

# **A case study of community and nature-based features as a contributor for tourism development in Rasuwa District.**

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<b>A case study of community and nature-based features as a contributor for tourism development in Rasuwa District.</b>		
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Abstract		
<p>This study aims to understand the model of sustainable tourism in Rasuwa district of Nepal. As Rasuwa is a high-altitude region with different socio-economic dynamics than other research has, it needed attention to be studied. The study starts by introducing the need and available research works on the topic and assesses the effect of community-based and nature-based tourism on the sustainable development of Rasuwa District. It identifies opportunities offered by Rasuwa's cultural, and natural attractions, among others, and challenges presented by seasonality, infrastructure gaps, and environmental degradation. The study aims to understand the current dynamics and suggest effective ideas for sustainable future planning of tourism with the help of available natural resources and community culture. Qualitative data was analysed through the grounded theory that attempts to unravel the meanings of people's interactions, social actions, and experiences. Thematic analysis was done to understand the categories that needed attention, and the results highlighted include collaborative strategies of stakeholders like locals, government representatives, NGOs, etc. The study suggests innovative practices and supportive policies for tourism sustainability to help Rasuwa balance tourism and environmental sustainability. Most recommendations are towards infrastructure improvement, skill development, and entrepreneurship to address seasonal adjacencies and promote growth on a sustainable basis. This research provides actionable insights about how to ensure sustainable tourism in Nepal's Himalayan regions.</p>		
Keywords		
Community-based tourism, Nature-based tourism, Sustainable tourism, Rasuwa District, Ecotourism, Environmental sustainability		

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#### List of Abbreviations

- COVID: Coronavirus Disease
- BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation
- TRPAP: Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme
- NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations

- WTO: World Trade Organization
- CBT: Community-Based Tourism
- NBT: Nature-Based Tourism
- GDP: Gross Domestic Product
- UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## 1 Introduction

Tourism is an economic and social activity that means travelling from one location to another with the intent of learning and discovering new places, geography, culture, cuisines, traditions, and sets of activities conducted by persons individually and periodically in contexts different from their usual environment (IGI Global 2024). However, Tourism is a complex industry influenced by economic, political, geographical, and recreational players (Garcia 2014). Tourism is both extremely beneficial and damaging to the environment. Tourism offers several benefits, but it can also put a lot of pressure that causes damage to the natural environment, disrupting the wildlife, exerting strain on receiving communities, and leading to the degradation of traditional societies, which affects the already limited resources like forest and water and be a major cause of pollution (Sedai 2006).

### 1.1 Motivation of the Study

Various research has been done on developing eco-tourism and sustainable tourism in Nepal. Yet, relatively minimal literature is available that discusses eco-tourism practices in the Rasuwa region (Baniya 2023). This problem forms the basis of the research because mass tourism poses a risk to the sustainable development of the tourism industry in areas of fragile ecosystems. The sustainable tourism relies on three factors of sustainability: the environmental, the economic, and the socio-cultural sustainability (Sedai 2006). This study aims to demonstrate that sustainable tourism management of popular destinations is best achieved by eco-tourism and managing the social, economic, and environmental implications caused by the course of tourism. This must be done because of the increment of International and Domestic tourist traffic to the regions with mostly natural landscapes and low population. The travel sector is an enormous industry in Nepal which contributes a lot to the country's GDP and planning a sustainable future for this field is a necessity (Bhattarai & Karmacharya 2022). Therefore, the primary purpose of this research study is to build up a structure of sustainability and to identify the current situation of the tourism sector in Rasuwa district.

Rasuwa District has a strong cultural and natural environment that makes it a perfect subject for this study. Tourism in Rasuwa can boost the economy uplift the local community and protect the environment (Kunwar & Pandey 2015). With the great opportunities of natural and community tourism, there are various problems such as environmental degradation, cultural erosion, and unfair distribution of the benefits of tourism that need to be addressed and solved. With the rise in popularity of sustaining the environment and being eco-friendly while travelling the world, this study aims to find out how CBT and NBT are going to sustain

economic, ecological, and social with the dynamics of the region. This descriptive research aims to generalize the findings based on qualitative research by interviewing the stakeholders for sustainable development of the region. This study uses quantitative research which is a systematic approach to data gathering to allow one to obtain a thorough understanding of social events in its' own habitat (UTA Libraries 2016) by involving the understanding of locals and stakeholders this study aims at understanding the problems and suggesting recommendations for solving those issues to achieve sustainability in the region.

The preexisting studies about eco-tourism are majorly done in the West and according to the Western ideology and socio-economic environment but the case of Nepal is different because of its diversifying cultures and different socio-economic dynamics, this research intends to bridge this void by studying the context of Rasuwa. It will also allow us to preserve the natural and cultural integrity and work as a case study for other similar regions. With the increased tourism opportunities and easy implementation of community-based tourism the local population there do not need to migrate for economic benefits which will reduce overcrowding of cities like Kathmandu and Pokhara. The study also aligns with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) by the United Nations which will help Nepal achieve its SDG.

## 1.2 Justification of the Study.

This study is needed to examine the balance of tourism growth with sustainable tourism practices in one of Nepal's most ecologically and culturally significant regions. This is significant for improving the socio-economic conditions of the population residing in those areas. Rasuwa has distinctive natural landscapes and cultural legacy and finding sustainable ways to optimize those resources for the economic benefit of locals without sacrificing environmental integrity or cultural values is a challenge. A large percentage of tourism in the region relies on Nature Tourism like trekking, mountaineering, etc. which if not planned sustainably can cause unfavourable impacts on the environment that include soil erosion, deforestation and loss of habitat, garbage dumping, etc. The intensive concentration of tourism activities in a specific area exploits natural resources resulting in the marginalization of locals diminishing their cultural identity by eradicating cultural practices of the region in the longer run if not practiced sustainably. (Upadhyay 2020.)

Nepalese tourism has an issue of low-cost or mass tourism with visits to famous destinations which are delicate regions such as Everest region, Annapurna region as well as Rasuwa. With the ever-growing numbers of both domestic and international tourists, there is a great

need to observe the conserving principles of ecotourism. These impacts of higher visitor turnover rate create pressure on the environment, prejudice against traditional societies, competition for limited resources including water and forests, and an elevated rate of pollution on local and global tourism. (Baniya 2023).

Hence, while on the one hand, it can bring many positive changes such as commercial growth and community growth the aspect of tourism also presents several pressure points that include environmental impacts and affects the lifestyle of local populations of the region. Tourism affects the natural movement patterns of living plants and animals by not providing them space that they are used to and exposing them to human interference; farming and livestock are also affected by human interference beyond a certain point. These dynamics make nature-based tourism a controversial subject when it comes to the socio-economic benefits for the local communities since this does not factor out an equal distribution of the same across the two. Some other vulnerable groups in the community may still choose exploitative tourism without feeling any boon of its economic benefits (Kunwar 2014). Unplanned tourism can have impacts on local vegetation and cause an imbalance in wildlife habitat. It may also increase air, water, noise, light and other pollution. Native fauna could be hampered with roadways creating barriers to the movement of animals. Increased vehicles for construction and other commercial activities could destroy animals and their natural habitat (Buckley 2011).

With the increasing interest in tourism of Rasuwa District for the local communities, their culture, and natural beauty the existing tourism activities require additional balance and analysis regarding their sustainability (Baniya 2023). The problem is in redesigning the objectives of conserving the environment, improving the standards of living of the people residing in the area as well as catering to the increasing demand for tourism. However, there is inadequate research investigating the interconnection of nature-based tourism (NBT) and community-based tourism (CBT), thus further research is required to establish how these components may complement each other and contribute to the future sustainable development (Zielinski et al. 2021).

Managing the investment for infrastructure development in delicate ecological areas like Rasuwa without proper planning and sustainability has raised concerns over environmental disasters such as landslides or earthquakes. Special consideration needs to be paid to the stability and compatibility of such infrastructure with local ecology (Chan & Bhatta 2021)

### 1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this thesis is to examine sustainable tourism development opportunities in Rasuwa District while considering the socio-economic dynamics of the region and making use of already available natural resources and community partnerships for improving tourism in the region. These objectives are informed by the challenges and gaps outlined in the problem statement, specifically the need to address environmental degradation, unequal economic distribution, the preservation of cultural heritage, etc.

This study aims at exploring the current status of ecotourism in the Rasuwa district. This involves comparing the existing state of ecotourism highlighting the advantages, disadvantages and potential for further development by identifying and analysing communitybased features to promote tourism in Rasuwa. This means examining the current local environment of Rasuwa district which includes homestays, guiding services, cultural events, and community conservation efforts.

The research focuses on rich nature-based attractions in Rasuwa for increasing tourism, such as national parks, trekking destinations, natural ecosystems and religious sites. The research will help to understand how these assets can be used to develop the tourism sector while maintaining ecological balance. Recommendations for integrating community and nature-based tourism suitably will also be discussed in the study. By looking into the current status and dissatisfaction in tourism the study aims to recommend measures to improve local offerings while also marketing and supporting local cultures to generate revenue for the local economy. Ultimately, this study is aimed at developing a balanced model for tourism that promotes both community welfare and economic development. The sustainable tourism framework in Rasuwa is emphasized to create a balance between economic growth, cultural heritage, and natural resource preservation. This can serve as a model for other regions, encouraging a sustainable approach that benefits local communities without harming nature.

To identify solutions that optimize benefit distribution, promote long-term sustainable development, enhance community welfare, and protect the environment and to achieve this the study is guided by the questions:

- What are the current community and nature-based practices for tourism in Rasuwa District and how are they performing?

