

Managing A Sustainable Domestic Tourism for Bhaktapur Durbar Square: Learning from Patan Durbar Square

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Abstract

Tourism can be considered as the main component for protecting the cultural and natural heritage of the country and considered as the important source for generating economic growth and employment opportunities of the country. Covid-19 pandemic has been affecting each and every sector around the world along with tourism. Due to the pandemic, lockdown in most of the countries, restriction to travel and no group meetings. The Bhaktapur and Patan Durbar Square are the major cultural attraction for tourist. The domestic visitors in Bhaktapur Durbar Square are less in number compared to Patan Durbar Square hindering the economic and socio-culture of the place. Domestic tourism can be one of the solutions to recover the losses in the tourism sector but need to follow the safety protocols. The main objective of this research is to find out how Patan Durbar Square have ability to be more attractive for domestic tourism before Covid-19 pandemic than Bhaktapur Durbar Square and how to develop conclusions and recommendations on future prospects of domestic tourism in Bhaktapur Durbar Square with various programs and activities learning from Patan Durbar Square.

Keywords

Tourism, Covid-19, Pandemic, Bhaktapur Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square, Domestic tourism

1. Introduction

Domestic tourism refers to residents of one country traveling within their own country for different purposes. In 2005, Gillian Gale, in her text book designed for BTEC National Travel and Tourism students, defined domestic tourists as; “People who are travelling in their own country for tourism purposes”.

The World Tourism Organization defines, “Sustainable tourism is the form of tourism that meets the needs of tourists, the tourism industry, and host communities today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

COVID-19 pandemic has caused widespread disruption in socioeconomic activities including the tourism sector in several countries including Nepal due to travel restriction and lockdown. According to the results from Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), Nepal Tourism Board, journals, books and websites, the tourist flow was increasing steadily till recently. While in the current year declared as Visit

Nepal 2020 the number of tourists abruptly declined since March with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic [1].

Patan and Bhaktapur Durbar Square are listed in UNESCO World heritage site. Both squares are the marvel of Newari architecture and the history from the same time “Malla Kings” with no clear history. Patan Durbar Square is a center of both Hinduism and Buddhism, comprises of 136 “bahals” (courtyards) and 55 major temples [2] whereas Bhaktapur Durbar Square is also known as a museum of medieval art and architecture with many examples of sculptures and woodcarving works.

The architecture, history, heritages and cultures of both the squares are marvelous and cannot be compared for its own uniqueness. Although, Bhaktapur Durbar Square has been experiencing the large number of tourists with the cultural richness, it is less compared to Patan Durbar Square. Patan Durbar Areas has always been the major attraction for domestic and international tourists because of various reasons compared to Bhaktapur Durbar Square.

2. Research Objectives

Main objective

- To compare and find out the main reason for less numbers of domestic tourists in Bhaktapur Durbar Square compared to Patan Durbar Square before pandemic.

Specific objectives

- To find out how Patan have ability to be more attractive for domestic tourism
- To identify the major problems and scenarios for domestic tourism development in the Bhaktapur Durbar Square.

3. Need of Research

Bhaktapur and Patan Durbar Square, heritage zones are the centers for tourists because of its beauty, uniqueness, culture and festivals. Tourism has provided the economical beneficial to the people around there on its own way. Tourism has been playing a vital role for the livelihood of the local in Patan and Bhaktapur Durbar Square.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, there are no visits by international tourists which even provide negative impact on the economy. There is the need of study for understanding the main reasons for less numbers of visitors in Bhaktapur Durbar Square comparing to Patan Durbar Square even before Covid-19. The study is necessary to introduce new programs and activities that can attract more domestic tourist in Bhaktapur Durbar Square and promote the domestic tourism in the place that even helps recovering the impact due to COVID-19 culturally and economically.

4. Limitation

Although there is main three squares in Kathmandu valley, Kathmandu Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square and Bhaktapur Durbar Square listed in the UNESCO World Heritage Site, this research just focusses on Patan Durbar Square and Bhaktapur Durbar Square. The data are collected to the very limited visitors to reduce the risk of COVID -19. Most of the findings were based on the information's by Key persons.

5. Literature Review

5.1 Tourism Development in Nepal

Tourism has become one of the main income sources for many developing countries like Nepal. Nepal with the beautiful landscape and famous for its snowcapped mountains, abundant flora and fauna, exciting trekking routes and rich cultural and religious diversity has great potential to become a top destination for tourists [3].

