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# Impacts of an Earthquake in Tourism in Kathmandu, Nepal

Thapa, Surendra

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Laurea University of Applied Sciences  
Kerava

# Impacts of an Earthquake in Tourism in Kathmandu, Nepal

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Thapa, Surendra

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The main aim of this Bachelor's thesis is to provide the idea or information about the after effects of the recent earthquake that has occurred on 25<sup>th</sup> of April, 2015. Since the devastating earthquake, the tourism industry of the country has fallen down.

Kathmandu is currently in a big crisis due to the recent earthquake. The earthquake was of 7.8 Richter scale and has killed thousands of people and injured many thousands of people making them homeless. It has made the situation of the country to be in a terrible state. All the business including industry and markets has fallen down and the people are in misery. Since the earthquake, the tourism industry has also fallen down very low due to the damage in famous tourist sites and the decreasing number of tourists day by day.

This thesis is trying to focus on the impacts of an earthquake in tourism. The research was made to find out the effects of an earthquake in historical and cultural heritages sites, mainly UNESCO world heritage sites of Kathmandu, decrease in the number of tourists' arrival after earthquake and the effects that have been caused in the economics of tourism.

This thesis has attempted to describe the history of an earthquake and its continuous effects on the cultural and historical sites of Nepal and how it has influenced the arrivals of the tourist number and its impacts in the economics of the country and the tourism industry.

The thesis has found out that the devastating earthquake that has hit Nepal a year ago has caused heavy effects in the tourism industry. The famous tourists' attraction sites have been destroyed by an earthquake and the less numbers of tourists travelling to the country have effected in the tourism industry such as hotels, restaurants, cafes, local vendors business, travel agencies and other tourist entertaining industry. The economics of the country have been hit hard due to the fallen down business of the tourism industry.

## Keywords

Impacts of Tourism, Earthquake, Kathmandu, Nepal, UNESCO World Heritages Sites

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## 1 Introduction

Tourism is one of the ways to take pleasure by travelling place to place. There are many reasons to travel from one place to another. The purpose of travel may vary from one person to another, such as leisure and holidays, trade and business, change of environment or some other reasons.

Tourism is one of the main livelihoods in Nepal. Being the capital city of Nepal, Kathmandu is one of the main tourist spot in the country. It is full of cultural, historical and religious sites such as temples and shrines, Historical palaces, National Museum, Botanical gardens and parks, traditional houses and villages.

Recently, Nepal was hit by a big earthquake on 25<sup>th</sup> of April, 2015. It has killed thousands of people and injured many thousands of people making them homeless. At the same time, the recent earthquake has destroyed many cultural and historical sites of Kathmandu which are famous for tourist visits. Due to the fear of the earthquake, many tourists have cancelled their plans to visit Nepal and many of them have left Nepal as soon as Possible. The situation has severely affected the tourism industry and it's economic in many ways in the country.

### 1.1 Background

Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, is the largest city where seven out of ten UNESCO world heritages are located. These are the monuments and the buildings that describe the cultural, historic and artistic achievements of the city. The seven world heritages sites of UNESCO are the famous places for sightseeing as well as to understand the culture, religion and the history of the Kathmandu valley. Basically, the three cities named Lalitpur, Bhaktapur and Kathmandu as a whole is counted as the Kathmandu city of Nepal. Besides, there are other places such as villages, shrines and small artistic temples, gardens of dreams in Kathmandu which are famous for their own uniqueness.

Being one of the poor countries, Nepal is facing crisis every now and then due to political issues, internal wars and also natural calamities. Nepal is not far from the effects of the disasters that are caused by the nature. Flood and Landslides are one of the common disasters

that are caused every year during the monsoon season. Besides, earthquakes have been one of the killer disasters in Nepal nowadays. The earthquake on 25<sup>th</sup> of April, which is of 7.8 Richter has taken many lives and left thousands of people injured and homeless. The aftershocks since the big quakes are still hitting Nepal time after time giving panic to day to day life of the people in the country. There was an aftershock on 12<sup>th</sup> of May, 2015, which was of 7.3 Richter which caused almost the same effects as the first earthquake did.

The earthquake and its aftershocks hit Nepal with heavy loss and grief. The Kathmandu city has taken major effects in both cultural and historical sites of tourism sector. The temples, shrines, monuments and historical buildings including the world heritage sites that have been preserved for many years have taken more or less damage overall. This is not the first time Nepal was hit by a big Earthquake and destroyed the historical sites of the country. There were many big earthquakes which had hit Nepal many times with more or less damages and one of the biggest was in 1934 AD. 'The last major earthquake to hit Nepal was in 1934, and the most-impacted buildings were rebuilt afterwards.' (Rider, Polly, 2015.) One of the main sites for the tourist in Kathmandu is a cultural and historical site which has been in critical situation since the devastating earthquake of 2015. Nepal's key tourism products including UNESCO world heritage sites: Basantapur Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square, Bhaktapur Durbar Square, Swayambhu Nath and Boudha Nath have all seen major damages.