This question addresses the objectives of this study by exploring existing practices, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and analysing how these tourism models complement or conflict with each other.

- What challenges and opportunities exist in aligning community and nature-based tourism initiatives with sustainability in Rasuwa District?

This question directly links to the objectives by identifying barriers and opportunities, helping to understand strategies to integrate sustainable practices while balancing ecological preservation and community benefits. By answering these questions, the research aims to systematically address the objectives, leading to practical recommendations for sustainable tourism development in Rasuwa.

#### 1.4 Key Concepts

This research is focused on multiple elements of community and nature-based features for sustainable tourism development in the Rasuwa district of Nepal. As sustainability is an important factor during development in today's day and sustainable tourism is one of them that encompasses the environmental, commercial and social impact of tourism and all of this is linked with sustainability. With the increase in technology and keeping in mind the increased global warming and climate change sustainability in the tourism industry is also an important issue (Streimikiene et al. 2021). Sustainable tourism is fulfilling current demands in a way that the later generations also meet their demands. Economic growth, environmental conservation, and cultural heritage preservation are integrated. Sustainable tourism is necessary for high-altitude regions like Rasuwa because of the fragile ecosystem and the study identifies ways to achieve it.

Community-based tourism (CBT) is a method that has a participatory character, and local communities are directly engaged and share the benefits of tourism activities to promote the process of economic empowerment, cultural preservation, and a sense of community. CBT can be used to develop an approach for eco-development, especially in developing countries like Nepal where the majority of the population is in rural areas and has a rich cultural and traditional way of life. This can improve the socio-economic condition of the region with its rich culture and heritage (Arintoko 2020). The study aims to explore the community-based features of Rasuwa and find ways to incorporate those features into the tourism industry so that the local economy can prosper with the already available resources of the community.

Likewise, Nature-Based Tourism (NBT) also has a focus on tourism experiences related to natural landscapes, biodiversity, and ecosystems with responsible use of natural resources. As Rasuwa is rich in natural resources with famous destinations like Langtang National Park, religious significant sites like Gosaikunda, and mountains and trekking routes this study aims at the possibility of increasing tourism sustainably.

So, the key concepts focused on this study were sustainable tourism development, the use of natural assets for tourism activities and the effective use of community partnerships to promote tourism in the Rasuwa district. The study also focuses on the suggestions and feedback of the locals for achieving the desired sustainable results in the region.

### 1.5 Outline of the thesis

The paper outline is based on IMRAD format, but some liberty is taken to make the study more readable. Starting with the introduction chapter is about the aim of the study, the objectives, the research questions and the problem statement. It is aimed to let the readers know about what the study is about. The emphasis is given to features of community and nature-based models of tourism on sustainable tourism. Next, the study focuses on the essential background information with a focus on geographical information on Rasuwa District, an introduction to tourism in Nepal and the historical background of tourism. The study then reviews the relevant literature available that focuses on community-based tourism (CBT), and nature-based tourism (NBT) and the relationship between them as well as challenges regarding NBT and CBT with its implementation in high altitude regions like Rasuwa.

The research methodology describes the qualitative approach for research, data collection methods, and selection of respondents for the interview in which stakeholders like local homestay owners, guides, government officials, etc. were interviewed with relevant questions for the study. The data was analysed based on the responses and personal observation of literature and the findings of the research are presented in the analysis part including aspects such as the feasibility of the CBT and NBT in Rasuwa, seasonal fluctuations in tourism, the use of sustainability practices, the involvement of the locals in decision making and collaboration in attracting tourists. The final chapter concludes the study with a summary of the findings the answer to the research questions and practical recommendations for how to improve the way of tourism in Rasuwa that also suggest future directions in research. The References unit references every source used and listed throughout the thesis alphabetically and the Appendix provides supplementary materials like questionnaires and figures used in the study. A consolidated figure of the thesis outline is presented in Figure

1.

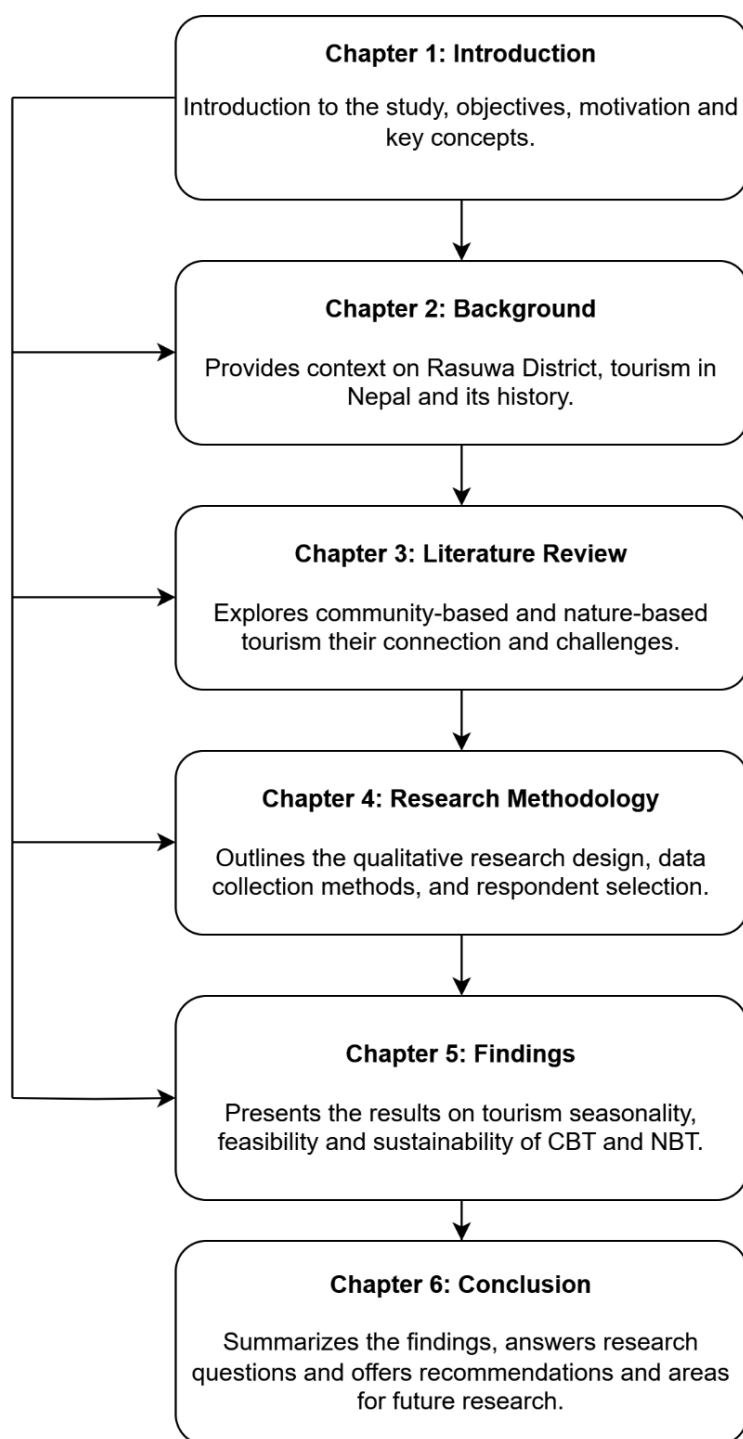


Figure 1. Outline of the thesis

## 2 Background

### 2.1 Overview and History of Tourism in Nepal

The tourism sector is one of the sectors that is rapidly growing and plays a huge role in economic development and providing job opportunities for the local population to improve

their socio-economic status (Dwyer et al. 2009). Tourism in Nepal was initiated in the mid 1950s with the formation of the National Planning Council for Tourism along with the founding of Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation which succeeded in transforming the tourism lead into the country. This was made for a shift of traditional tourism image to cultural and adventure tourism regarding increased interest in Buddhist influences due to the flooding arrival of Tibetan refugees. But formal promotion began in the late 1980s as the trekking paradise started gaining popularity, the progress of tourism facilities in Nepal began in the 1990s, mainly in Kathmandu, where the international tourist's first point of contact is, and Pokhara, which is famous for its lakes and trekking routes (Sapkota 2020). Tourism helps in employment for over a million people be it through direct involvement in the tourism sector or and indirectly and contributes around 4 per cent of the GDP of Nepal. (Bhandari 2022)

Nepal has distinctive tourism products based on its natural assets, cultural history, and geographical diversities. As one of the famous mountain adventure sports pioneers, Nepal offers many natural landscapes for hiking, climbing, paragliding, wildlife hunting, and much more (Hop Nepal 2023). Nepal has 8 out of 10 world's tallest mountains and is globally famous for mountaineering and trekking in general boosted by the world's highest peak Mount Everest. Moreover, other activities like bungee jumping, jungle safari, bird watching, and so on have also attracted many nature lovers to take nature sightseeing tours in Nepal to have a close look at the beautiful natural sceneries. Nepal has so enormous natural and cultural features and travellers like to Because of that tourism plays an important role in the economy of the country (Jayawardena et al. 2008).). Nepal has cultural tourism which reflects a rich and developed heritage that is a product of multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-lingual beliefs. Antique admirers can go for artisan products like pieces of jewellery, Thangka paintings, and other hand-woven apparel and pashminas. Religious places and the tradition of spiritual practices in Nepal also make the place attractive (Upadhyaya 2011).

