

IMPACTS OF COVID-19 IN TOURISM SECTORS: A STUDY OF SAURAHA CHITWAN

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ABSTRACT: *Nepal announced 2020 as years of visit Nepal and January 1st Government of Nepal also inaugurated the visit Nepal 2020 in Dasaratha Stadium Kathmandu. Public and private sectors have invested Millions to achieve the goal of Visit Nepal 2020, however, soon after the inauguration of Visit Nepal 2020 COVID-19 introduced in Nepal. The effect also falls in the tourism of Sauraha. The can be seen various impacts of COVID-19 in tourism sectors like jungle safari, hotels, restaurants. The study analyzes peoples' perception on the effect of COVID-19 on tourism sectors. The study followed both descriptive and analytical research design based on qualitative paradigm of the research. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources, however, findings and conclusion of the study was based on primary data. Only 25 individual respondents randomly selected to collect the information about the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism. From the data analysis and presentation it is found that social, economic, cultural and psychological impacts occurred in study area specially, in tourism sectors.*

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, Sauraha, Chitwan tourism

INTRODUCTION

The word "Tourism" has been derived from the French word "Tourisme" literally means to travel to the related fields. Later, this word was popularized in the decade 1930s but its significance was not fully realized. Kunwar (1997) defines, 'Tour' is known as journey from place to place for pleasure. Tourism has been defined in various ways. Some author describes Tourism as system tourism is a system of four inter-related part market, travel destination and marketing, Marketing is service related to the customer" (23). There are different types of tourism known as *aryatana* (going out for pleasure and knowledge): *deshatana* (going out other countries primarily for economic gain): and *tirthatan* (going to the place of religious importance). We get even many reference of *akhet* (hunting) and *vihara* (excursions). In the modern context various writers, researcher define the term tourism in different prospective. Bhatiya (1997) defines, "tourism as the totality of relationship and phenomenon arising from the travel and stay of strangers provided their stay does not imply the establishment of a permanent residence and is not concerned with a remunerated activity"(45). In the same lines Tourism for rural poverty alleviation program (TRPAP), (2005) explains, "A person becomes a tourist if he/she stays at a place or country other than his own place of stay for a minimum of one night for leisure, recreation, holiday, medical treatment, study and business, and family mission or meeting"(25). This definition highlights the basic features of tourism related to the outgoing phenomena from home with various purposes.

Corona virus (Severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus) has introduced in China in December 2019 in Wuhan China. Since the time the virus spread all over the world as pandemic. (Zimmer, 2021). In Nepal, the first case of corona found in Kathmandu in The first patient is 31 year old students who had returned from Wuhan China on 9th January. He is the first COVID patient of South Asia. The first case of local transmission was found on 4th April 2020 in Kailali and the first death occurred on 14 May. Lockdown was begun in 24 March and it was ended in September. However, the second wave of COVID still creating problem in nation. Schools, colleges, cinema halls and tourist spots are still closed. (Kathmandu Post, 31 March 2020)

COVID -19 not only affected on tourism sectors but also created problem on manufacturing and foreign trade and remittance. However, others sectors except tourism partly run during COVID pandemic. Tourism sectors like trekking, rafting mountaineering jungle safari are closed during COVID. Tourism sector is the most affected area of COVID-19. Around 20,000 tour, trek and mountaineering guides lost their job during COVID pandemic. (Tourism Board, 2021).

2020 was declared as visit Nepal year with aimed to bring two millions foreign tourist in Nepal. Ministry of tourism, culture and civil aviation inaugurated January first 2020 as visit Nepal years with big ceremony but the declaration was postponed in February after globally spread COVID - 19 pandemic. In this context, COVID-19 creates great deals of in tourism sectors and people living tourism area have been facing economic problems and that impact on their livelihood. In this study it analyzes the situation of Sauraha, the third important tourist spot of Nepal. The study mainly focused, what is the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic in Sauraha and how people perceive the situation and suggest to government to come out from the situation.