## 1.2 Research Questions

The main aim of my thesis is to find out the impacts of earthquake that has hit Nepal on 25<sup>th</sup> of April, 2015, in tourism industry of Nepal. The main priority will be given to find out on the following matters.

- Impacts of an earthquake in the tourist attraction sites of Kathmandu.
- Impacts of tourists' arrival number after an earthquake in Nepal.
- Impacts of tourism economic after an earthquake in Nepal.

## 1.3 Research Methods

There are two types of research methods for data collection. They are:

Qualitative research method: It is the method to reveal the perception, feelings, emotions, experiences and the behavior of the specific target group. It is descriptive rather than predictive and statistics analysis does not fit in this research method compared to quantitative research. 'Data collection in qualitative research is not seldom based on unstructured or semi-structured, but methodologi-

cally flexible techniques, e.g. individual depth interviews or group discussions, that are suited to elicit great detail and a comprehensive view.’ (Atlas.ti.)

Quantitative research method: It is mainly done by the statistical, mathematical and numerical analysis of data collection by organizing questionnaires and surveys. Quantitative research method can lead the thesis little bit faster way compared to qualitative research method. ‘Quantitative research uses highly structured, rigid techniques such as online questionnaires, on-street or telephone interviews. Unlike qualitative research, which allows unlimited expression from respondents, quantitative research relies responses to pre-formulated questions.’ (Atlas.ti.)

The method that is applied for the data collection of my thesis is mainly based on qualitative research method. The methods that are used for the data collection are observation in the tourists site areas, interview with the associated members of tourism board, and focus groups such as the hotels members, local vendors, members from the National Tourism Boards, and tourists in affected areas if found. The other way of collecting the data is by reading the related books, journal and articles from internet. The means of data collection will be done with field notes.

## 2 The Impacts of Tourism

Tourism is the fast growing industry. It is one of the sources to grow the economic outcomes and the employment of the country. But, along with the positive sides, tourism could also bring the negative impacts to the country. It depends how the management in tourism of the country is. There are several categories of tourism impacts in the country. They are: economic, politics, environmental, social and cultural, services, taxes, community behaviour, crowd and competition. Each category has its own positive and negative aspects.

The impacts of tourism from political, socio-cultural, and economical issues or vice versa are discussed below.

### 2.1 Political impacts

Politics plays one of the important roles in tourism industry. It could be both positive and negative. Political issues can either increase or decrease the attractiveness of the country for tourism. For instance, last year right after the big earthquake, when Nepal was just trying to recover from the heavy loss, there was blockage in the boarder of India and Nepal due to the Political issues. The situation was already in crisis due to the earthquake but after the block-

age, the situation was out of control. There were lack of fuels, food and many other things that Nepal imports from India through boarder. This has increased the situation of Nepal from Worse to worst that even if tourist wills to visit Nepal, it would not have been the right time. Political issues are like the mirror that reflects the situation of the country whether to visit or not. 'Countries affected by political unrest inevitably experience a decline in the number of international tourists and in tourism receipts. No country has been able to shield its tourism sector against the impacts of insecurity.' (World Economic Forum.)

## 2.2 Economic impacts

Tourism plays important role in the economics of any country. They are one of the main sources for the growth and development of the country. They benefit the country with the employment opportunity, tax revenues and development in the local and national business. Tourism industry has established many businesses, both local and national, which benefits the country with foreign currency and increase the GDP of the country. Those businesses include accommodation such as hotels, motels, resorts and lodges; passenger transportation such as airlines, airports, buses, private automobiles, taxis, boats, cruise, ships; food and drink such as restaurants, coffee shop, café, Bars and disco and other entertaining ways. 'According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2008/2009), the global tourism industry would account for 3.4 percent of global GDP in 2008, while the broader impacts (including the indirect effects on the economic as a result of tourism) would mean that it could be expected to account for 9.9 percent of global GDP.' Therefore, tourism plays very vital role in the growth of economic worldwide. (Holloway 2009, 86.)

## 2.3 Socio-cultural Impacts

Tourism has its impact on society and culture of every tourist destined country. Tourism is a fast growing industry. It can have both positive and negative effects on tourism industry. For instance, tourists are more interested in the culture of others and their curiosity could preserve the culture of the place which otherwise could have withered away due to lack of support. At the same time, there could be cultural clashes too due to different life styles, culture and religion between the locals and the tourists. All the travels of tourist have impacts in tourism in one of another way. 'Tourism is a cultural phenomenon. It both impacts cultures and society, and is shaped by culture and society. It is often difficult to distinguish cause and effect in the relationship between tourism and society.' (Hall & Lew 2009, 141.)