Tourism can play a significant role in boosting Nepal's economy, directly by providing employment to the locals and improving their economic status and also through indirect means like the government policies for the development of infrastructure and facilities for tourism activities. (Stevens 1988) In some countries, tourism plays an important role in sustaining the economy as the agricultural industry is on the decline because of multiple factors tourism serves some economies to sustain by providing employment opportunities to the local population. Similarly, some regions rely entirely on tourism. (Ashley et al. 2007)

## 2.2 Rasuwa District and Tourism

The Rasuwa District, one of the newly established districts which is in the Himalayan region of Nepal can be taken as an example of the above explained features of nature and community-based tourism. This district is near the Langtang National Park (LNP) which was declared in 1976 with an area of 1710.00 Km<sup>2</sup>; extending to a buffer zone of 42.00 Km<sup>2</sup> (Kunwar 2014). LNP has direct and strategic significance for the ecological variety because it is home to the species of conservation importance as well as endangered species like snow leopard and red panda, *Panthera uncia* and *Ailurus fulgens* respectively; and also falls within the Sacred Himalaya Landscape that holds religious importance for both Hindu and Buddhist. This landscape also plays a valuable role in protecting the corridor between the protected area in Nepal and Tibet (China) which raises regional biodiversity and conservation value. Despite the stunning sceneries that nature offers to the eye, historical and cultural values give a new perspective on the district's importance. (KC 2022).

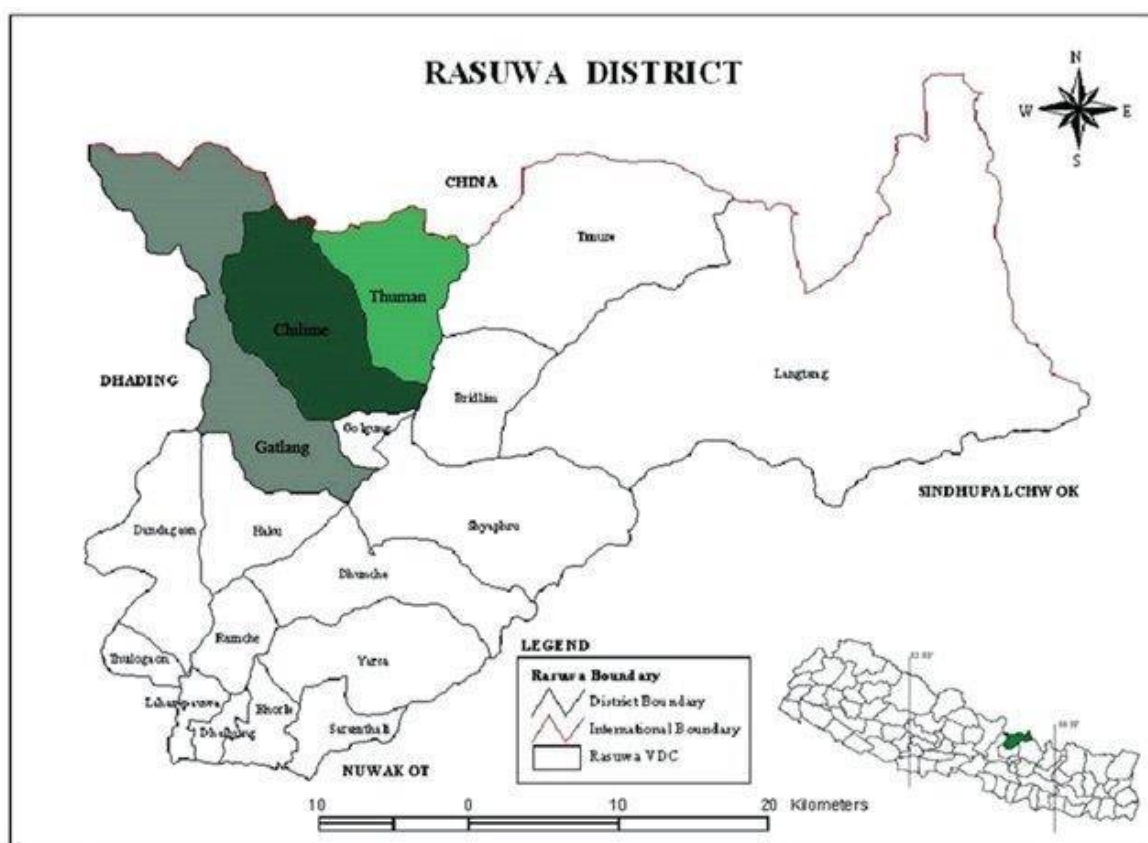


Figure 2. Map of Rasuwa district (Yadav and Rajbhandary 2016)

When it comes to nature and adventure tourism activities; trekking, hiking, and mountaineering are the most common and greatly confined to the Syafrubensi-Langtang-Kyangjin of Rasuwa. Some of the beautiful trekking tracks in the district include the one to

Gosaikunda a Hindu and Buddhist pilgrim destination that is trekked by thousands of pilgrimage tourists annually. The cultural essence of the region is well distributed as the indigenous Tamang people have rich traditional practices and beliefs with their own folk songs and unique dance performances. There are many tangible and universal properties like architectural, religious, and historical sites that complement the beauty of the region and provide tourists an exciting touch of culture, monasteries, traditional villages, and local markets with handcrafts which are among the famous ones. Still, this region is not only impressive for its landscapes: it offers guests a deep cultural experience. Even though a person has travelled extensively for the thrill, gains a cultural and anamorphic awareness of the territory and the great Himalayas (Duwadi 2024).

The growth of Nepalese tourism began during the 1950s and which was mainly depended on trekking over the period including cultural tourism, rock climbing, pilgrimage tourism ecotourism, etc. In the last two decades, a steep rise has been seen in the number of foreign tourist arrivals in Nepal as the potential for adventure tourism got famous all around the world and Nepal's nature and culture got promoted (Nepal 2022).

Among the variants of tourism, ecotourism is a kind of model that uses natural resources sustainably and the combination of conservation measures with the social and economic development of communities with tourism simultaneously. Ecotourism encourages proper utilization of natural resources concerning the ecological system and has direct positive impacts on the hosts (Honey 2008). In Rasuwa, therefore, homestay programs, local guiding services, educational tours, cultural performances, etc support the local people and ensure Community-based tourism creates a new tourism market and ensures natural resources sustainability.

The Rasuwa district has beautiful natural landscapes for sightseeing, bird watching, trekking, and other adventurous tourism activities which makes it a perfect location for Naturebased tourism and also the religious and cultural aspects unique to the region especially the Tamang community and their festivals and culture make it a desirable spot for Community-based tourism as many tourists are eager to explore the unique mountain culture (KC 2018). The study will also examine ways and mechanisms of enhancing linkages of these community efforts for more solidification of sustainable tourism development practices. Rasuwa district has turned into an important tourist hub with valleys like Langtang attracting tourists for trekking to the nearby mountain track, Gosaikunda Lake, and Yala Peak. The ability to maintain progress and work towards upholding sustainable tourism as a major strategy from which travellers from all over the world can get to see Nepal's natural beauty, culture and traditional practices all point towards the realization that

the government of Nepal has and will continue to create employment opportunities while at the same time taking crucial steps to protect the environment and Nepal's culture. Multiple vanishing species are found in the high-altitude region of Nepal including endangered birds, plants, flowers, etc (Shrestha 2001).

### 2.3 Comparison to other research

Some of the aspects studied on tourism in Rasuwa district include community participation, the implication of nature tourism, and the Socio-economic returns that can be earned from tourism activities. When the conclusions of this study are compared to those of other studies, useful data regarding how tourist development is carried out in this area is discovered.

Dahal (2011) has paid considerable attention to the key approach implied in the "Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (TRPAP)". His conclusions suggest that effective rural tourism can be possible only if local communities take part in the decision-making processes and share in the economic benefits. (KC 2017), suggests that social and physical quality objectives should thus be attained if local people participate in their active involvement in ecotourism ventures. Nature-Based Tourism and Ecotourism

A lot of earlier researchers highlighted that nature-based tourism can gain significant importance in Rasuwa because of its biological and geophysical diversities. The study by Newsome & Dowling evaluates how ecotourism influences economic growth and serves as a tool for protecting the world's natural resources. It is believed that ecotourism in Rasuwa helps the district's economy while also acting as a conservation tool that changes tourist behaviour (Gurung & Scholz 2008).

Several studies have acknowledged cultural tourism as a preservation tool. For example, Duffy (2008) discusses how responsible tourism can improve society's human cultural value through responsible consumption. This study agrees with Dahal (2011), who believes that initiatives such as the TRPAP help maintain and develop the traditions of the people living in Rasuwa while also providing jobs for them. As a result, there is a connection between maintaining culture and promoting tourism in Rasuwa (Dahal 2011).

### 2.4 Challenges and Barriers

Several studies show that Rasuwa has the potential to grow its tourism industry, but there are also some major challenges. (Blackstock et al. 2008) discuss issues about local communities' training demands, infrastructure development, and limited resources. Actors

must work together to establish sustainable solutions since such obstacles may lessen the influence of intentions on the progress of tourism. (KC 2017).

According to a review, the general strategy for Tourism Development in Rasuwa is to consider community involvement, environmental conservation, and cultural practices empowering locals, making sure that they receive an even share of the earnings and combining local, non-governmental, and government organizations into partnerships are all areas that require attention (Sedai 2006). The government policies in the region seem to be inadequate for sustaining sustainable development in the area and promoting tourism and good policies are required to achieve it. According to research, good governance is crucial to bringing tourism growth under control while controlling environmental and cultural damage (Ruhanen 2013). Seasonality is another problem in Rasuwa as the influx of tourists increases at certain points of the year and is considerably low in the rest. This is a wellrecognized problem of tourism, and it affects the tourism economy. With the increase in problems with seasonality, it is important to find solutions to respond to these problems sustainably. (Yabancı 2023)

Overall, the review here supports this framework by pointing out that community engagement is a way to successfully represent community voices and address current issues in the development of tourism initiatives in Rasuwa. These results not only advance our understanding of Rasuwa's tourist factors but also aid in the discussion of sustainable tourism in Nepal (Kunwar et al. 2014).

