providing with authentic experience for the tourists.

Participant 1 “One important aspiration is to maintain a balance between tourism growth and cultural preservation, ensuring that tourism activities enhance rather than degrade our heritage.”

Participant 3 “My aspiration is to ensure that tourism activities do not compromise the local way of life and heritage. It is also necessary to prioritize responsible tourism practices that minimize environmental impact and promote community engagement.”

Participant 4 “I think promotion of responsible tourism practices that respect local traditions and heritage is important. Also, the tourism should be diversified beyond the main attractions, encouraging visitors to explore lesser-known sites and support local businesses throughout the region.”

Participant 6 *“My aspiration is to implement responsible tourism practices that minimize negative impacts on local heritage and ecosystems. This includes promotion of eco-friendly accommodations like bicycles,, and waste management initiatives to reduce the carbon footprint of tourism activities.”*

Participant 1 shared his aspiration of the need to maintain a balance between tourism growth and cultural preservation. This was to ensure that tourism activities enhance rather than degrade the heritage of Bhaktapur Durbar Square. Similarly, Participant 3 focused on the importance of safeguarding the local way of life and heritage, suggesting that tourism development should be carefully managed to avoid compromising the cultural integrity of the area. This balance can be achieved through strategic planning and management practices, such as regulating visitor numbers during peak periods, investing in heritage restoration projects, and conducting awareness campaigns about the significance of cultural preservation. The participant also shared his aspiration for prioritizing tourism practices that minimize environmental impact and promote community engagement. The promotion of responsible tourism practices that respect local traditions and heritage was discussed with participant 4. He also encourages visitors to explore lesser-known sites and support local business throughout the area. There are a lot of pottery-making activities around the square and visitors can also participate in those activities, which can support local artisans. Participant 6 said he believes that the negative impacts of tourism on local heritage and ecosystems would be minimized in the future. The community could introduce eco-friendly transportation systems like bicycles in the area, helping to minimize carbon footprints. He also told about the waste management systems which is not so good at the area but hopes that it gets improved in the future.

The aspirations shared by the participants reflect a shared commitment to promoting sustainable tourism practices while safeguarding the cultural and environmental heritage of Bhaktapur Durbar Square. There is a common thread of community engagement and empowerment in shaping the future of sustainable tourism in the area. From promoting local culture and heritage to supporting local businesses and artisans, the aspirations reflect a collective effort to ensure that the tourism development benefits the local community in a sustainable and responsible manner. However, these aspirations could hamper in the local economy as well. As mentioned by the first participant, there are some shops which give away free drinking water for the tourists. This is a very generous step towards the hospitality sector but could decrease the sales of bottled water, disrupting the economy. Thus, it is very important to find a proper balance between the community's aspirations and the practical initiatives.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Bhaktapur Durbar Square stands as a testament to the rich cultural heritage and historical legacy of the region. It has been serving as a living museum that connects the present generation with the stories and traditions of their ancestors. The increase in tourism has brought about substantial economic benefits, including the creation of employment opportunities, the growth of small businesses, and the enhancement of local infrastructure. These positive impacts have significantly contributed to the local economy and the quality of life for residents. However, the rapid growth of tourism has also presented some challenges that must be addressed to ensure the preservation of the cultural heritages of Bhaktapur Durbar Square. Some of the issues like overcrowding, pollution, and cultural clashes were discussed with the local people as the negative impacts of the growing tourism in the site. Also, the concerns raised by the local community regarding the potential future impacts of tourism tells about the need for a balanced approach that prioritizes cultural preservation alongside economic development.

The local community has demonstrated proactive engagement in implementing sustainable tourism practices, including heritage conservation through eco-friendly methods, promoting responsible waste management, and encouraging authentic cultural experiences. These efforts reflect a commitment to preserving the cultural and historical significance of Bhaktapur Durbar Square while accommodating the growing interest of tourists. It is crucial to emphasize sustainable tourism practices, including the promotion of eco-friendly initiatives and supporting community based tourism. These measures not only help to preserve local traditions and cultural heritage but also foster economic benefits for the community.