METHODOLOGY

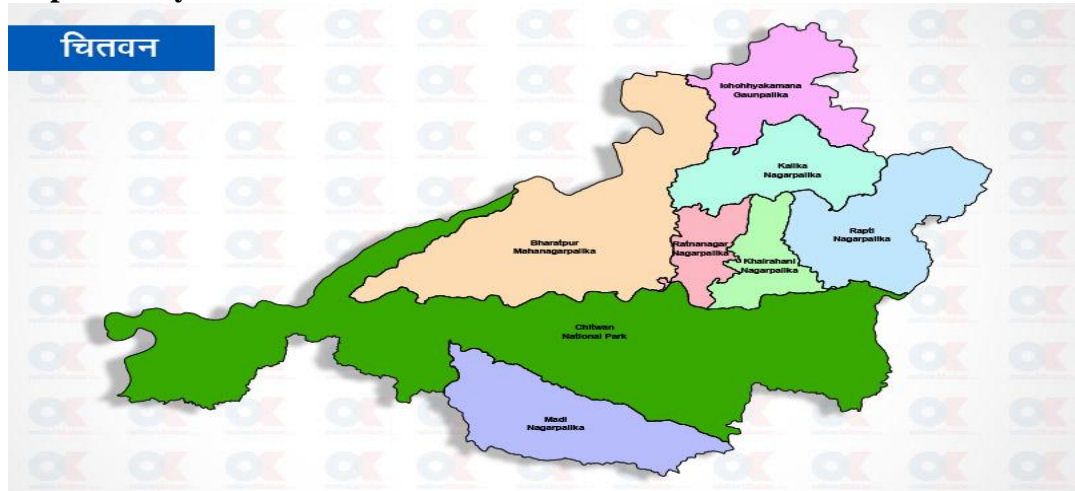
The study followed mixed method both qualitative and quantitative research paradigm and also used both descriptive and analytical research design. Qualitative information analyzed through descriptive way and quantitative data scrutinized by following analytical research design. Both secondary and primary source of data has been used for this study. Books, article and already published other materials have used as secondary source. Primary data were collected from field survey questionnaires and observation. 30 individual people who involved in tourism business were chosen as sample population for this study. Sample has been selected through cluster sampling method and only people from Sauraha area (Ratnagar Municipality Ward no. 7 the then Bachhuli Village Development committee). Conclusion has been drawn through data analysis and perception of the researcher what he has perceived at the time of field visit.

Study Area

Ratnagar municipality wards no 7 the then Bachhuli village development committee area has been selected as study area for this study. The area is located in Bagmati province 150 km far from Kathmandu. Total population of the ward is 5606. (Municipality Report, 2019, p.1). The study area is one of the main tourist spots of Nepal. Around five hundred hotels and restaurants are

currently located in the study area which was almost closed during the time of COVID-19 lockdown.

Map of Study Area



Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/> accessed 2021

Impacts of COVID on Nepali Tourism Sectors

Various impacts like economic, social, cultural and psychological can be seen in tourism sectors that occurred due to the COVID-19. Economic impact is one of the main impacts that play important role on the livelihood of the people. Like other pillar of national economy tourism sector is one of the important economic sectors. According to the economic survey 2019, tourism sector occupied 8% country's GDP in total. (Economic Survey, 2019). More than one million workers are employed in tourism sector. COVID pandemic highly affected on the sector and thousands of workers lost their job only the reason of COVID. The pandemic has mostly affected to lower middle class people who face challenges to fulfill their basic daily need of life. Record of the ministry of tourism, culture and civil aviation noted that "Tourists arrival rate has decline to below 10 percent" (Report of ministry of tourism, culture and civil aviation, 2020). It shows that 90% of the targeted number of tourists did not arrived Nepal during the years. The service industry has been hit hard by the continuous lockdown and absent of domestic and foreign tourists. In January 2020 after bean COVID-19 pandemic in Europe and America more than 50,000 already booked tickets has been cancelled (Record of tourism information sector 2020). After cancelation of these tickets none of the tourists have arrived in Nepal. Almost all the hotels and restaurants were closed. Due to the reason of COVID-19 pandemic low paid labors depended on tourism industries faced the problems of poverty. According to the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Nepal's tourism industry is estimated to lose more than \$330 million due to the lockdown enforced in the wake of the pandemic. (Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Report 2021). The tourism entrepreneurs have requested to the government to bring plans and policies to promote tourism for its survival. In some extent, government of Nepal thinks about to promote domestic tourism in Nepal, however, the second wave of COVID begin in Nepal from April 2021. Due to

the second wave of COVID-19 there are not like to come tourist from Europe and America soon. It will take long time recover pandemic in the world. In this context it is difficult to fulfill the lose that happened due to COVID-19 in tourism sectors because Nepal's existing political instability and limited resources cannot immediately create a large number of jobs and opportunities. However, government focuses on expanding the tourism and agriculture sectors that contribute to the economy.