### **3 Literature Review**

This paper aims to identify literature that will help readers understand the economic, environmental, and socio-cultural impact of sustainable tourism in Nepal's rural areas using the homestay model. The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) defines sustainable tourism as 'Tourism that strives at all times to maintain its economic, social, and environmental impacts in a balanced and sustainable state and to meet the environmental needs of visitors, the organ of the industry, the visitors, the environment, and the local cultural tourism, social, and economic host community'. The World Tourism Organisation defines sustainable tourism development as meeting the needs of current tourists and host regions while protecting and improving opportunities for future generations.

According to research, people most often visit heritage sites to grow spiritually, relax, get away from home, spend time with loved ones, or discover themselves (Harrison 2003). Because of Nepal's rich geographical and ethnic diversity, sustainable tourism has emerged

as an important factor in managing the growth of the tourism industry and the environment socially and economically (Sedai 2006). However, sustainable tourism is still an emerging problem in the context of Nepal, which needs research attention, especially in the case of rural application of sustainable tourism. Based on previous research, this literature review aims to combine knowledge from various sources such as national policies, management procedures, and previous literature related to tourism and sustainability indicators for the development of the Nepalese tourism evolution and the opportunities and threats associated with it. Specifically, the community-based nature of homestay tourism is analyzed to establish the foundation for developing rural parts of Nepal for sustainable tourism purposes (Dhakal 2021).

### 3.1 Community-Based Tourism

Along with supporting sustainable practices in the tourist industry, CBT involves communities in the tourism industry to improve their welfare (Dangi & Jamal 2016). Its main goals are to involve communities in tourism management and highlight the tourism sector's traditions, knowledge, and way of life. CBT can also support social freedom and provide income for the underprivileged by offering local accommodation, guided village tours, and cultural groups (Blackstock et al. 2008). Community-based tourism (CBT) has been extensively researched as a sustainable approach to tourism development that emphasizes the role and empowerment of local communities (Kayat 2002).

Community-based tourism (CBT) is becoming popular as a means of cultural preservation and poverty reduction (Bhattarai et al. 2005). It aims to solve economic and cultural sustainability problems by empowering communities to control the tourism business. Some activities may involve things such as farming projects, local crafts, cooking, and storytelling to create awareness among the visitors who are financially helping the local economy to grow. However, challenges like poor financial support, poor infrastructure, and poor training of skills can sometimes hinder the proper utilization of CBT in underdeveloped areas like Rasuwa. Effective strategies might require partnership support from NGOs as well as governments, which may initially provide some level of structure but develop handover strategies to manage local peoples' ownership in the long run (Nepal Tourism Board 2023). In the context of sustainable tourism development, promoting community-based tourism has been identified to achieve sustainable development goals (Matarrita-Cascante et. al. 2010).

## Job Creation



Figure 3. Benefits of Community-Based Tourism (Gupta et.al. 2020)

CBT has developed in Nepal through initiatives in many villages such as Langtang and Dhunche, Gatlang, where tourists are introduced to traditional village life, festivals, and other traditional practices and rituals. These interactions also allow travellers to have memorable and new experiences while also preserving cultural traditions through their use. The CBT model has developed into one of the key tourism initiatives in countries like Nepal, addressing its objective of improving the socio-economic condition of local communities while preserving the traditional culture and geographic diversity. Furthermore, community participation fosters a sense of responsibility and promotes the preservation of local traditions, the environment, and resources for future generations. (Hiwasaki 2006.)

According to Buckley (2009), nature tourism includes the parts of travel that depend on natural resources in their natural state and are meant for experiencing and enjoying wildlife and the natural environment. Recently, this type of tourism has become increasingly popular. Tourism acts as a way for people to connect with the environment as well as for enjoyment. Therefore, an important part of global tourism policy is the management of recreation (Newsome 2010).

### 3.2 Nature-based Tourism

Nature-based tourism, which is categorized under ecotourism, has rapidly grown in popularity since its development in the 1980s. It is concerned with environmental degradation, conservation, and the economic returns on investment for host communities (Duffy 2008). The term "ecotourism" clearly indicates the current realization of the broad values of ecological conservation and appreciation, as well as the responsible use of tourism resources. Ecotourism also emphasizes that to encourage sustainable tourism, local people's ownership and sharing of tourism profits promote ecological sensitivity and environmental consideration. Nature-based tourism is important, especially in countries like Nepal that are rich in natural beauty and tourist places and it can play an important role in uplifting the economy of the country (Nyaupane et al. 2009).

A study has shown that the key players should involve everybody as general members to form a healthy cooperative of governments, NGOs, and private industry to support the sustainable conservation of these resources (KC 2017). Overall management of resources complements the conservation of the natural environment while variations in the cultural practices and employment needs of the communities benefit the local population (Dahal 2017).

Tourism, conservation, and community engagement in the Usambara Mountains, as well as ecotourism, have resulted in socio-cultural effects that have led tourism planners to consider all these factors. Promoting an appropriate tourist attitude, encouraging cultural sensitivity, and protecting the cultural sanctity of any community that visitors visit are all necessary for socially sustainable tourism (Carlsen & Wood 2004). Nature-based tourism can promote sustainable development and poverty eradication in countries such as Nepal by providing revenue-generating natural resources while also conserving biodiversity and cultural heritages. Nature-based tourism is growing globally, especially in lower-wealth countries, despite declining per capita visits in wealthier nations like the U.S. and Japan. This trend supports conservation efforts and environmental awareness, with the reasons for declining visits to richer countries still uncertain (Balmford et al. 2009).



Image 1. Devotees throng Gosainkunda for Janai Purnima celebrations (Ratopati 2024)

Gosainkunda, a prime destination in Rasuwa district, stands as an example of nature-based tourism, where this serene high-altitude lake covered between mountains attracts thousands of pilgrims during festivals like Janai Purnima. Despite being a difficult terrain, the site accommodated over 130 buses, 350 jeeps, cars, vans, and 420 motorcycles, reflecting its popularity among the local population. Large tourist inflows required the establishment of health camps and increased security measures.

In conclusion, nature-based tourism (including ecotourism) significantly plays an important role in the management and sustainable use of natural resources for the benefit of tourism consumers and the receiving community (Shrestha 2023). To protect and nurture natural capital as well as the people and communities that surround it, successful implementation is directly related to careful planning and administrative activities that take into consideration the environment, society, and economics (Nyaupane et al. 2009).

### 3.3 Relationship between community-based tourism and nature-based tourism

Both CBT and NBT work hand in hand in creating a sustainable structure in a community for tourism operations since they share the same principles that enhance the conservation of the environment and participation of the locals in developing local tourism products. Their link is based on their common goals of sustainable development, cultural conservation, and environmental management. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) focuses on local people's increased participation in the decision-making processes of tourism and development. This

avoids commercial exploitation of people and culture by keeping economic benefits close to the community such as through homestay operations and cultural performances. CBT also covers cultural promotion, where cultures, arts, and knowledge are developed to maintain a certain cultural heritage against the backdrop of globalization (Han et al. 2019). Nature-based tourism (NBT) relies on natural resources as the main selling point; it hence depends on features like biodiversity, including twenty- seven sites of ecological significance as well as attractive scenery to lure tourists. This form of tourism is therefore conservation-oriented with the primary goal of maintaining the natural resource endowment of the regions that host the tourists. NBT promotes practices such as responsible wildlife interaction, habitat protection, and sustainable resource use, aligning with global conservation goals. It also integrates environmental education for tourists, enhancing their appreciation of nature and fostering support for preservation efforts. By creating economic incentives linked to conservation, NBT ensures that local communities also benefit through sustainable livelihoods, thus creating a balance between ecological preservation and socio-economic development (Cabaguing 2024).

Both CBT and NBT operate on principles of sustainability, aiming to balance economic growth with environmental conservation and cultural preservation. They share a symbiotic relationship where their combined implementation enhances local livelihoods while protecting natural resources. For instance, nature-based tourism thrives on pristine ecosystems, which are often maintained through community-based initiatives. Local communities serve as guardians of biodiversity, promoting conservation efforts and providing unique cultural experiences that attract tourists (Han et al., 2019 & Winter et al. 2019).

Community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives focus on empowering local populations through tourism ventures like craft markets, cultural exhibitions, and eco-guided tours, creating sustainable income while building local capacity. These activities not only highlight regional traditions but also provide opportunities for marginalized groups, particularly women and youth, in rural areas to actively participate in economic activities. By linking tourism to community development, CBT ensures that the financial benefits of tourism remain within the community, fostering fair growth. For example, studies show that CBT ventures, such as homestays in Nepal or artisan cooperatives in Latin America, enhance livelihoods while preserving cultural heritage (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009). Nature-based tourism (NBT) generates significant revenue from eco-tourism activities such as wildlife safaris, trekking, and park fees, which are reinvested in conservation projects and infrastructure that support local communities. This type of tourism not only attracts direct funding for environmental preservation but also strengthens the economic viability of maintaining protected areas. It

enhances biodiversity conservation by aligning economic incentives with ecological sustainability. The financial benefits of NBT, such as job creation and other economic benefits from tourism-related activities, help the local communities to implement conservation efforts (World Bank 2022).