In conclusion, Bhaktapur Durbar Square is not only a tourist destination but a vital cultural heritage site that carries the identity and legacy of the local community. By focusing on the sustainable tourism practices and prioritizing the preservation of cultural heritage, it is possible to achieve a harmonious balance between tourism growth and cultural heritage conservation. This approach will not only safeguard the historical and cultural value of Bhaktapur Durbar Square for future generations but also enhance the overall experience for visitors, ensuring that they leave with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the cultural heritage of the site.

CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research can serve as a guide for future studies on this topic in other destinations. This study is limited to contextualizing the findings on how the growth of tourism has been affecting

Bhaktapur Durbar Square, where the local people find it so important to preserve their cultural heritage. In the future researches, comprehensive assessments to understand the impacts of tourism in socio-cultural, economic and environmental dimensions can be prioritized. Also, to ensure long-term sustainability of tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square, I would recommend the future researchers to conduct long term studies which assesses ongoing impacts of the area.

Additionally, the future researchers can organize visitor satisfaction surveys, which would offer valuable insights into tourist's perceptions and preferences. The effectiveness of community engagement initiatives in promoting sustainable tourism and preservation of cultural heritages can be investigated as well. The existing tourism policies and regulations can also be analyzed to identify gaps. This provides with the opportunities to formulate policies recommended towards responsible tourism practices.

CHAPTER 7: LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The thesis has some limitations that should be taken into account. As this thesis is qualitative in nature, it introduces subjectivity and the participant's responses may be influenced by personal biases, experiences and individual perceptions. This might not accurately represent the broader community's views. Since quantitative data have been restricted, statistical analysis have not been performed. This could lead the findings to not being applicable to a much broader context, lacking statistical strength. Potential observer bias, where the researcher's presence might influence participant's response is another consideration as limitation.

The study is based on information obtained from interviews and secondary data sources. The data is collected from the semi-structured interviews with only six participants due to time constraints. A larger sample size could have produced different results and also could have improved the findings. This might not fully capture the diverse perspective of all the stakeholders as well, including different age groups, tourists and local government agencies. Additionally, the study geographically focuses solely on Bhaktapur Durbar Square, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other cultural heritage sites.

Tourism patterns and impacts can fluctuate seasonally and over longer periods, affecting the relevance of the findings over time. This temporal constraint of the data collection period also poses a limitation. The dynamic nature of tourism industry means that the findings could become outdated as the new trends and policies influence tourism landscape in the research

area. Lastly, this thesis is conducted only by exploring the impacts of growing tourism and some sustainable tourism practices that the area has been implementing, which means not any potential recommendations have been provided upon the impacts and practices.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Participant information

Participant initials	Name of the participant	Age	Gender	Occupation
1	Rajesh Manandhar	41	Male	Carpenter
2	Maya Devi Shrestha	37	Female	School teacher
3	Mahesh Prajapati	39	Male	Potter
4	Ramesh Tamang	43	Male	Restaurant owner
5	Sita Ghaju	36	Female	Guest House operator
6	Bikesh Shrestha	26	Male	Tourism student

A. Semi-structured interview questionnaires

1. Can you please introduce yourself and your occupation? Also, how long have you been living here around Bhaktapur Durbar Square?
2. What changes have you observed in tourism around Bhaktapur Durbar Square over the years?
3. How important are the cultural heritages for the people here? Why do you think they need to be preserved?
4. Do you think tourism has impacted this place over the years?
5. What are the positive impacts you have noticed, from the inflow of tourists here?
6. And, what about the negative impacts?
7. Do you have any concerns about the future impacts of this growing tourism?
8. What type of sustainable practices have the community implemented in the area?
9. Finally, what are your aspirations/ambitions for the sustainable tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square?

B. Semi-structured interview transcripts

Participant 1: Rajesh Manandhar, 41 years old male

Can you please introduce yourself and your occupation? Also, how long have you been living here around Bhaktapur Durbar Square?

Sure, I am Rajesh Manandhar and I am a carpenter by occupation. I was born here and I've been living here for over 41 years. I am also actively involved in the community activities here.

What changes have you observed in tourism around Bhaktapur Durbar Square over the years?

Over the years, I've seen a significant increase in the number of tourists visiting Bhaktapur Durbar Square. This has led to more shops and guesthouses opening up in the area.

How important are the cultural heritages for the people here? Why do you think they need to be preserved?