### 3 UNESCO World Heritage List

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. This is embodied in an international treaty called the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972. (UNESCO.)

UNESCO is the World Heritage centre that approves and maintains the official World Heritage List. UNESCO's World Heritage mission is to encourage countries to sign the World Heritage Convention and to ensure the protection of their natural and cultural heritage. 191 states parties have ratified the Convention. As of July 2015, 1031 sites are listed: 802 cultural, 197 natural, and 32 mixed properties, in 163 states parties. (UNESCO; UNESCO Wikipedia.)

There are ten heritages sites that are listed in World Heritage sites of UNESCO from Nepal. Out of ten, seven World Heritage sites lie in Kathmandu. They are as follows:

Kathmandu Durbar Square (Basantapur Durbar Square),  
 Bhaktapur Durbar Square,  
 Patan Durbar Square,  
 Swayambhunath Stupa,  
 Boudhanath Stupa,  
 Pashupatinath Temple, and  
 Changuarayan Temple.

The other three world heritage sites are out of Kathmandu, and they are Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha, lies in Lumbini district, Sagarmatha National Park, lies in Solukhumbu district, and Chitwan National Park, lies in Chitwan district. (UNESCO.)

### 4 Impacts of Earthquake in Cultural and Historical Heritage Sites

The recent earthquake and its aftershocks have damaged many cultural and historical heritage sites in Kathmandu. The seven world heritage sites of UNESCO have also taken major damage from the recent earthquake in Kathmandu. Most of them have taken more or less damage in each heritage sites and are in under construction. The previous earthquake that has hit Nepal in 1934 had caused severe damage to those heritage sites and was renovated again. And, one more time, the same heritage sites have been destroyed with a big earthquake and are in renovation stage. Here are the descriptions of some of the famous heritage sites which have taken damage from the recent earthquake.

#### 4.1 Dharahara

'Dharahara' (Picture 1), one of the famous and tallest buildings, was built in 1832 by the Prime Minister Bhimsen Thapa in the name of the queen Lalit Tripura Sundari. The building was twelve storeys during that period but due to the earthquake in 1934, it took serious damage and was renovated into nine storeys. 'The nine-storey Dharahara Tower, once loomed over the Kathmandu city for 183 years and was reconstructed after Nepal's 1934 earthquake, now is in rubble'. (Zhao 2015.)

Being one of the tallest buildings of Nepal, it had been an iconic lookout over Kathmandu. The building had spiral staircase of two hundred steps and was one of the main spots for tourist attraction. However, the recent earthquake of 25<sup>th</sup> April has completely destroyed the building with no sign of renovation.



Picture 1; Picture of Dharahara before and after an earthquake

#### 4.2 Kathmandu Durbar Square (Basantapur Durbar Square)

Kathmandu Durbar Square (Picture 2) is listed as eight cultural world heritage sites in UNESCO. The temples, palaces, courtyards and streets are the main fascinated part of this place. The main attractive sites of this place are Taleju temple; Hanuman Dhoka; Kastamandap, a house of wood, Kumari bahal, Vastaa Durga temple, Nasal and Mul Chowk; Kumari Bahal, a house of living god; Bhandarkal, a botanical garden from seventeenth century and many others.

However, the place has taken severe damages due to the recent earthquake. Most of the places in Kathmandu Durbar Square have taken severe damage and are in critical state.

'80 percent of the temples around Durbar Square are now destroyed, including the 18th century Vatsala Durga Temple - a towering sandstone structure that evoked the peaks surrounding the city. Kathmandu's Durbar Square also sustained severe damage, with parts of the Hanuman Dhoka (the city's oldest palace) having collapsed along with the pagodas of several temples.' (Rider 2015.)



Picture 2; Kathmandu Durbar Square before and after an earthquake

#### 4.3 Bhaktapur Durbar Square

Bhaktapur durbar square (Picture 3) is one of the cultural heritage sites of Nepal, listed by UNESCO world heritage site in 1979. This place is very famous for tourist as it reflects the ancient period of Nepal.

'Bhaktapur Durbar Square is an assortment of pagoda and shikhara-style temples grouped around a fifty-five-window palace of brick and wood. The square is part of a charming valley as it highlights the idols of ancient kings perched on top of stone monoliths, the guardian deities looking out from their sanctuaries, the wood carvings in every place - struts, lintels, tympanums, gateways and windows - all seem to form a well orchestrated symphony.' (SAARC Tourism Nepal) The main attraction points of Bhaktapur are Nyatapoli, a famous pagoda of Nepal; Art gallery; Palace of fifty five windows; the golden gate; Lion gate; temples and many others.