Combining both NBT and CBT results in a strong team that makes NBT more financially sustainable while bringing a sense of inclusion and involvement in both landscapes and people. NBT uses natural resources such as forest, biodiversity, and landscape to market tourism and meanwhile, CBT ensures that these developments engage the locals in the economic gains of tourism and empower them in the process. For example, eco-lodges and guided tours employing locals are an outstanding example of a double win because on one hand, they offer the traditional cultural tourism experience of the CBT model, and on the other, deliver the environmental theme of the NBT model. This dual approach not only diversifies income streams but also creates a deeper connection between communities and environmental conservation. Involving locals in the decision-making and revenue-sharing model addresses economic inequalities and creates a sustainable environment for preserving natural and cultural heritage (Cabaguig 2024 & Zapata et al. 2011).

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and Nature-Based Tourism (NBT) are closely connected, as both prioritize sustainability, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation. CBT empowers local communities by ensuring they directly benefit from tourism, while NBT focuses on utilizing and protecting natural resources for ecotourism indirectly helping the local economy. Together, these models create a balanced approach where local communities support conservation efforts, and tourism promotes both economic development and environmental management. Their shared goals and principles demonstrate how these two tourism models are intertwined, reinforcing each other in promoting sustainable tourism (Han et al., 2019 & Cabaguig, 2024).

### 3.4 Economic, Social, and Cultural impacts of tourism

The impact of tourism on the economic development of host destinations is observed through employment, local entrepreneurial development, and foreign exchange income. It helps in increasing GDP through various sectors including the accommodation sector, transport sector, and entertainment sector. Also, due to tourism activities, there is always the development of social amenities such as roads, airports, and other infrastructure that will greatly benefit the local communities other than the tourism sector. The sector still has problems such as economic leakage whereby profits are taken out of the local economy, and fluctuating tourist arrival patterns which lead to unpredictable financial trends. However,

they can only remain as concerns even though tourism is an important factor in economic development, where industrialization chances are limited (Apriyanti et al. 2024.)

Socially, tourism promotes intercultural and inter-group contact between the tourists and the locals of the area hence promoting unity and understanding of both cultures. Basic facilities, including transport, pharmaceuticals, and schools, are enhanced to meet the demands of tourists, raising the living standard for locals. However, the rapid increment of tourism development threatens to overload community resources, increase social injustice, and collapse traditional hierarchy. Some of them may be directed toward deteriorating the quality of life of people within the area with issues like over-tourism. Several factors should be taken into consideration in a community to encourage a favourable rating in the facilitation of tourism, that includes, communal involvement policies. This needs to be inclusive and any negative impacts that may arise from the implementation of tourism as a success factor should be effectively managed (Agarwal et al. 2024.)

Culturally, tourism has dual significance as a bearer and disruptor of heritage. It offers grants for the protection of cultural heritage, the arts, and cultural festivals; many of which give new life to practices threatened by extinction. Through displaying and exposing the cultures and history of a culture to the global masses, tourism increases their pride among the people. On the other hand, the pressure to sit and meet the tourists' needs distorts the organic processes of public cultural production, it commercializes it and standardizes it. Technological development and respect for cultural heritage are essential to getting the right balance between cultural relevance and tourists' expectations of cultures for the appropriate cultural tourism management (Bai & Weng 2023.)

### 3.5 Tourism as a Tool for Sustainable Development

Sustainable tourism can be described as a set of measures employed by or in the management of the travel and tourism industry. The primary goal of sustainable tourism is to find the positive and negative impacts of tourism. It simply seeks to amplify the benefits and reduce the drawbacks (Global Sustainable Tourism Council 2022). Tourism continues to be one of the most promising and influential factors of development that stimulate further economic growth, use and protection of natural resources, and social improvement. Tourism, if well harnessed, is a source of income and employment, especially in rural and underdeveloped regions. It can also encourage super-diverse cultural education and integration of different cultures and belief systems. (Badal & Kharel 2020.)

However, if tourism is not well managed, it can also have negative effects. They result in degradation of the environment, erosion of culture, and unfair treatment in society. To

overcome such challenges, it should adopt sustainable tourism policies that focus on the improvement of the communities' standard of living and the natural and cultural assets (Hop Nepal 2023). Sustainable tourism speaks to the economic, social, and physical or natural aspects of tourist activities. It involves the reduction of pollution, waste production, and depletion of natural resources. It is about the creation of benefits like employment, poverty eradication among others, and capacity building of the community (Hajam et al. 2023).

This was supported by the following sustainable tourism management approaches that include environmental management including proper waste disposal and energy and culture and heritage conservation to boost the tourist industry. This includes involving local communities in the decision-making process, paying fairly to its employees, and buying products from local markets (Karki 2024). Tourism is a very useful method of economic development if it is conducted under the principles of a careful and justified approach. Sustainable tourism management enables tourism to produce desirable social, economic and environmental impacts (Global Sustainable Tourism Council 2022).

## 4 Research Methodology

This unit outlines the research methodology used for assessing the impact of sustainable nature-based and community-based tourism in the Rasuwa district of Nepal. The study is based on a qualitative research design particularly designed for learning the subjective experience, cultural dynamics, and the ecology of the social and environmental conditions of Rasuwa district for the implementation of sustainable tourism through CBT and NBT. This method helps us to understand how community participation and natural resources play in significant role in tourism growth. Stakeholder perspectives such as local people, tourism professionals, and government authorities are the focus group and participants for the study. The respondents were interviewed about Rasuwa's existing situation of tourism, the seasonality effect, the feasibility of CBT and NBT, and the aspect of tourism sustainability. For analysis, the data were gathered through online mediums such as Zoom, Email, and WhatsApp, which were captured in audio, video, and text format. The respondents were chosen in such a way that they were the major stakeholders in the implementation of CBT and NBT. This includes local homestay and lodge owners who are primarily responsible for CBT, local tourist guides and tour operators who are the primary stakeholders in NBT, and government officials who are responsible for the implementation of rules and policies that can promote and push CBT and NBT. The method uses unstructured interviews and ethnographic which involves directly observing people in their natural environments to understand how they interact with their surroundings. Using this approach based on precepts of the qualitative approach and supported by interpretive paradigms (Bryman 2016), qualitative data was analysed through grounded theory that *attempts to unravel the meanings of people's interactions, social actions and experiences*. (Khan 2014) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006), respectively. Within this methodology, tourism-specific differentials in Rasuwa are favoured by focusing on meaning, experience, and participant perspectives (Hammarberg et al. 2016).

### 4.1 Qualitative Research Design and Questionnaire

*Qualitative research is a method of inquiry employed in many different academic disciplines, traditionally in the social sciences, but also in market research and further contexts* (Oun & Bach 2014). The qualitative methods together form a research design to achieve an overall insight into the subject matter. Unstructured interviews were conducted with stakeholders including local homestay owners, tour operators, and guides, and collected primary data. The main objective was to explore how community resources and natural attractions contribute to sustainable tourism development through these interviews. Unstructured

interviews had the important advantage of allowing participants to freely discuss their viewpoints, and as a result, offered extremely useful insights into the socio-economic and environmental factors affecting tourism in Rasuwa. Apart from interviews, participant observations were made to capture real-time interactions and behaviours in the community. The ethnographic method allowed the researcher firsthand experience of the region's cultural practices and their corresponding role in tourism. Interviews and observations together presented a holistic vision of the symbiotic relationship between community participation and natural conservation in tourism.

The research questions relate closely to the theoretical framework of CBT and nature-based tourism (NBT) as the questions in this thesis explore the multifaceted relationship between tourism dynamics, local communities, and environmental sustainability in Rasuwa district, Nepal. Each question was deliberately framed in a manner that will gather data in a way that should help in understanding factors affecting CBT and NBT components like seasonality, community involvement, sustainability implementation, and socio-economic impacts on local stakeholders for effective implementation of CBT and NBT.

Seasonality is a recognized problem that has negative effects on tourism and the local economy. The impact of seasonality must be studied and measures to resolve this seasonality issue sustainably must be explored. (Yabancı 2023) And as seasonality poses a risk for tourism activities the first set of questions on tourism seasonality is conducted to investigate the duration of tourism activity. This aids in understanding and focussing on seasonality issues to address the direct relationship with demand forecasting for CBT and NBT in the region. This also includes how peak and non-peak seasons affect local businesses and tourism infrastructure, as well as when to focus. The importance of this aspect is to understand the balance relations of tourism and environmental protection as it is defined in the theory of sustainable tourism (Hunter 2002).

Local entrepreneurship and cultural activities play prominent roles in promoting tourism, particularly CBT and concerns about them were raised to better understand the current situation. Questions were asked to support Butcher's argument that local participation in tourism-related decision-making guarantees that economic benefits will be shared, and cultural authenticity will be kept. (Butcher 2006).

The questions including eco-tourism infrastructure and waste management, directly address the sustainability factor for environmental regulation. Finally, policy-oriented questions were asked about sustainable tourism development. Government policies are important in determining how tourism works and in ensuring that the development in areas like Gosaikunda and Langtang National Park follows sustainability goals. It is found that good

governance is crucial to bringing tourism growth under control while controlling environmental and cultural damage (Ruhanen 2013).

## 4.2 Data Sources

The resulting data required for this study was obtained both from primary sources and secondary sources, resulting in a rich and diverse foundation for analysis. The primary data collected involved direct engagement with stakeholders and the secondary data helped in constructing the contextual understanding of tourism in Rasuwa, by supplementing findings from the device of primary research. As logistical barriers were considered, primary data collection through unstructured interviews was conducted remotely via digital mediums, including WhatsApp, Zoom, and email. The stakeholders of which these interviews were a part were straightforward: local homestay operators, tour guides, tour operators, and government officials. Participants for the study were selected according to their relevance to study objectives and included those with different perspectives.