Bhaktapur Durbar Square holds stories of our ancestors. It's like a treasure chest of history. Preserving it means keeping those stories alive for our children and grandchildren. It's our identity.

Do you think tourism has impacted this place over the years? And also on your lifestyle?

Yes. Tourism has brought significant changes to our Durbar Square. Back in the day, I used to work only on traditional Nepalese furniture. Now, sometimes I get requests for more modern designs from tourists.

What are the positive impacts you have noticed, from the inflow of tourists here?

There's been an increase in employment opportunities. More residents are involved in tourism-related businesses such as handicrafts and guiding services. Also, tourism has created employment opportunities for local residents in various sectors. Many families have operated homestays and small businesses focused on tourists, which has increased household incomes.

Could you also talk about some negative impacts?

Yes, there are some negative impacts of tourism that we have observed in our community here like overcrowding. I can also see some tourists not following the waste management rules and thus, littering the area. The municipality, in the recent time has implemented a fine for this kind of activity. I feel that the growth of tourists has also led to changes in the local lifestyle and culture. The cost of living has also risen in some areas.

Do you have any concerns about the future impacts of this growing tourism?

My major concern is the risk of over-commercialization of cultural practices, where traditions may be misrepresented. This could lead to a loss of authenticity of our cultural identity over time. For example, I prefer to see tourists enjoying *Bisket Jatra* but I would not like to see the change in the timing of festival, impacted by the arrival of tourists in the future.

What type of sustainable practices have the community implemented in the area?

I can think of one key project which involves educating local residents and tourists about responsible waste management and recycling. Another practice is the guided tours led by knowledgeable locals. It highlights the cultural and historical significance of this place while promoting respect for local customs and traditions. There are some cultural workshops and demonstrations conducted by local artisans to showcase traditional crafts and skills. For instance, I showcase the handicrafts made from furniture in such workshops. Also, sometimes there are awareness campaigns organized to let people know about environmental conservation practices and encourage responsible behavior during their visit. Also, there are sometimes tree-planting activities to maintain the cleanliness and greenery of the area.

Finally, what are your aspirations/ambitions for the sustainable tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square?

One important aspiration is to maintain a balance between tourism growth and cultural preservation, ensuring that tourism activities enhance rather than degrade our heritage.

Participant 2: Maya Devi Shrestha, 37 years old female

Can you please introduce yourself and your occupation? Also, how long have you been living here around Bhaktapur Durbar Square?

Namaste, my name is Maya Devi Shrestha and I am a teacher at a local school.. I have lived in this area all my life, which is 37 years. I am also usually involved in different community events and activities.

What changes have you observed in tourism around Bhaktapur Durbar Square over the years?

I think a lot of tourists have been visiting this area. Their number has been increasing every year.

How important are the cultural heritages for the people here? Why do you think they need to be preserved?

Our ancestors built these temples and palaces. They left their mark here for us to remember them. By protecting this place, we honor their hard work and sacrifice. It's like keeping a bond alive with those who came before us.

Do you think tourism has impacted this place over the years? And also on your lifestyle?

Absolutely. The square used to be much quieter, but it has changed now, with more tourists coming in. It's wonderful to see our culture attracting people from all over the world.

What are the positive impacts you have noticed, from the inflow of tourists here?

The job opportunities in tourism-related sectors like hospitality and handicrafts have increased. Maybe you noticed there are many tourist guides who have been employed to guide tourists here. Most of them are the locals. So, we can say tourism has been boosting local economy from it. Also, I think tourism has been creating a lot of job opportunities for different local people.

Could you also talk about some negative impacts?

Once, while there was a cultural dance ceremony during a festival here, some tourists joined the dance. It looked so weird but was equally enjoyable. I don't want to say it impacted our practice but looked unfamiliar. Other than that, I do not know any situations like that. I would also say pollution due to the inflow of tourists, which affects the quality of life for residents.

Do you have any concerns about the future impacts of this growing tourism?

There's a risk of overdevelopment and strain on local infrastructure, which can negatively impact the quality of life for residents. It is important to balance the benefits of tourism with the need to preserve our cultural identity.

What type of sustainable practices have the community implemented in the area?