The famous pagoda, Nyatapoli, remained intact even after the devastating earthquake. But, there were other temples and monuments that have taken both minor and major effects.

'The Authorities at Bhaktapur Durbar Square said 67 monuments out of 116 at Bhaktapur have been demolished. The Priest House, Siddhi Laxmi Temple and the replica of Muktinath Temple among others suffered minor damages whereas the Temples of Shiva, Asi Dega and Batsala Devi among others have demolished.' (Explore Himalaya Travel and Tour 2015.)



Picture 3; Picture of Bhaktapur Durbar Square before and after the earthquake

#### 4.4 Patan Durbar Square

Patan Durbar Square (Picture 4) is located in the middle of Patan city which is also known as Lalitpur. It is an ancient specimen of Newari architecture. This place is also the residence of former Patan royal family. The place reflects both Hinduism and Buddhism. The major attractions of this place are the three courtyards, Mul chowk, Sundari chowk and Keshav Narayan Chowk; Krishna temple with twenty one golden pinnacles; the Ashokan Stupas; Patan Museum; Kumbheswor temple, five storied pagoda style temple; Jagat Narayan temple, Mahabouddha and many others.

Despite the shocking earthquake, very few monuments of Patan durbar square are completely demolished. Also, the temples such as Taleju temple, pashupati temple, mahadev temple and Mahabouddha temple have taken slight effect which could be renovated. The patan Museum has also taken partial damage. Meanwhile, the main attraction sites have remained intact. 'Krishna Temple, Mayadevi Temple, Golden Temple, Minnath Temple and the Big Bell of Patan Durbar Square remained intact during the powerful quake of 25/04. The artistic Dhunge Dhara (Stone-Tap) at Patan Durbar Square suffered no loss at all during the quake.' (Explore Himalaya Travel and Tour 2015.)



Picture 4; Picture of Patan Durbar Square before and after an earthquake

#### 4.5 Changunarayan Temple

Changunarayan temple (Picture 5) is one of the oldest temples in Kathmandu valley which is devoted to Lord Shiva. It is estimated to be from 4<sup>th</sup> century and is listed in world heritage site of UNESCO. The temple is good sample of art with stone, wood and metal. The major attraction part of this temple is the image of Lord Vishnu with ten heads and ten hands. It is famous for its beautiful art and architectures of idols and shrines.

Although, Changunarayan temple has survived against the trembling earthquake but it has taken some minor damage which has to be renovated. It is one of the oldest temples full with its beautiful art and architecture which should be pass to next generation so that it will not lost its glory in coming future. Presently, the temple along with other side temple is held and supported by the wooden planks until the renovation will not be completed. Also, the temple was closed temporarily for tourist until the renovation is not completed.



Picture 5; Picture of Changunarayan Temple before and after an earthquake

#### 4.6 Swayambhunath Stupa

Swayambhunath (Picture 6) temple is also one of the oldest and famous temples of Lord Buddha which is located on top of hill of Kathmandu valley which is visible from all around Kathmandu. This temple is also known as the 'Monkey temple' as big large tribes of monkey live in this place surrounding the whole temple. It is estimated to be from or before 5<sup>th</sup> century and listed in world heritage site. The main attractive site of this temple is the long staircase that leads to the temple. It is believed to be self-created or self-existed and it has three hundred sixty five steps. Swayambhunath stupa is the holy shrines for the Buddhist and its main preach are peace and harmony. The stupa has white dome and glittering golden spire which is visible from all sides. Besides, there are many small monuments and shrines around the main stupa.

During the earthquake on 25<sup>th</sup> of April, Swayambhunath stupa has suffered significant effects all around. Although, the main Swayambhunath stupa and five monuments have been intact but some of the monuments and idols around the stupa have been demolished. Also, the Swayambhu Museum has also taken partial effects but it could be renovated. 'The natives of Swayambhunath (Buddacharya Family) now protect the historic inscriptions, idols and monuments at Swayambhunath.' (Explore Himalaya Travel and Tour 2015) For few months, this place has not access to the tourist or visitors until the renovation is completed and safe to travel.



Picture 6; Picture of Swayambhunath Stupa before and after an earthquake

#### 4.7 Pashupatinath Temple

Pashupatinath (Picture 7) temple is one of the famous temples of Lord Shiva all around the world. The temple is in pagoda style covered with beautiful arts and architecture.

‘Pashupatinath Temple, with its astonishing architectural beauty, stands as a symbol of faith, religion, culture and tradition. Regarded as the most sacred temple of Hindu Lord Shiva in the world, Pashupatinath Temple's existence dates back to 400 A.D.’ (SAARC Tourism Nepal) It is listed it world cultural heritage sites of UNESCO.