The purpose of these interviews was to discuss the benefits and drawbacks of implementing CBT, the way traditional practices pull tourists, and what affects local livelihood. For example, homestay operators shared their stories about how they played a part in the tourism industry and their experiences of infrastructure and seasonality. Handicraft artisans also talked about the cultural importance of their crafts and how these crafts also could serve as attractions for tourists. The primary collection was made up of these direct reports, which provided detailed insights into the lives of Rasuwa residents and communities. This study focuses on qualitative approaches, although information was also gathered using secondary sources to help explain the study. In addition to this, supplementary information was drawn from sources of government visiting reports, policy documents, and previous research in the field of CBT and NBT in Nepal. The primary data was aligned to bigger trends in tourism development using these materials that helped frame the challenges and opportunities in Rasuwa.

## 4.3 Demographic Factors

For this, we conducted interviews with 8 Rasuwa district respondents, members of the Rasuwa District community, such as homestay owners, tourist guides, tour operators, and government officials. During these interviews (through text, audio, and video calls), the participants discussed their behaviours, preferences, and viewpoints on tourism in the region. The interviews were conducted bilingual i.e. English and Nepalese, and Nepalese

transcripts were translated into English for analysis. The use of a dual language made this approach inclusive and accurate, allowing participants to comfortably express themselves.

Table 1 shows the details of the Demographic Profile of Interviewees:

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Interviewees

<b>Test Subject nr</b>	<b>Field</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Gender</b>
1	Business	Hospitality	Male
2	Business	Hospitality	Male
3	Business	Hospitality	Female
4	Tourism	Hospitality	Male
5	Tourism	Hospitality	Male
6	Tourism	Hospitality	Female
7	Governance	Policy Making	Male
8	Governance	Policy Making	Female

From this data, we established 8 respondents who participated from various professions, and that there are both gender representations found in the majority of them. 2 men and 1 woman were homestays, and 1 woman in this sector. 1 man and no woman were involved as tourist guides, a male-dominated workforce. 1 man and 1 woman participated from among tourist operators. Government officials were however equally divided, with 1 male and 1 female. The group, in total, consisted of 5 men and 3 women, predominantly men across most professions.

The data analyses the socio-economic dynamics of Rasuwa district, especially gender roles and professional distribution. Despite this, most of the professions are dominated by men, particularly in entrepreneurial and tourism-related roles, such as local entrepreneurs and tourist operators. This means a traditional socio-economical structure with the rule that in most cases men became leaders and income earners. Through the absence of women in local entrepreneurship, we can highlight potential barriers including, limited access to resources, societal norms, or the lack of support systems for women in business.

But women occupy a considerable space in areas like standing for homestay ownership and tourism. While this participation is, admittedly, somewhat restrained, it may simply be hinting

at prospective opportunities for women in employment that are more attuned to the realm of decentralized, community, and cultural interactions.

The fact that government officials are represented equitably is a good thing, and that is a step in the right direction toward greater gender equality in public service. It seems to address a socio-economic structure that is emerging in which women are starting to intrude into traditionally male domain roles slowly. There is a necessity for targeted initiatives to help empower women and to ensure there are inclusive opportunities in Rasuwa's expanding tourism and entrepreneurial sectors.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected through interviews and observations were analysed using thematic analysis. The method of which was to systematically code the data looking for recurring themes and patterns that corresponded to the research objectives. The analysis resulted in themes of 'seasonality effect', 'existing situation of tourism in Rasuwa', 'feasibility of NBT and CBT', and 'tourism sustainability' that are indicative of major aspects of CBT and NBT in Rasuwa. At first transcription of interviews was done, then an iterative process to classify data into manageable categories. Each of these categories was then investigated to determine underlying relationships and broader significance of tourism development. The last step involved synthesizing these themes into useful understandings of sustainable tourism practices in the region in such a way that the findings are not only descriptive but also help in understanding sustainable tourism practices in the region. Using qualitative data, this research methodology focuses exclusively on the factors that affect tourism in Rasuwa without losing the depth of study, which has made an extensive contribution in terms of policymaking, community stakeholders, and researchers.

### 5 Findings

#### 5.1 Seasonal Fluctuations in Tourist Activities in Rasuwa

Tourist activities in the Rasuwa district are dependent on seasonal variation and the local economy is greatly affected and so are the local resource utilization. The study found tourism peaks in spring and autumn, spurred on by dry and pleasant, mountainous weather. The region is very appealing to trekkers and adventure seekers as well, and these are the seasons wherein an influx of international tourists occurs. On the other hand, since the monsoon and winter seasons will see a loss in tourist activity, even local travel picks up in winter due to snowfall, which draws tourists in to enjoy snow-related experiences in the high-altitude regions of Rasuwa.

A 38-year-old local guide said,

*“We expect high numbers of tourists during the spring and autumn seasons for the trekking trails like Langtang and to enjoy the pleasant weather. These are our busiest months. But in the monsoon, the rains make the roads unsafe, and we hardly get any visitors. Though we do get several domestic tourists during the winter, it doesn’t make up for the decline in international tourists during that time as international tourists spend more.”* (TS4 2024)

A local homestay/lodge owner also had similar thoughts as he spoke:

*“Although it is great that we get several tourists during the snowfall season because this is the peak season there is a high demand on our resources, especially on labour and local raw materials which puts strain on our communities and the other hand, during off-peak seasons, resource utilization falls significantly, and it becomes impossible to consistently maintain the same staff and to sustain the cash flow.”* (TS1 2024)

These results show how tourism in Rasuwa is a cyclical phenomenon where the inflow of tourists is heavily influenced by seasonal variations, with spring and autumn attracting the highest number of international tourists due to favourable weather and trekking opportunities. In contrast, the monsoon season sees a decline in activity due to unsafe conditions, while winter experiences a moderate influx of domestic tourists for snow-related activities. This seasonal fluctuation impacts local economies and resource utilization, creating challenges for sustainable staffing and resource management during off-peak seasons. Strategic planning involving diversifying tourism offerings, resource management, and income stabilization measures are needed to cover for seasonal fluctuations addressed in the challenges. Stakeholders can improve tourism’s resilience and sustainability in the Rasuwa District by understanding and taking mitigating measures to these effects.

## 5.2 Feasibility of NBT and CBT in Rasuwa District

Community-based tourism is flourishing in the Rasuwa district because it integrate local culture and festivals into the tourist experience where tourist come from all over the world to experience the culture of Nepal and especially the culture of the Rasuwa district, A 42year-old local entrepreneur observed:

*“I see tourists come in flocks to see our (Tamang) festivals like Lhosar and Janai Purnima and other cultural events. It’s nice to see them enjoy our festivals as much as we do. It is also a great time for me financially, as more tourists means more*

*business, which makes the festivals feel even more celebratory. However, the decrease in tourists during off-seasons does impact us negatively.” (TS2 2024)*

Rasuwa has a lot of cultural heritage which includes Tamang tradition, and ancient monasteries, and there are distinct styles of architecture that attract tourists who wish to submerge in their rich cultural heritage. They provide for homestays, traditional cultural performances, culinary experiences, etc. Many tourists are drawn here to learn more about the Tamang community and their unique culture and also taste the authentic local dishes cooked using age-old techniques. This cultural engagement stretches to enrich the tourist experience while offering the local community the opportunity to grow economically in their community.

Preserving cultural heritage is also a significant priority in Rasuwa. A 40-year-old female homestay owner shared:

*“I actively teach the community how to safeguard our traditions. These are what attract visitors from far and wide, and it’s important to keep them alive for future generations. I also make sure to remind tourists to respect our customs, our environment, and our way of life—these are essential for sustaining our community.” (TS3 2024)*

She further explained the economic benefits of promoting local crafts:

*“We sell locally made handicrafts as souvenirs to visitors. This not only provides us with an economic boost but also helps promote our culture and livelihood internationally.” (TS3 2024)*

Majestic peaks, lush forests, cascading waterfalls, and Rasuwa's natural beauty add to its beauty, and it serves as a magnet for many travellers when looking for solace and a reconnect with nature. Rasuwa district has a variety of terrain and supports trekking, bird watching, and wildlife photography activities. A 37-year-old tourist operator noted:

*“Rasuwa’s diverse terrain, from rocky mountain trails to peaceful forest paths, offers endless opportunities for trekking, bird watching, and wildlife photography. It’s like stepping into a different world—one minute you’re hiking through dense alpine forests, and the next you’re gazing at expansive views of snow-capped peaks. This variety is what makes Rasuwa such a unique and memorable experience for tourists.” (TS5 2024)*

Rasuwa district has a balanced opportunity for both CBT and NBT due to its rich cultural heritage and diverse natural landscapes. Cultural events like the Tamang festivals, local

homestays, and traditional performances attract international tourists, although businesses face off-season downturns. Local guides and artisans adapt by offering cultural workshops and selling handcrafted goods, generating income year-round. The district's natural beauty, with opportunities for trekking, bird watching, and wildlife photography, further enhances its appeal. These activities provide significant economic benefits while preserving local traditions. With targeted investment in infrastructure and sustainable practices, Rasuwa can build a resilient, year-round tourism model that supports both its cultural heritage and natural environment.