Yes, our community here has adopted practices like organizing guided tours led by knowledgeable locals to educate tourists about our culture and heritage. They have organized workshops to showcase traditional crafts and skills to tourists. Additionally, the community promotes local cultural events and festivals to engage tourists in authentic experiences while respecting our traditions and heritage. The collaboration with the municipality has been an important method to implement waste management initiatives and promote recycling.

Finally, what are your aspirations/ambitions for the sustainable tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square?

My aspiration is to empower local residents through tourism-related opportunities, promoting economic benefits while preserving community values. The goal should be to achieve sustainable tourism development that enhances our quality of life and also protects our cultural and heritage for future generations.

Participant 3: Mahesh Prajapati, 39 years old, male

Can you please introduce yourself and your occupation? Also, how long have you been living here around Bhaktapur Durbar Square?

Namaste, my name is Mahesh Prajapati and I have a pottery business. Previously, I lived in Patan but I've been living in Bhaktapur almost 25 years now. I make different pots from clay and sell them for living. I am actively involved in the community events in this area.

What changes have you observed in tourism around Bhaktapur Durbar Square over the years?

I've noticed a lot of changes since I moved here. Changes mean increase in tourism. This change has influenced the local businesses around the square.

How important are the cultural heritages for the people here? Why do you think they need to be preserved?

Our cultural heritage in Bhaktapur Durbar Square means a lot to us. It tells the story of our past and shows our rich culture. Preserving these buildings is like keeping our memories and stories alive for future generations. It also brings visitors to our city, which helps our businesses and supports our community.

Do you think tourism has impacted this place over the years? And also on your lifestyle?

Yes. I can say there's more demand for our traditional pottery items as souvenirs. On the other hand, we have to compete with cheaper goods. But overall, I'd say it's been mostly positive.

What are the positive impacts you have noticed, from the inflow of tourists here?

On the positive side, tourism has provided economic opportunities through job creation. This has allowed people to generate income from guesthouses, restaurants, and art businesses. Tourism has motivated local people here to start their own business, like you can see different restaurants and souvenir shops. So, the growth of tourism has played a vital role towards the local economy.

Could you also talk about some negative impacts?

I think the growth of tourists has also disrupted the peaceful rhythm of daily life, especially during peak seasons. And yes, cultural clashes and misunderstandings between tourists and locals have also often created tensions. According to our culture, we believe in privacy but I have seen a lot of cases where tourists have not been private and we feel uncomfortable about that.

Do you have any concerns about the future impacts of this growing tourism?

I think original cultural traditions can deteriorate as tourism continues to grow. I don't see it now but it might happen in the future and I hope it does not happen like that. The cost of everything could also increase significantly in the future due to tourism.

What type of sustainable practices have the community implemented in the area?

One initiative is the promotion of souvenir shopping, encouraging visitors to buy locally made handicrafts and products that support our local artisans and businesses. The guides are local people from here who educate tourists about the significance of the sites and the need for conservation. There is also the establishment of waste management system to keep the area clean and reduce environmental impact. There are cultural workshops, where the tourists learn traditional crafts like pottery directly from us. The municipality also organizes awareness programs on waste disposal and recycling. Another practice involves organizing cultural events and festivals that highlight our traditional arts, music, and dance.

Finally, what are your aspirations/ambitions for the sustainable tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square?

My aspiration is to ensure that tourism activities does not compromise the local way of life and heritage. It is also necessary to prioritize responsible tourism practices that minimize environmental impact and promote community engagement.

Participant 4: Ramesh Tamang, 43 years old, male

Can you please introduce yourself and your occupation? Also, how long have you been living here around Bhaktapur Durbar Square?

Hello, my name is Ramesh Tamang. I was born in Dolakha, but I have been living and operating this restaurant business here for the past 15 years. Despite not being a native resident, I am quite engaged in community events. Recently, I participated in a waste management event which was very fun.

What changes have you observed in tourism around Bhaktapur Durbar Square over the years?

I have not seen much of the changes over the years. It is because there used to be a lot of tourists when I moved here and there still are lot of them while I am here.

How important are the cultural heritages for the people here? Why do you think they need to be preserved?

I think Bhaktapur Durbar Square is very important, from a cultural point of view. I was not born here but I can see that the ancestors of the local people here built these temples and palaces with love and skill. They are part of the identity and history of this place.