Economic Impacts of COVID -19

Sauraha is located in Chitwan district which is one of the COVID-19 affected districts of Nepal. From the beginning of the pandemic death rate COVID-19 seemed higher in Chitwan so that local government strictly closed the tourist area for tourists. In this context, the study analyzes local people's perception about the economic effects of COVID-19 pandemic.

Socio Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

The study has been based on primary data; that has been collected from the filed through individual interview. Respondents from various socio economic backgrounds have been participated in this study. The following table highlights the socio- economic characteristics of the respondents.

Table: 1 Socio Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

S. N.	Age	No	%	Caste/ ethnicity	No.	%	Religion	No.	%	Education	No.	%
1	15-25	10	40	Bramin/ Chhetri	8	32	Hindu	14	56	literate	1	4
2	25-35	8	32	Ethnic	10	40	Buddha	7	28	Secondary	12	48
3	35-49	7	28	Dalit	7	28	Christen/ other	3	12	+2 level	7	28
4	Total	25	100	Total	25	100	Total	25	100	Above Bachelor	5	20

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Above table shows the socio economic characteristics of the respondents. Data shows that 40% respondents are between age group, 15 to 25, 32% are between age group 25 to 35 and 28% are between 35 to 49 years age group. Similarly, 32 % are belonging to Bramin and Chhetri community, 40% are belonging in Ethnic community, and 28% are fall under the Dalit community. In the same way, 56% respondents are to Hindu community, 28% are Buddhist, and 12% are belonging to Christian /other community. While analyzed the education status of the participants, it found that 4% literate, 48 % passed secondary level, 28 % passed + level and 20% passed above + level. Among twenty five participants most of the respondents are involved in hotel business

(15) respondents are involved in hotel business and 10 respondents are involved in trekking , jungle safari and curio shop.(three are involved in curio shop, 2 are followed jungle safari and five involved in trekking. Before and after COVID pandemic there found certain changes in the livelihood of the people.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Income

Before COVID-19, Nepal had prepared for Visit Nepal 2020. In Chitwan various hotels and cultural houses, restaurants were built by the local people. During the years of 2019 150 new hotels were established in Chitwan (Report of HAN chapter Chitwan, 2020). Due to COVID all the hotels, cultural houses and restaurants were closed. All the workers have lost their job and became jobless. Due to lose of the job, workers and business men lost their income. The following table shows the impact of COVID in income.

Table: 2 Impacts of COVID-19 in Income

S.N.	Impacts on income	No	%
1	Yes	23	92
2	No	2	8
3	Total	25	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 2 indicates the respondents' perceptions about the impacts of COVID-19 on income. Data shows that 92 percent respondents feel changes on income and 8 percent do not feel changes in income. After lose the job many workers have been jobless and their income automatically changes. They have no capacity to increase income during lockdown period; however, 10 percent respondents increase their income after shifting the job. They began the shop and sanitizer and mask so they earn more than previous. Only few people earn money by adopting new business like health equipment's related business.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Assets

Before COVID pandemic values of property is very high. Respondents have more assets like land, furniture, vehicles but in COVID period they sell some of the land, furniture and vehicles to pay loan of the bank. The following table shows impacts of COVID on assets.

Table: 3 Impacts of COVID-19 on Assets

S.N.	Impacts on income	No	%
1	Yes	18	72
2	No	7	28
3	Total	25	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 3 shows the impact of COVID-19 on asset of the respondents. Data shows that 72 percent respondents lose their asset due to COVID-19 Pandemic. They sell their fix property and other

assets and spend on other purpose. However, 28 percent respondents have not decreased their asset due to COVID pandemic.