Government has announced the 'Visit Nepal 2020' campaign with the aim of bringing in two million tourists by 2020 in order to promote the country's tourism industry [3]. After being badly hit by the devastating earthquake of 2015, there was a fall in numbers of foreign tourists. But, in recent years, the country's tourism industry has seen positive signals along with the increase in the inflow of foreign tourists. According to the Economic Survey of 2018/19, the number of tourist arrivals in 2018, not counting Indian tourists who arrived by land, was 1,173,072, which is 25 per cent more than in 2017 [3].



Figure 1: Visit Nepal 2020, Tourist Arrivals

5.2 Present Situation of Tourism in Nepal

The situation of the Tourism industry in Nepal has taken a terrible turn. The year 2020 was supposed to be the visitnepal2020 (the slogan for the tourism year) went in ruins for the country. With the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, China the virus has spread throughout the world. With travel bans and countries in lockdown, no one wants to leave their home. This has affected the tourism industry very hard [4].

5.3 Tourist arrival data of Nepal

According to the data from Nepal Tourism Board, there is constant increase in number of tourists till 2015 and after the Gorkha earthquake 2015, the fall of the

numbers of tourist visiting Nepal can be seen in the graph below.

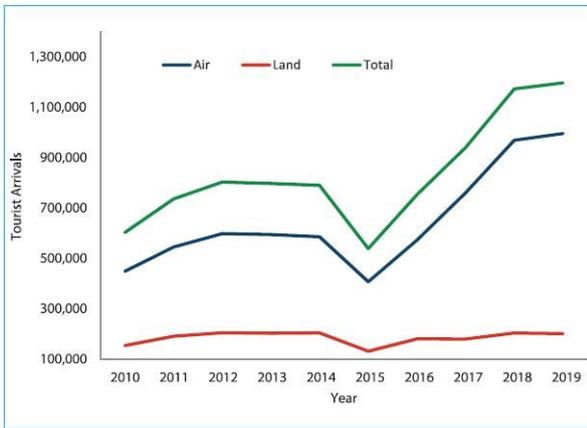


Figure 2: Tourist arrival in Nepal 2010- 2019 [5]



Figure 3: Total Tourists visiting Patan [6]



Figure 4: Total Tourists visiting Bhaktapur [7]

5.4 Literature Summary

The journal by Thomas Dowson, “guidelines for visiting sites and museums during the coronavirus pandemic” and Laura Itzkowitz “How the Coronavirus Pandemic Is Affecting Museums”, mentioned about the coronavirus guidelines such as Online booking of tickets, keep your distance, follow

a set route, Personal protective measures and don’t touch.

In the news article, “Developing domestic tourism” published by The Himalayan Times, comprised the interview with Deepak Raj Joshi (CEO) talks about campaigns launched by NTB that is centered towards internal tourists like ‘Ghumphir Year’ in 2016 after the Gorkha earthquake 2015 and encouraging local communities to treat both domestic and international tourists equally well which encourages prospective domestic travelers.

From the article, “Domestic tourism importance and economic impact” by World Travel and Tourism Council and “Strategies for developing domestic tourism: A survey of key stakeholders in Namibia” by Joram Ndlovu, Alias Byakunu and Ernniet T. Heath includes various policies to raise the contribution of domestic tourism such as price discounts, publicity, marketing, advertising, direct sales, group discounts, special packages, promotional campaigns, incentives and competition.

6. Case Area

6.1 Bhaktapur Durbar Square

Bhaktapur Durbar Square, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in the current town of Bhaktapur, also known as Khwopa, which lies 13 km east of Kathmandu. Bhaktapur Durbar Square area have beautiful surroundings, courtyards and skyline. It displays the vibrant depth of Newari culture so called a ”Living Heritage” or a ”Living Museum” [8].