The temple of Pashupatinath has not taken any damage and has remained intact during the devastating earthquake. However, minor damages can be seen around the temple which could be renovated. But, the observation can be concluded with no major effects in the area. And, there is no restriction in tourist or visitors access.



Picture 7; Picture of Pashupatinath Temple before and after an earthquake

#### 4.8 Bouddhanath

Bouddhanath (Picture 8) stupa is the biggest stupa of Lord Buddha which is one of the oldest stupas in Nepal. The stupa is well known for Buddhism and also the part of world cultural heritage sites of UNESCO.

Bouddhanath stupa has got serious damage due to the devastating earthquake. The top part of the large dome shaped stupa has destroyed and is under construction. Tourists were restricted to visit the area for few months and some precautions to be taken while visiting the area once it is opened for tourist again. It is said that it might take two years to complete the renovation.



Picture 8; Picture Boudhanath Stupa before and after an earthquake

Similarly, there are other places which are famous among the tourists. Those places have taken serious damage.

#### 4.9 Bungamati and Khokana

Bunngamati and Khokana (Picture 9) are the small villages located in Lalitpur district of Kathmandu valley. The villages are the inhabitants of Newari society. The villages were very famous for their peculiar home structure, culture and traditions, temples and monuments.

The villages have taken serious damage during the life threatening earthquake. Most of the houses were made of mud and brick which were not able to endure the devastating earthquake. The home of 'Rato Machhindranath', a goddess, located in Bungamati has damaged completely with no trace possibility of renovation. 'Officials said that it would at least take 7-8 years to rebuild the Shikhara style Temple of Machhindranath. ' (Explore Himalaya Travel and Tour, 2015.)





Picture 9, Picture of Machhindranath Temple before and after an Earthquake

Other places such as Dabu Nava mandala, the place to bath Lord machhindra, Mai Rudrayani Kali temple, Karyabinayak temple have remained intact. The tourist activities at these villages have been restricted for certain period of time. 'The Government Officials say, once the work of renovation begins these villages will be once again opened for tourists. However, it is not yet known when these villages will be opened for foreign travelers.' (Explore Himalaya Travel and Tour 2015.)

These all affected areas will takes more than years to be completely renovated and the flow of tourism may not be as usual as it used to be before the devastating earthquake.

## 5 The Impacts of the Earthquake in Tourists Arrivals in Nepal

The devastating earthquake that has hit Nepal has shocked all the international tourists from the world. Those tourists who have been already in the valley were traumatized and planned to leave the country as soon as possible and those who have reserved the flight to visit Nepal have cancelled their flight immediately. One of the tourists who were in the valley flew to Bangkok after the sad tragedy of earthquake and felt bad while leaving the country. 'I am still crying for Nepal. The people I witnessed praying in Durbar Square are all dead. I will come back, but now is not the right time for tourism. It's too sad.' (Vater 2015.)

Nepal received 251 148 less tourists last year, representing a sharp drop of 31.78 percent, compared to the 2014 figure. The impact of the killer quake was bigger for Nepal's tourism industry with arrivals plunging 55.59 percent to 97 510 during the four-month period (May-August) following the disaster. (Prasain 2016.) The tourist arrivals to Nepal has fall drastically from all parts of the world due the fear of earthquake.

Nepal is the landlocked country surrounded by India in Southern, Western and Eastern part and China in Northern part. Every year, there are numbers of tourists travelling from India and China. But, since the devastating earthquake, the numbers of tourists from India and China have decreased tremendously. For the safety of their countrymen, India and China sent fewer tourists with major cautions to Nepal for travel.

According to Deepak Raj Joshi, the chief executive officer of Nepal Tourism Board, May-July period is the school holiday season in India, and a large number of Indian visitors come to Nepal during this time of the year. But, due to the shocking earthquake the number has dropped heavily. 'Indian inbound dropped to an average of 5 000 monthly during the May-July period from 20 000 monthly recorded during the same period in 2014. The earthquake occurred during the prime Indian holiday season, as a result the numbers dropped significantly.' (Prasain 2016.)

Similarly, the numbers of tourists from China have also decreased in high rate. 'Nepal had been receiving an average of 12,000 Chinese tourists monthly since January 2015, but the figure dropped to an average of 1,200 monthly during the May-July period. There was a slight increment in the number of visitors from China during the rest of the year, but they remained below 4 500.' (Prasain 2016.) According to the article, the arrivals from China dropped to a four-year low of 66,984 individuals in 2015, down 45.89 percent from the previous year.