### 5.3 Tourism Sustainability

Rasuwa is famous for its much sought-after unique biodiversity, particularly its rare flora and fauna that draw in nature lovers or wildlife enthusiasts. These attractions motivate the demand for wildlife excursions and eco-friendly lodgings. But during peak seasons, it's often overcrowded, and the place exceeds the region's carrying capacity, resulting in higher pollution, more strained infrastructure, and cultural degradation. Such disruptions affect animal behaviour as this could jeopardise their survival, and therefore, there is a need for sustainable tourism and better policies in regions like Rasuwa.

Though there seems to be a lot of sustainability issues in the area, when asked to a government official, he added a positive light to the situation and said:

*"We are working on stricter trekking permit regulations to control the number of visitors to Langtang and Gosaikunda, ensuring the trails aren't overused and waste is managed responsibly. We are also trying to create a program that educates the tourists about the local environment and the importance of leaving no trace on the trails."* (TS7 2024)

Awareness amongst the locals is also ongoing regarding the sustainability issue, a homestay owner has revealed plans to install sustainable central heating systems using hot water pipes to tackle the use of fossil fuels in winter. He added:

*"We've also started using solar panels to reduce our dependency on firewood, especially during the peak seasons when resource use is high. We also encourage guests to minimize their waste and reuse water where possible."* (TS7 2024)

Thus, these responses highlight a growing awareness among stakeholders about the need for sustainable practices. These systems also attempt to offer more comfortable tourism stays within the principles of sustainable development. However, enforcing these initiatives requires a collaborative effort among businesses, government, and tourists. The adoption

of renewable energy, waste management policies, and educational campaigns could mitigate the environmental degradation associated with high tourist influxes. Moreover, integrating sustainability into local traditions can help ensure long-term resilience.

#### 5.4 Innovative Approaches to Attract Tourists

Rasuwa, being close to key urban centres such as Kathmandu, offers unique opportunities to attract tourists during weekends and holidays. However, it is a huge challenge to keep the inflow of tourists steady due to several obstacles, majoring the seasonal fluctuations. In response to that, several innovative approaches have been suggested to ensure Rasuwa remains a year-round destination. A tour operator noted the potential of targeting the domestic market during the offseason, emphasizing that families and friend groups from nearby urban centres like Kathmandu and Dhunche would enjoy a quick getaway to experience Rasuwa's peaceful natural surroundings. She said:

*"We are planning to offer special weekend packages; we hope to attract people looking for a break from city life. It's a great way to fill in the quieter months while still providing a unique, relaxing experience."* (TS6 2024)

Marketing plays a critical role in boosting tourist numbers, especially during the off-season. A tourist operator highlighted the power of social media and online endorsements in increasing visibility:

*"A popular Kathmandu vlogger visited recently, and it boosted the bookings. Social media and online reviews are so important; they help create buzz about Rasuwa and can bring in tourists even during slow periods."* (TS6 2024)

She also suggested diversifying tourism offerings by focusing on educational tours, particularly during winter breaks. She explained that schools and colleges could organize trips to Rasuwa, where students and teachers can immerse themselves in the rich Tamang culture and traditions. Educational tourism not only balances visitor flow but also provides a meaningful cultural exchange that benefits both the tourists and the local community.

Homestay entrepreneurs pointed out that Lhosar, a major festival of the Tamang community is possible to give to the tourists even off-season. According to him, cultural events organized and publicized well will not only promote tourist engagement but will also highlight Rasuwa's cultural and natural features to a wider public. Therefore, cultural promotion and tourism marketing synergy could provide an opportunity to stabilize guest flows within the year, enriching both visitors as well as the local economy. The findings show the interdependent relationship between Rasuwa's natural and cultural resources and seasonal

variation of tourism. The district can deliver a more resilient and balanced tourism industry in which environmental challenges, sustainability, and the use of cultural assets are promoted.

The role of promotion in counteracting low tourist inflow during the off-season period cannot be overemphasized. Tour guides, operators, and government bodies have begun to implement promotional activities to attract tourists had been done by several stakeholders. A government official added to the question about making Rasuwa district a year-round tourist destination, she said:

*"We recognize the potential for Rasuwa to become a year-round destination, and we are actively working to support these efforts. By partnering with local businesses, tourism operators, and cultural organizations, we can help promote weekend getaways, educational tours, and seasonal events. Our government is focusing on enhancing infrastructure, such as improving road access and ensuring better connectivity, to make Rasuwa more accessible throughout the year. Additionally, we're providing funding and support for marketing campaigns that highlight Rasuwa's cultural and natural attractions, ensuring that both domestic and international tourists have a reason to visit year-round." (TS8 2024)*

She also emphasized the government's efforts to balance growth with sustainability:

*"While we push for more visitors, we must also ensure that tourism development is sustainable. This means focusing on responsible tourism practices, promoting ecofriendly accommodations, and managing visitor numbers to avoid overburdening the environment and local resources. By working together with the community and private sector, we can create a thriving, resilient tourism industry in Rasuwa." (TS8 2024)* Community leaders and entrepreneurs are seeking to diversify tourism offerings to respond to the economic challenges seasonality brings. Some suggested organizing off-season events and sports competitions to attract tourists during less busy periods. These festivals such as cultural festivals or trekking challenges are great reasons to join even in the low season for tourism in Rasuwa. These initiatives bring about the opportunity to engage local businesses and artisans for economic activity to stay active throughout the year. In addition to stabilizing the inflows of tourism, these measures support the promotion of sustainable and dynamic growth of the destination so that Rasuwa remains vibrant year-round. By treating the district as a whole, it can design a stronger tourism industry that will benefit both visitors and the local community.

## 5.5 Collaboration with Stakeholders

Sustainable tourism development in Rasuwa is heavily dependent on stakeholder collaboration. Tour operators and guides are essential in drawing people off the road, and ensuring they're treated well can hopefully lead to long-term partnerships. A way to help strengthen these collaborations is to provide food and lodging for tour operators and guides accompanying visitors. The homestay entrepreneur expressed their gratitude to tour operators and guides, emphasizing their role in increasing tourist flow. Collaboration with other local entrepreneurs such as craftsmen and artisans is also important for all the other stakeholders, which seems to be generally agreed upon.

Tour operators and guides play a vital role in bringing tourists to the region, as highlighted by tour guides, they work closely with homestay owners and event organizers to create packages that offer both adventure and cultural experiences. This teamwork makes it easier for tourists to plan their visit and encourages them to stay longer and bring in customers for locals, the locals also share some profit with tour guides and operators which benefits everyone.

It is also important that the government plays a huge role in supporting all people involved. The government is facilitating collaborations between private businesses, NGOs, and local communities to ensure that tourism growth is balanced and inclusive. For example, they have supported partnerships to improve eco-lodges and develop promotional campaigns that showcase Rasuwa's unique offerings. The local government has also partnered with conservation groups to promote responsible trekking and educate tourists about waste management. These efforts are helping preserve the trails and wildlife habitats that make Rasuwa so special.

The combined efforts of the local community, businesses, and government are fostering a unified approach to tourism development in Rasuwa. By pooling resources, leveraging each other's strengths, and addressing shared challenges, these collaborations are creating a more resilient and balanced tourism industry. Initiatives such as public-private partnerships for infrastructure development, cooperative marketing strategies, and environmental stewardship demonstrate the collective commitment to ensuring that Rasuwa's cultural and natural treasures are preserved while benefiting all stakeholders involved.

## 6 Conclusion

This research successfully addresses its purpose of examining the socio-economic factors and positioning of the natural and local resources of Rasuwa to enhance tourist value addition. The research questions and objectives as stated in the beginning are met in achieving its overall goal of establishing CBT as well as NBT as the major components of sustainable tourism in Rasuwa District. Analysing current CBT and NBT practices, this study establishes how the two complement each other and carry out the responsibility of enhancing tourism within the area. It shows how homestay, cultural activity, and conservation meet with treks, biodiversity and cultural sites for diverse-oriented tourism. Observing the sentiments of locals it was found that community-based tourism helps sustain the local economy in off-peak seasons.

The study addresses its objectives by identifying the benefits and challenges of aligning CBT and NBT to sustainability goals. Therefore, pointing out seasonal impacts, roles, and responsibilities of stakeholders and the study contributes towards a balanced tourism approach. The research outcomes support the purpose of meeting gaps regarding ecological conservation and community well-being and addressing challenges through the perspective of stakeholders.

The insights that have been learned from Rasuwa are applicable in understanding the integration between CBT and NBT in other similar socio-cultural and ecological dynamic regions. This study suggests that currently, policy changes need to be done to control the detrimental effects of over-tourism and unmanaged tourism. The lack of awareness regarding renewable energy consumption, waste disposal and fair distribution of resources must be noticed by the government and skill programs and seminars must be provided to the locals to enhance the CBT and NBT way of thinking while making them considerate about the detrimental effects of unplanned tourism. The study reveals that Rasuwa consists of rich natural resources for NBT and diverse and unique cultural aspects, especially of the Tamang, Limbu, and Sherpa communities making it a unique destination for the CBT model. It was also found that emphasis on digital marketing and upgrading of infrastructure is needed to introduce Rasuwa to the world which is still unknown to the place.

Through interviewing 8 respondents across a range of professional backgrounds that are connected to the CBT and NBT aspects, the research finds a male-dominated workforce in entrepreneurial and tourism-related roles, consistent with traditional socio-economic structures of such regions. But women are starting to get more involved especially in hospitality, handicrafts, and artisans' products, which indicates increasing gender inclusivity

and women empowerment in the region and is expected to help in the development of the region shortly according to the trend analysed.