Do you think tourism has impacted this place over the years? And also on your lifestyle?

Tourism has completely transformed the restaurant scene here. When I first opened my restaurant, it was mainly visited by locals. But now, many tourists visit this place. I have also adjusted some of my menu. It's a good thing for business, but sometimes I miss the old days when things were simpler.

What are the positive impacts you have noticed, from the inflow of tourists here?

We can take an example of my business here. The increase in tourism has created employment opportunities for different people working in this restaurant. So, we can say it has been benefiting many families economically. Tourists spend their money on different activities like they buy local made arts and souvenirs. They also dine at restaurants to try local foods, for

example here in this restaurant. The money spent by the tourists increases the economy and it is utilized in the maintenance of the place.

Could you also talk about some negative impacts?

Let me share you one of the incidents that happened recently. A group of tourists came here to try *Newari food*. I informed them about *Chhoila* which as you know is very spicy, but they replied they could eat some spicy. But after they ate, their face turned red because of the spiciness. They said that they could not think that *Chhoila* would be that spicy. Of course the food is our tradition here and spicy is normal for us, but it was not for them. I don't say it impacted anything to our culture but it was sort of mismatched practices between them and us. Another thing I think about is that the rising tourism has led to increased living and renting costs. I have to pay a certain amount as rent for this restaurant. The price is bit expensive because this is a tourist area. Maybe it would have been bit less if it was quite far from this area.

Do you have any concerns about the future impacts of this growing tourism?

I am concerned there is a risk of increased pressure on infrastructure and resources due to growing tourist numbers, leading to environmental degradation and disruptions in daily life for residents. I am saying this because if you look at the number of visitors, there is a need for upgrading the infrastructure like water supply and electricity. However, this place is small and has limited space and I am not sure if the local people would be so happy to see that in the future.

What type of sustainable practices have the community implemented in the area?

There is a focus on promoting locally sourced and traditional foods in the restaurants. I have to reduce plastic waste by using paper bags to pack take away foods. There is active engagements in community-led initiatives for heritage conservation and waste management, like I mentioned before. The establishment of waste management systems and recycling programs keep the area clean and reduce environmental impact. The community also organizes cultural events that showcase traditional arts, music, and crafts. So far as I have noticed here, the community has

been offering guided tours led by local residents to the tourists. For environmental sustainability, there are some waste disposals like you can see one of them there.

Finally, what are your aspirations/ambitions for the sustainable tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square?

I think promotion of responsible tourism practices that respect local traditions and heritage is important. Also, the tourism should be diversified beyond the main attractions, encouraging visitors to explore lesser-known sites and support local businesses throughout the region.

Participant 5: Sita Ghaju, 36 years old, female

Can you please introduce yourself and your occupation? Also, how long have you been living here around Bhaktapur Durbar Square?

Namaste, my name is Sita Ghaju. I have been operating this guest house here in Bhaktapur for the past 10 years. I am actively participating in the community events in the area.

What changes have you observed in tourism around Bhaktapur Durbar Square over the years?

I have noticed tourists preferring authentic experiences and interactions with the local community, rather than just visiting tourist spots. Recently, there was a tourist asking a lot of questions to a *Khukuri* maker about its making. Maybe the tourist had only seen the production of *khukuri* in the internet and was experiencing in real time then.

How important are the cultural heritages for the people here? Why do you think they need to be preserved?

This place is not just stones and buildings; it's a sacred place. Our temples are like homes for our gods and goddesses. When we protect this place, we keep our spiritual connection strong. It's where we come to pray, to find peace, and to feel closer to the divine.

Do you think tourism has impacted this place over the years? And also on your lifestyle?

Of course. Since the growth of tourists over the years, this business has thrived with the increase in tourists visiting Bhaktapur Durbar Square. However, with the rise in competition, we constantly have to upgrade our facilities and provide better services to stand out. But overall, I'm grateful for the opportunities tourism has brought.

What are the positive impacts you have noticed, from the inflow of tourists here?

I would say growth of tourism has played an important role in providing employment opportunities to many people here. As the flow of tourists has been growing here, people have explored various ways to start their business, just like me. My business here has also benefited economically from tourism. Due to the growth in tourism here, a lot of hotels, restaurants and shops have been opened. And I think it is a good way of improving local economy.