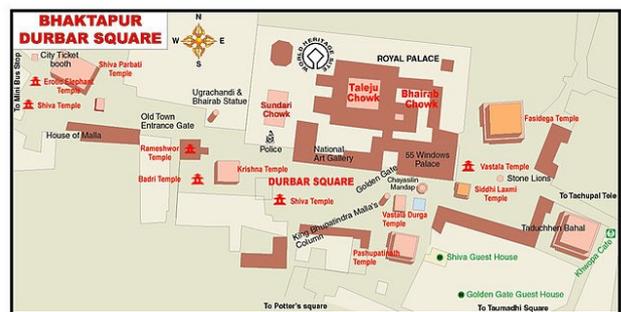


Figure 5: Map of Bhaktapur Durbar Square

6.2 Patan Durbar Square

Patan Durbar Square located at Patan (known as Lalitpur) is one of the 3rd royal largest cities along with Kathmandu and Bhaktapur Durbar square, which

is about 5km south of Kathmandu valley. Patan Durbar square city is known for its rich tradition of arts and handicrafts, stone carvings and metal statues.

There are 3 main courtyards or chokes, Mul choke, Sundari choke, and Keshav Narayan choke in the square [2].

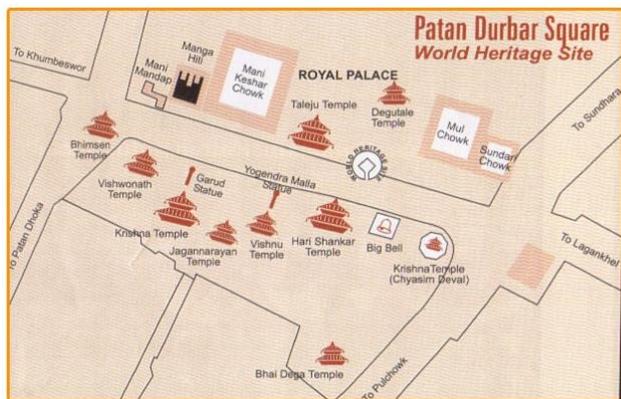


Figure 6: Map of Patan Durbar Square



Figure 7: Total Nepali visitors in Bhaktapur Museum

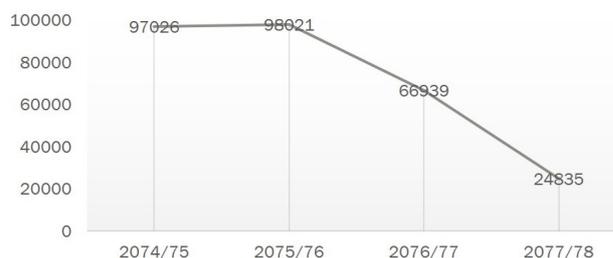


Figure 8: Total Nepali visitors in Patan Museum [6]

7. Findings And Analysis

The analysis on why Patan Durbar Square has more visitors comparing to Bhaktapur Durbar square were done on the basis of four parameters.

7.1 Social Dimension

The main reason for many visitors in Patan Durbar square is because of many educational facilities and many commercial buildings, malls and commercial activities like live music etc. in Patan compared to Bhaktapur.

7.1.1 Museum

Patan museum is housed in a courtyard within the Northernmost building complex of the Durbar area and National Art Gallery (Bhaktapur) are organized in the old Royal building from Malla period. Patan museum has been one of major attraction for many domestic visitors because of its ambience, art and artistic values but Bhaktapur museum is congested, don't have good ambience, proper display management and unrenovated building after Gorkha earthquake 2015.

7.2 Cultural Dimension

Culture and festivals are the main attraction to both the squares. Domestic tourists visit the squares on the

particular day for the religious purpose as well.

Before the pandemic, The cultural promotion in Patan is done by printing the festival calendar with monthly schedule of activities but Bhaktapur don't promote for culture with extra activities. The display in the outdoor artifacts, paintings etc. helps in local tourists' attraction since they can see something from past history. The display of Singarshan and Pauwa (Painting) on the day of Jestha Sukla Purnima is done on Patan Durbar Square and there are many local visitors but there is no any culture of displaying anything at Bhaktapur durbar square. Displaying the artifacts and paintings can be one of the cultural promotions to attract local visitors.

7.2.1 Cultural Route in Patan

Recently due to the risk of pandemic, the cultural programs are not celebrated as it used to be before. Before pandemic, cultural route during any festivals start from different places as per their schedule and follows the same cultural routes yearly. This does not confuse the visitors and makes the domestic tourists visiting the place easier to know and encourage them to visit again.