Other aspects of the analysis describe the heavy seasonal impact on tourism activities with peaks in spring and autumn because of good weather and trekking options and in festivals like Janai Purnima and Lhosar, where the influx of religious tourists increases in comparison to the off-peak seasons. This cyclical pattern makes local resources work overtime during peak seasons and leaves them struggling during off seasons economically. The environment is polluted majorly during these peak seasons and affects the local vegetation, plants, and animals of the region. To mitigate these effects and promote year-round tourism, stakeholders have recommended strategies including diversification of tourism offerings, targeting of domestic tourists and resource management measures.

The study explores the possibility that nature-based tourism (NBT) and community-based tourism (CBT) are key drivers of sustainable economic growth. Cultural heritage resources, including Tamang traditions, local festivals, and handicrafts, are integrated into the tourism experience and almost everyone benefits from this. The district's unique diversity in terrains and biodiversity makes it more appealing. With its rich culture and tradition, the district makes a good spot for cultural exchange and helps align the CBT model, and the rich natural resources like the Langtang trekking route, and the number of animals and flowers help align with NBT. The Langtang National Park area and other trekking routes in the region are the major natural attractions among adventurous tourists whereas Gosaikunda is the main attraction for religious tourism making the district a perfect place for a nature-based tourism model.

The study reveals that the NBT and CBT model of tourism is already being pursued in Rasuwa in some way or other, but it is not managed and optimized to gain maximum output from tourism. CBT is being followed and cultural activities like the Annual Tamang Heritage Festival, Cultural Homestay, Lhosar, Traditional Dance and Music, Local art and craft, and so on are used to increase tourism. These practices help greatly in economic development and the preservation of art. Similarly, NBT is leveraging the district's rich geographically displaced natural features by providing various activities like trekking, wildlife photography and snow sports. Both tourism models are rather successful during the peak season; international tourists generally travel in spring and autumn and domestic tourism boosts the economy during winter. Efforts must be made on cultural workshops, promoting handicrafts, and offering off-season activities and it requires further investment to enhance the experience and sustainability.

The major challenge faced by Rasuwa is seasonal changes in tourism. Because, during offpeak seasons, local business enterprises are unable to utilize resources at their capacity which are needed in food supplies and physical facilities and infrastructure, they are wasted. Also, having a steady employee becomes almost impossible, and many employees look for other job opportunities when there is low demand. Another problem faced by the locals was the environmental impact on the local ecosystem from tourism. The study found that cultural events are not frequent as people travel for employment and another seasonality factor. The lack of awareness among the locals regarding the use of renewable energy was found as a major problem for sustainability but the local government is trying to cope with this issue. It was also observed that the use of social and digital marketing can enhance the region's reach for attracting new tourists.

Although some problems are in the current tourism model of Rasuwa, the study suggests that the district can be developed for year-round tourism, increased economic benefits and cultural preservation without adverse effects on the local ecosystem. The findings conclude that even though challenges exist in sustaining NBT and CBT models in Rasuwa but with proper planning the region can benefit from these models in the long term and develop a balance between tourism and sustainability.

### 6.1 Validity and Reliability

The implementation of CBT and NBT-based ecotourism model in the Rasuwa region was the main point of study. Validity implies whether the findings are precise and if they suit the research goal. As (Veal 2006, 41) indicates, tourism studies pose special challenges as they are studies of the behaviour and attitudes of human beings, which are by nature so subjective. This research has been based on unstructured interviews with stakeholders, trekking guides, and government officials. Although this is good to have since it allows us to get valuable qualitative data, the validity of these results depends on whether the participants are aware of the topic well enough, how in-depth are the answers and what questions should be asked in the right way. Nevertheless, in the Rasuwa region, a great sensitivity to the tourism-related aspects e.g. seasonality and the individual perspective complicates the validity of the analysed data because of the dynamic and complex nature of tourism in this region.

Reliability means repeatability and consistency in the findings. In natural sciences, however, identical results are often possible in controlled conditions but are seldom in social sciences e.g. in tourism sciences. Social, cultural, and environmental factors influence human behaviour and response: replication is not so easy, (Veal 2006, 41). The incorporation of

this reliance on interviews necessitates the introduction of variability into this study as people will naturally view different situations based on their experiences and changing conditions in the Rasuwa region. For example, homestay owners might have a different view on waste management or trekking guides can have some views on tourist behaviour based on the season, policy changes, and external factors according to the global tourism trend.

While exact replication of results may not be possible, the research avenues created still provide methods to examine patterns and themes that can be useful in understanding the environmental dilemmas of tourism in the Rasuwa region. The data is thematically analysed so that recurrences such as waste management and policy effectiveness are systematic manners in which they were captured and addressed leading to a strong understanding of the subject matter.

## 6.2 Future Research and Recommendations

This section provides practical and actionable recommendations for sustainable tourism in the Rasuwa District and suggests future research that is necessary for the sustainable tourism development of Rasuwa with an emphasis on NBT and CBT. It focuses on measures to support year-round tourism, strengthen local communities, implement sustainable practices, and enhance infrastructure. With additional recommendations that include the significance of policy collaboration, digital marketing, and regular impact assessment toward environmentally friendly and socio-economically beneficial tourism growth.

Locals seemed to struggle to diversify and monetise the cultural side of tourism, suggesting a lack of skills and expertise. As a result, more diverse activities, such as cultural festivals other than Sonam Lhosar, and educational programs regarding the region's history and culture must be implemented. Seasonal adventure activities that support tourism all year must be explored which can include activities like camping, discounts on holiday packages in off-seasons, and collaborating with locals to promote via digital marketing to reach a wider audience.

It was also found that the locals lack in accommodating the tourists professionally so training the locals in hospitality is necessary for good reviews by the tourists. Sustainable practices are known to the locals, but the alternatives are easy and cheap to integrate, to solve this the local government must provide workshops and equipment like solar panels, biogases, and hydroelectricity to promote the use of renewable and green energy. A study must be done to explain the positive impact of using green energy instead of non-renewable energy in high-altitude locations like Rasuwa.

Entrepreneurship workshops must be majorly focused on females in the area as the participation of females in economic and decision-making activities seems low in Rasuwa. This must be done to promote gender equality. With the help from government and non-government organizations such programs can be funded and executed effectively. Awareness for efficient waste management and water conservation needs to be done and studies in the area to promote sustainability and protect the ecosystem.

Regular environmental impact assessments must be conducted to update policies aimed at reducing environmental damage. Socioeconomic analysis must be conducted at regular intervals to assess the performance and effectiveness of NBT and CBT in the region. In this context, detailed studies of the environmental impact of tourism in regions like Rasuwa are required for successful planning. Additionally, governing agencies must establish clear criteria for sustainable tourism and develop legislation to restrict tourism.

To connect Rasuwa with the rest of the world and attract many tourists, it is necessary to develop basic facilities such as housing for homestays, enhanced transportation, and a communication network in this modern age of technology. Promotion of Rasuwa's offerings through digital platforms will increase with the introduction of improved internet connectivity in the region which will help in marketing and making a user-friendly booking system for tourists this will not only help in gaining tourists but also help the people of Rasuwa to be educated on various subjects. The joint work of local communities, businesses, NGOs, government bodies and other stakeholders with the inclusion of everyone in decision-making and management is important for the sustainability of community-based and nature-based tourism in the Rasuwa district.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Figures

Figure 1. Outline of the thesis

Figure 2. Map of Rasuwa district

Figure 3. Benefits of Community-Based Tourism

### Appendix 2: Tables

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Interviewees

### Appendix 3: Questionnaire

<b>Section 1: Demographic Questions</b>
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<b>Name:</b>
<b>Age:</b>
<b>Sex:</b>
<b>Occupation:</b>
<b>Section 2: Tourism Stakeholders (Homestay/Lodge Owners, Local Entrepreneurs, Tourist Guides, Tourist Operators)</b>
What seasonal fluctuations of tourist activity have you witnessed in Rasuwa around its Gosaikunda or Langtang colonies?
How does the seasonality of tourism affect your business and service and what challenges it poses during the high and low seasons?
What types of cultural events or activities are most popular among tourists, and how do they vary?
What would you do to improve community-based and nature-based tourism offerings in Rasuwa to attract more tourists year-round?
How do you propose local entrepreneurship sustains tourism in Rasuwa during off season?
How do you balance offering authentic cultural experiences with ensuring the cultural identity of the community is not compromised?
What other innovative ways would you put in place to attract more tourists when there are fewer in the market?
How do you make sure the local community is involved in tourism-related activities to create shared economic benefits?
How do you ensure that your business or service aligns with sustainable tourism practices?
What are the peak seasons for trekking and pilgrimage to Gosaikunda, and what factors influence these trends?
What opportunities do you see in religious tourism?

<p>Do you know explored sustainable infrastructure improvements, such as eco-lodges or renewable energy use, for your operations?</p>
<p><b>Section 3: Government Officials</b></p>
<p>How does the government support community-based tourism initiatives like homestays, cultural events, or guiding services?</p>
<p>What policies are in place to protect religious and trekking sites such as Gosaikunda while promoting tourism?</p>
<p>Are there any specific initiatives to promote eco-tourism in sensitive natural areas like Langtang or Gosaikunda?</p>
<p>What funding or training opportunities are available for homestay owners and cultural performers to improve their offerings and preserve their traditions?</p>
<p>What is the role of the government bodies in promoting eco tourism practices among local stakeholders?</p>
<p>How is the government addressing issues like waste management, deforestation, and pollution in key tourist areas?</p>
<p>How is data on tourist inflow, seasonality, and environmental impact being collected and utilized for sustainable planning?</p>
<p>What challenges does the government face in implementing sustainable tourism policies, and how do you plan to address them?</p>