Likewise, the number of tourists travel from other parts of the world has also decreased compared to the previous year. According to the article from Prasain Sangam published on 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 2016, arrivals from the US, Australia, the UK, Japan and France dropped 14.33 percent, 24.05 percent, 19.12 percent, 31.80 percent and 31.92 percent respectively last year. Inbound from South Korea, Germany and Spain too dipped 21.94 percent, 29.39 percent and 48.58 percent respectively during the review period.

The figure 1 gives clear vision about arrivals of tourist in Nepal in 2014 and 2015. It compares the number of tourist arrivals between the two years.

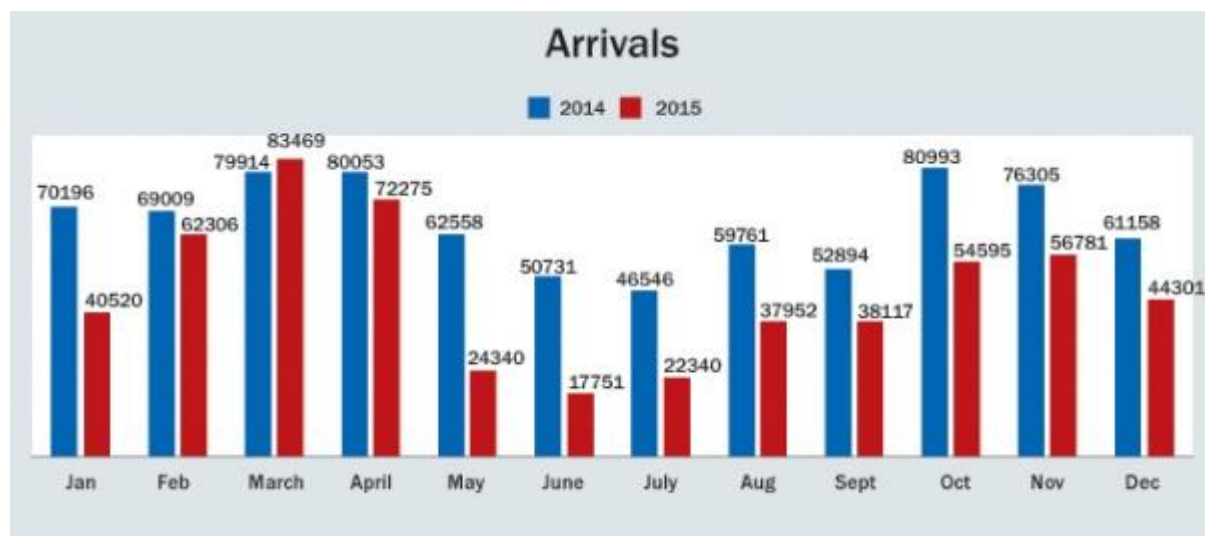


Figure 1; Biography of Arrivals of Tourist in 2014 and 2015. (Bhujū 2015.)

In figure 1, the biographical bar clearly shows that the number of tourist arrival in 2015 is low compared to the previous year. In March, 2015, a month before an earthquake has hit Nepal seems to have the highest tourists' arrival compared to last year and throughout the year. In the beginning of the year also, the numbers of tourists arrival have been low compared to previous year, however, since an earthquake has hit Nepal in 25<sup>th</sup> April, the number of tourists have fall down extremely. The spring season, March to May, neither hot nor cold, where monsoon rains yet to begin and autumn season, September to November, similar like spring season, neither hot nor cold, monsoon rains stop and winter yet to begin, are peak tourist seasons in Nepal to attract the tourists for leisure and adventures. According to the bar graph shown above, the numbers of tourist arrival in both tourist seasons are very low compared to the previous year. The lowest number of tourist arrivals was on June, July and May, less than half a number compared to previous year.

Overall, the number of tourist arrival in the country in 2015 is low compared to the year 2014. According to the Data of Immigration (DoI), a total number of tourists visited Nepal in 2015 was 554 747 (the number is approximate due to not able to get data from other earthquake affected areas). 'The arrivals number is down by 29.7 percent compared to the year 2014 when a total of 790 118 people visited Nepal from abroad.' (Bhujū 2015.)

## 6 Impacts of Earthquake in Economics of Tourism

Tourism is one of the main gateways for economic growth in the country like Nepal. Since the tourism has started, it is sometimes also called the third religion of the country because it is one of the most important industries of the country which plays the key role in the economic

activities of Nepal. Kathmandu, being the capital city of Nepal, and the main gateway of Nepal, it plays main role for the income source for city people which attracts thousands of tourists annually.

As being one of the main economical industries of Nepal, Tourism has play major role in the contribution of Nepal's GDP. It has high growth rate potential that would benefits the country in many ways. It has created many positive ways for the development such as employment generation, historical and cultural preservation, foreign exchange earnings, infrastructural development and environmental protection. 'World Travel and Tourism Council data shows that Nepal's tourism accounts for 4.3percent of the national GDP and 3.5 percent of total employment generating 487, 5000 jobs in 2014.'(Nepal Economic Forum.)