Impact of COVID-19 in Livelihood

COVID-19 pandemic creates impacts on respondents' livelihood. Before COVID-19 pandemic situation of livelihood was better than this time. Livelihood strategies are ever changing process. The pattern of livelihood strategies of social groups varies on the basis of space and time. Existing socio-cultural values of people in the same space can create differences in the pattern of adaptation from one ethnic group to another. In the same way, adaptation pattern of the same ethnic group may differ from one place to another due to change in the social and physical environment (Banskota, & Pradhan, 2007). Before COVID-19 people used various household assets like television, car, motorcycle, washing machine, watches etc. After happened COVID pandemic none of the respondents purchases household asset in the house, however, some of the respondents purchase some household assets like mobile phone and laptop to use online class for their children. Except that none of other gadgets are purchased by the respondents. Schools are run through online classes and other business like bank and finance also partly run; however, tourism business is totally closed in Sauraha. The people who involved in tourism business have no capacity to increase household asset in their house. The following table shows the respondents perception about the impacts of COVID-19 on livelihood strategies.

Table: 4 Impacts of COVID19 on Livelihood Strategies

S.N.	Impacts of COVID19 on Livelihood Strategies	No	%
1	Yes	15	60
2	No	10	40
3	Total	25	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4 indicates the respondents' perception on the impacts of COVID-19 on livelihood strategies. Data shows that 60 percent feel changes on livelihood after COVID -19 and 40 percent do not feel any changes in livelihood strategies. After COVID-19 many workers have changed their livelihood, however, some are still waiting to revive the situation.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Social order

There can be seen impact of COVID-19 on social order. Due to lose of job, workers face various social disorder in life. During the time of COVID-19 worker are involved in illegal activities. The following table shows the perception of respondents on the impact of COVID-19 on social disorder.

Table: 5 Impacts of COVID-19 on Social order

S.N.	Impacts of COVID19 on Social order	No	%
1	Yes	14	56
2	No	11	44
3	Total	25	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 5 shows the impact of COVID-19 on social order. Data shows that 56 percent feel impacts on COVID-19 and 44 percent do not feel the impact of COVID-19 on social order. Gambling, rape, alcohol, drug, quarrel, gang fighting are increasing in the study area that bring social disorder in tourist area.

Impact of COVID-19 on Cultural Practice

COVID-19 brings new order in cultural life. Before COVID-19 pandemic there is system of hand shake, share the glass of wine. During the COVID-19 pandemic physical distance and Mask is compulsory so that hand shake culture is changed in the salute. Like that various cultural festivities also banded and only limited on online activities. The following table shows the respondents perception on the impacts of COVID-19 on performing culture.

Table 6: Impacts of COVID-19 on Cultural Practice

S.N.	Impacts of COVID19 on Cultural Practice	No	%
1	Yes	13	52
2	No	12	48
3	Total	25	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 6 shows the impacts of COVID-19 on cultural practice. Data shows that 52 percent respondents feel changes on culture due to COVID-19 and 48 percent do not feel any changes in cultural practice. During the time of COVID-19 tourist area was totally closed and traditional cultural practice like group dance, hand shaking, group sings all are stopped. However, some of the respondents are still practiced traditional culture and break the rules of government. They gather in certain venue and continue group dance and singing.

CONCLUSION

COVID-19 brings various changes in the life of people in tourist area. In Sauraha too respondents perceive various impacts like impacts on economy, income livelihood strategies. Like that unemployment, lack of routine and busy schedule, people are involved in various illegal activities and beak the social norms and values of the society. In Sauraha gambling, gang fight, rape and quarrel are increased. In some cases suicide cases also increase in my study. According to record of municipality ten individual have committed suicide during COVID -19 pandemic. During the time of COVID pandemic other business is partly opened but tourism industries are totally closed and thousands of workers became accidently became jobless. Millions of invest and hundreds of hotels are totally closed in Sauraha. In such critical situation of some of the workers are shifted from the job, however rest of the workers are waiting and hope to revive tourism related activities. To revive the tourism industries in Nepal government should bring new programs and address the problems of lower middle class workers and investors. Respondents demand soft loan and facilities to revive the tourism industries, however, government still does not bring policy to revive the tourism industries in Nepal. COVID -19 pandemic is still appeared in Nepal with second wave.

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