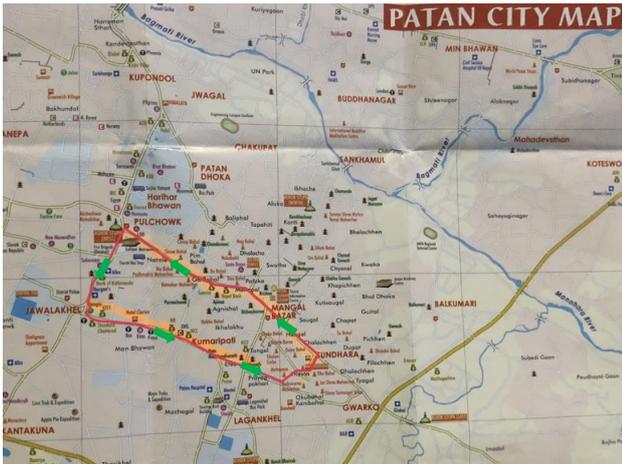


Figure 9: Cultural Route in Patan

7.2.2 Cultural Route in Bhaktapur

The cultural route in Bhaktapur during any festival begin from Durbar Square leading to the upper part of Bhaktapur and to the lower part i.e., Muldhoka, Kwathandou, Dattatraya, Golmadi, Sukuldhoka, Taumadi, Nasamana, Bansagopal, Itachhen and ending at Durbar Square.

But with the change in time, the cultural route has been shortening. The main route from Suryamadi to Bharwacho is followed whereas the upper part routes are missing. This has been one of the reasons for less local people / friends and families visiting the place during festivals as well. Visiting relatives/family members is one of the type of domestic tourism.



Figure 10: Missing Route in Bhaktapur Cultural Route

7.3 Economic Dimension

Patan and Bhaktapur both are famous for Newari dishes and local foods. Local people of Patan durbar square sells the traditional foods like Aalu Achar,

Chhwayela, Wa, sweets etc. whereas Bhaktapur is famous for Juju Dhau and SamayaBaji. The selling of local beverages is one of the main income sources for both the place.

7.4 Environmental Dimension

The accessibility factor has been one of the reason for more visitors in Patan Durbar Square than Bhaktapur Durbar Square. The easy access to Patan Durbar Square from Gwarko, Lagankhel, Pulchowk, Sankhamul and Balkumari and easy availability of public bus with proper services moving around the Ring Road such as Mahanagar yatayat, and Sajha yatayat.

Public and private vehicle users are comfortable to visit the place.

Maximum numbers of domestic visitors in Patan Durbar Square are within the proximity of 8.5 Km.

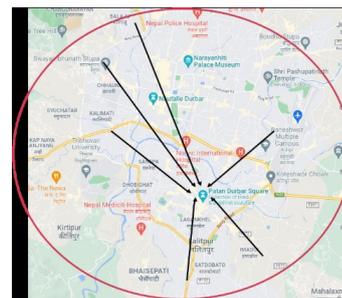


Figure 11: Proximity to Patan Durbar Square

The public vehicles are not easily available to visit Bhaktapur Durbar Square. There is less problem for private vehicle users whereas the public vehicle users have to face lots of problems such as congestion, fare issue, delay etc. Maximum numbers of domestic visitors in Bhaktapur Durbar Square are within the proximity of 6.2 Km.

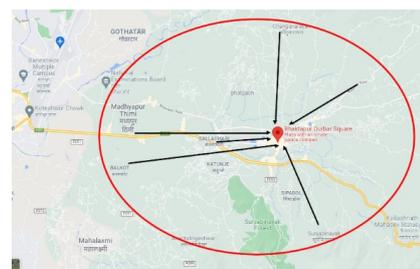


Figure 12: Proximity to Bhaktapur Durbar Square

8. Plans after Covid-19 for Tourism promotion in Bhaktapur and Patan Durbar Square

Bhaktapur municipality and Patan municipality are both active in the case for promoting the domestic tourism. Various plans are being formulated by municipalities which are yet to be publish and works to be done.

Bhaktapur municipality plan to conduct the program “Bhaktapur Nights” to promote festivals and jatras (Bhaktapur Tourism Office).

Patan municipality are involved in making the plans such as:

- Festival Campaign – for cultural exchange
- Holi for foreigner and domestic tourists – Demo of Malla period Holi
- Documentary of Mahabihar from Pulchowk to Mangalbazaar
- 500 Women local guide training- to promote guided service to domestic tourists
- Standard movie shoot in the chowks of Patan Durbar Square that will encourage promotion
- Workshop with local communities for Knowledge sharing, to discuss how local communities can be benefited by the museum and how museum can be benefited by local communities.