Likewise, there are many others positive sides of tourism that has contributed for the development of the country and has helped in increase in economic rate of the country. 'The government earns approximately USD 3.5 million in climbing fees from Everest alone, whereas a single guide on Everest earns USD 6 000-7 000 during a single season.'(Nepal Economic Forum.)

However, the recent earthquake that has occurred in the middle of the spring, one of the tourist seasons, has disturbed the flow of tourism in country. Since then, the number of tourist that were already in Nepal started leaving the country immediately, and those who were planning a visit in Nepal cancelled their visit for the time being. 'Post-earthquake, reportedly 80 percent of hotel reservations has been cancelled and estimated 45 000 tourists have left the country.'(Nepal Economic Forum) The economic rate was supposed to be increased more than it was in 2014, but due to the sudden earthquake, every single plan and the hope of tourism industry such as hotel business, local tourism business, job employment and other similar things related to tourism has fall behind. 'Before the earthquake, the Tourism Ministry had set a target of receiving 1.1 million tourists by this year. But the figure has been revised substantially to 475 000 after the disaster. The average length of stay of tourist to Nepal has been revised downward to 7 days from 12.44 days.' (Prasain 2015.)

### 6.1 Effects on Hotel Business and Employment

Tourism creates many job opportunity in different ways such as in hotels, restaurants, travel agents, airlines and other passenger transportation services and also the activities offered by leisure industries which are supported by tourists. 'Nepal's travel and tourism sector directly generated 487,500 jobs last year representing 3.5 percent of the total employment in the country, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) said. In terms of absolute contribution to job creation by the travel and tourism sector, Nepal is ranked 38th among 184 countries.'

(The Kathmandu Post, 2015 March 31.) According to WTTC, the employment rate is supposed to rise by 4.0 percent, generating 506 600 in 2015. But, the sudden change in the environment due to shocking earthquake has disturbed all the possibilities of high income rate in tourism in the year.

The devastating earthquake has stroked Nepal and has suddenly made a drop in the arrival of tourist in country. Due to less number of tourists, the job opportunity that the tourism has created in different sectors such as hotels, travel agent, airlines, and leisure places like restaurants has fallen down in Kathmandu. The business in five stars hotels has dropped and the travel agent and the restaurants are also in loss due to low business. 'The Soaltee and Oriental hotels posted a slowed revenue growth in the last fiscal year, largely due to the April 25 earthquake that severely affected business. The downturn is expected to continue in this fiscal year as demand from business and leisure travelers has plunged since the disaster.' (The Kathmandu Post, 2015 Aug 20.)

## 6.2 Effects on Local Business in Tourism

Not only in hotel business, the fall of tourism arrival has affects the business of the vendors as well. The vendors are those people who run small and local business to sell or trade in the streets and in the famous visiting sites. They usually sell the handy crafts, handmade idols and other specific and peculiar things that reflect the culture, tradition and religion of Nepal. During the tourism season, the vendors open their stalls to show and sell their collections to the tourist in Kathmandu valley, mainly in cultural heritages sites such as in famous three durbar squares, temples and cities like Thamel, a famous tourist site city. Due to the damage taken from an earthquake, some of the cultural heritage sites have been closed for few months. 'The Department of Archaeology and Kathmandu Metropolitan City have arranged security parameters in and around the quake-damaged heritages sites for safety of visitors.' The vendors were not allowed to open their stalls in Basantapur durbar square, Patan durbar square and other famous tourist sites area where the earthquake has damage the sites. This has tremendously decreased the business of the vendors. 'Chandra Shahi, 45, of Kalimati, owner of Chad's Flag House, said trading in the Nepali flag and souvenirs had hit a snag on account of lack of tourists.' Similarly, 'Shaleena Poudel, 21, of Teku, a clerk at the ticket counter in Basantapur Durbar Square, said that about only 140 to 150 foreign tourists were visiting heritage sites in a day since it reopened.' According to Poudel, the flow of tourists is not satisfactory. Before the quake, about 30,000 tourists used to visit the Square generating revenue about Rs 700 000-800 000 a month. Due to gradual decrease in the number of tourist has caused effects on both the local and the tourism industrial sectors heavily.