Could you also talk about some negative impacts?

Yes. The increase in the number of tourists means more pressure on the water supply, waste management system and other infrastructures. There are also some situations of overcrowding, specially during peak season, when there is no proper space to walk.

Do you have any concerns about the future impacts of this growing tourism?

My concerns include wear and tear on historic sites and changes in local traditions. As you can see at the temple over there. The wooden stairs have been tearing down from some time due to the pressure from a lot of people everyday.

What type of sustainable practices have the community implemented in the area?

The community has implemented some initiatives like waste management programs and the promotion of local handicrafts. And yeah, we have a lot of local people working as tourist guides here. They help the tourists to visit the area and also guide them about the importance of the area. Various cultural activities are also organized here by the community highlighting the rich heritage of this place.

Finally, what are your aspirations/ambitions for the sustainable tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square?

The main aspiration is to preserve our cultural heritage while ensuring the well-being of our community. I hope we can develop tourism strategies that minimize the negative impacts on our historic sites and environment. This might also include measures to promote awareness about the importance of respecting our cultural traditions.

Participant 6: Bikesh Shrestha, 26 years old, male

Can you please introduce yourself and your occupation? Also, how long have you been living here around Bhaktapur Durbar Square?

Hello, my name is Bikesh Shrestha and I am a student. I am studying tourism management right now. I do not have a particular job but I actively work as a volunteer during the organization of events in this area.

What changes have you observed in tourism around Bhaktapur Durbar Square over the years?

Me and my friends used to and still spend a lot of our leisure time here and I can experience myself that that has been a noticeable increase in visitor numbers, especially with the growth of international tourism. I can see at least 20 different tourists everyday clicking pictures.

How important are the cultural heritages for the people here? Why do you think they need to be preserved?

Our Durbar Square is like an open book of history and culture. When we preserve it, we provide a place for schools and students to learn. It's not just about books; it's about experiencing history firsthand.

Do you think tourism has impacted this place over the years? And also on your lifestyle?

I've seen firsthand how it's changed over the years. The square has been busy, with tourists from all corners of the globe exploring our rich cultural heritage. It's definitely put Bhaktapur on the map, but it's crucial we balance preservation with development to ensure its long-term sustainability.

What are the positive impacts you have noticed, from the inflow of tourists here?

I think many residents have benefited from increased income and improved standards of living due to tourism-related activities. I have one of my friends here who has been in the business of making handicrafts since quite a long time now. He has been able to support his family economically from it. Many other residents here have found employment in the service sectors.. Also, tourism has played a role in the growth of small businesses like local artisans and craftsmen. They have benefit from increased demand for traditional handicrafts and souvenirs, providing them with a sustainable source of income.

Could you also talk about some negative impacts?

Yes, tourism growth in this place has brought some challenges like overcrowding and pollution. This has of course been disrupting daily routines of the people here. Also, I have seen a craftsman producing more marketable bracelet rather than procuding the authentic Newari bracelet. That looked quite fancy but lacked the proper value of *Newari* culture. If the souvenir is made within *Newari* culture, it should only contain *Newari* font, which is the only authentic one.

Do you have any concerns about the future impacts of this growing tourism?

I have a concern about environmental degradation due to increased tourist footfall, leading to pollution, and depletion of natural resources. This could have long-term impacts against the sustainability of the area and the well-being of residents.

What type of sustainable practices have the community implemented in the area?

There has been an emphasis on supporting local craftsmen and businesses through community-based tourism initiatives. I can think of one project about the restoration of historical buildings and monuments after the damage caused by the earthquake. There are also waste management programs to keep the area clean and reduce environmental impact from tourism activities. Waste management programs and recycling efforts are in place to minimize the environmental impact of tourism activities. Also the guides are the local people here, who are able to help the tourists regarding the knowledge about the cultural heritage of this place.

Finally, what are your aspirations/ambitions for the sustainable tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square?

My aspiration to implement responsible tourism practices that minimize negative impacts on local heritage and ecosystems. This includes promotion of eco-friendly accommodations like bicycles, and waste management initiatives to reduce the carbon footprint of tourism activities.