Bhandarkhal garden in the east of Patan Durbar square will be renovated and will be added with many facilities will be opened to the public. The light and sound show on the temporary dabali on the east of sundari chowk will be attraction for local visitors (Patan museum office).



Figure 13: Bhandarkhal garden renovation plan

9. Conclusion And Recommendation

9.1 Conclusion

The main reason for less number of domestic tourist in Bhaktapur durbar square is the accessibility factor i.e. no easy access by public vehicle, less cultural promotion, unrenovated building of museum, no provision of proper signage, public restrooms etc.

Patan durbar has been the attraction to the domestic tourist because it has easy access by public vehicle, frequent cultural programs, cultural promotion by attractive calendar, ambience of the museum and its management.

The Patan municipalities seems more active than Bhaktapur municipality in making the plan for economic recover from the covid 19 pandemic promoting the domestic tourism.

Based on Literature review, guidelines are provided for the visit in museum during the pandemic but it seemed impossible in case of Patan and Bhaktapur Museum because the spaces are managed in the old heritage building which are not spacious as compared to the international museums and museums here in Kathmandu are declares closed till date.

9.2 Recommendation

Bhaktapur durbar square can be able to attract more domestic tourists as Patan Durbar Square considering the various points.

9.2.1 National Art Gallery, Bhaktapur

The museum building should be renovated and the ambience in the inner courtyard space should be made more beautiful and attractive. The proper flow of visitors should be made and proper ambience can be created as Patan museum. Presentation of museum and virtual workshop can be done. Museum can also have some instagrammable works focusing on the young tourists.

9.2.2 Public vehicle access

Bhaktapur municipalities should be active on managing the easy access through public vehicles to encourage the domestic tourists. The provision of standard bus fare, proper services, safety in public bus encourage local tourists to visits the place.

9.2.3 Food/ Restaurants

The foods around the Bhaktapur Durbar Square should be made friendly for domestic tourists in terms of cost and services. Cultural programs and traditional beverages video and images can be displayed on the seating space of Restaurants. The local food stalls should be placed where possible maintaining cleanliness.

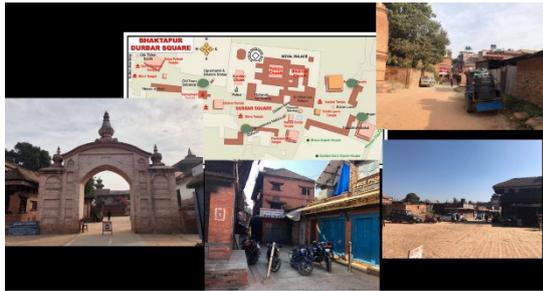


Figure 14: Proposal for food stalls around Bhaktapur Durbar Square

9.2.4 Handicrafts

The handicrafts should be made friendly to the domestic tourist economically. Handicraft Association Nepal should be active making the strategies on how handicrafts can be sold more to domestic tourists. The expensive crafts can be reduced in size or less detail works to minimize the cost of the products that makes it affordable to domestic visitors.

9.2.5 Heritage Walk route

Patan municipality have lunched the application for mobile phone named “Patan Heritage Walk”. Bhaktapur municipality and Bhaktapur Tourism Board should can show interest on making the application on mobile phone because these days, people are friendly to mobile rather than interaction.

9.3 Additional points to attract domestic tourist

9.3.1 Repatriation

Various lost artifacts from the past are been found in different parts of the world which are been repatriated in Patan. The repatriated artifacts must be published and advertised so that the domestic tourist give interest to visit the place at least once. This is also one of the ways to promote and encourage domestic tourist to visit. Bhaktapur municipality and Bhaktapur museum must work on it to bring back our valuable artifacts.



Figure 15: The Laxmi-Narayan upon arrival in Nepal Embassy in Washington DC on 6 March, 2021 [9]

9.3.2 Free Guide training

Guide should be necessary for local tourist as well. Good guide service encourages more local visitors to visit the place.

9.3.3 Encourage the celebrities to visit the place with all the safety

Domestic tourist is more interested to visit the place shown in the screen. Visit of Celebrities play a role as promotion of the place. The film shooting of standard movie in the inner courtyards and durbar square also promote the place. This will help in income as well as encourage domestic tourist giving the knowledge, these places exist here in Kathmandu valley.

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