## 7 History of Earthquake in Nepal

Earthquake is not new in Nepal. And, it was not the first earthquake in Nepal that has destroyed the cultural and historical assets of the country. Every now and then, Kathmandu is hit by the massive and destructive earthquake. Kathmandu is also one of the cities around the world that lies in the seismic zone. There were several records of earthquake that has hit Nepal and caused huge damaged to both human life and property. The massive earthquake that was occurred in 1934 was of 8.4 Richter, more powerful and deadliest that the recent earthquake on 25<sup>th</sup> of April, 2015. The survivor of that massive earthquake, Hem Prasad Timilsina, was safe during the recent earthquake of Kathmandu too. According to him, the Ghanta Ghar (Clock tower), opposite of Dharahara, has completely destroyed. During that massive earthquake, it has destroyed many cultural and historical heritages such as Dharahara (which has been completely destroyed in 1 recent earthquake), Bhaktapur Durbar Square, Kathmandu Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square and many such places which are important from both cultural and historical points of view. Those places were rebuilt after the shocking disasters.



Bhaktapur Darbar Square before and after 1934 Earthquake

Picture 10, Picture of ancient Bhakatapur Durbar Square before and after earthquake in 1934

The first earthquake ever recorded in the history of Nepal was on June 7, 1255. The earthquake was of 7.7 Richter scale.

‘1934 wasn’t even the worst earthquake Kathmandu has suffered. In 1255, one-third of the population of Kathmandu (30,000 people, including King Abhaya Malla) were killed when the valley suffered a direct hit with an epicentre right below the city.’ (Newar 2013.)

The destructive earthquake has always given the terror to human lives from ancient period of time till these days and will threaten Nepal in near future too. There is still the prediction

that the big earthquake might hit Nepal once again as the recent earthquake of 25<sup>th</sup> April has shifted the Kathmandu valley ten feet towards south and the valley might get hit again by another big quake to be in its normal state.

'In the case of Kathmandu, the tectonic plate under the city shifted southwards 10 feet over another plate along an ancient Himalayan fault line, releasing a seismic shock wave with the strength of "more than 20 thermonuclear weapons," according to the Wall Street Journal.' (Mishra 2015.)

In this way, Nepal has been the victim of earthquake since ancient time of history, and it has not only affected the lives of the people but it has destroyed and damaged many of our ancient historical and cultural heritages. These are the main assets to attract the tourist in the country and if they start vanishing due to the effects of earthquake time after time then someday there might be the possibility that the cultural and historical heritage sites that have been protected might lose its value due to new renovations. Till then, many of these existed historical heritages have been rebuilt and renovated but the recent earthquake has swiped away some of these historical assets completely, for instance, Dharahara. Such impacts could bring big loss in tourism industry.

## 8 Conclusion

The data collection during the research was not an easy task. Due to the recent earthquake, the cultural and heritage sites were not so easily accessible. The places which have taken damage from earthquake were in reconstruction and were not opened until the renovation was done. Also, the cautions have to be taken while visiting the place because the buildings could be in vulnerable state due to shaking earthquake that anything could happen. So, it was not easy to make visit to those places. It was difficult to find the local vendors to take interview due to damage in the related places.

The research was mainly based on internet articles and related topics because it was not easy to get the exact information within the few months of disaster. Most of the results were yet to come out during my visit in Nepal that I have to put my main focus on articles from internet.

Since the devastating earthquake, the tourism industry of Nepal is in big crisis. Many historical and cultural heritage sites have taken both minor and major damage. Some are in the state to be renovated but some of them have been completely destroyed with no sign of renovation. The aftershocks of earthquake are still prevailing in Nepal time after time. The fears of the big quake and its aftershocks have scared the tourist and minimize their visit in Nepal.

‘Nepal tourism after earthquake has been hit hard. More than 75% of the tourist arrivals are cancelled. Hotel bookings are cancelled.’ (Heritage Tours and Travels Trekking.)

The hotel business has gone down due to less number of tourists arrivals. Similarly, the restaurants, other luxurious industries for tourist, travel agents have also fallen down in their daily business. The foreign revenue the country used to get from tourism is less compared to previous years which has adversely affected in the economics of the country.

Tourists have started showing up at the Bhaktapur, Patan and Basantapur Durbar areas but the number is much less as compared to previous year. The earthquake and its aftershocks are prevailing in the country every now and then. And due to the movement of tectonic plate of the earth which has moved the Kathmandu valley ten feet towards south, there is a prediction that Nepal could be hit by another big earthquake to be in Normal state. No one knows if the saying is true or prank, but every Nepali who have experienced the deadly disaster are in the fear about the prediction. This has also trigger in tourist arrival numbers due to the fear of earthquake.

Nepal tourism will take some time for revival and continue its normal business. Most of the tourist attraction sites will take years and more to be renovated. And, the aftershocks are still prevailing which is not a good sign for tourist arrivals. Besides earthquake, there are many other internal and political issues which are affecting the tourism industry in many ways. At this stage, I wonder if Nepal tourism will be able to flourish well in near future as it used to be few years back.



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