

Agri-tourism in Municipalities: A Case of Thaha Municipality – Current Status, State, Obstacle and Countermeasures

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Abstract

Agricultural irrigated land (percent of total) 29.74 percent in 2010 of Nepal's territory, providing 65.7percent of Agriculture profession. To improve agricultural, agri-tourism in municipality's conservation and development, a wide range of positive measures should be undertaken. Agri tourism in agricultural lands, when properly managed and developed, plays a major part in agri-toursim and supporting those working in and around agri tourism through jobs and increasing incomes. Based on the analysis of agri-tourism in Thaha municipality, the paper discusses the current status, obstacles and countermeasures for agri-tourism in municipality. Lack of capacity of receiving tourists, and well-educated practitioner are barriers to effective development of agri-tourism in Municipalities. The challenges faced by the operators include expense, lack of capital, interaction with the public, marketing, availability of skilled labor, training of employees, on-farm insecurity, health department requirements, record-keeping, weather, and liability issues. In consideration of Agri tourism characteristics, these barriers can be overcome with government rational plans, and professional practitioner's cultivation.

Keywords

Agri-tourism, Municipalities, Tourism in Nepal, Means, Status

1. Introduction

Agri tourism is new concept in Nepalese context, despite long history of agriculture and tourism sectors in the country. While the percentage of people engaged in agriculture has decreased from 94.4 (1971) to 65.7 (2001 AD), whereas tourism became an important sector since in 1950s after the increased flow of international tourists to explore the cultures, picturesque of Himalayan landscapes. In 1953, Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa conquered the Mt. Everest for the first time and Nepal became a popular destination for the international tourists [Motca 2009, Shrestha p 2012]. There are many potentialities and popular forms of tourism industries in Nepal. However, there is no specific data on the history of agri-tourism development in Nepal. But, agriculture always remains an important sector in the tourism industry providing quality, healthy, organic food. WTTC works to raise awareness of Travel and Tourism as one of the world's largest economic sectors, supporting one in 10 jobs (313 million) worldwide and generating 10.4percent of

world GDP. The direct contribution in Nepal of Travel and Tourism to GDP in 2017 was NPR99.8bn (4.0percent of GDP).

For instance, the tea states in eastern Nepal have been famous for domestic and international tourists for recreational and beautiful landscapes. Furthermore, it is also popular for agricultural diversity in addition to tea states such as Aalu (potato), Alaichi (cardamom), Aduwa (ginger), Akabare khursani (red round big chilly), Olan (milk and milk product), and Amliso. Lack [(1997)] emphasized on a successful diversification strategy by augmenting the farm business with tourism activities that is appropriate in Nepalese economy by using diversified resources, landscapes, biodiversity, cultural heritages, and unique traditions [Thapa D 2013, Maharjan SK, 2006]. However, the scenario has been changing over the years since the agricultural labor forces, especially youth, are distracted from this sector which is an issue not only in Nepal, but also in many other developing and even developed countries. But, it is still continuing to be the backbone of nation's economy as it contributes nearly 47 percent to the Total Gross

Domestic Product (GDP) in the country in 1991 which reduced 33 percent in 13th plan.

Additionally, tourism has contributed the significant roles in overall development of the nation and also to uplift the living standards of the people. Many researchers emphasized on the importance of increasing the length of tourists stay Gautam and Adhikari and tourism in Nepal is also exploring new forms of tourism activities to lengthen the stay of tourists. In this context, agri-tourism can be new possibility in agriculture sector that motivates and encourages farming communities and also youths to raise the crops in an eco-friendly manner and diversity their economies by utilizing their traditional knowledge, conserving biodiversity and maintaining a rural and agricultural way of life. Municipalities in Nepal are cities and towns meeting minimum criteria set out by the government. These criteria include a certain population, infrastructure and revenues etc. Among these 276 municipal councils Thaha Municipality selected for case study. This paper review current state, means of promotion of agri-tourism in municipalities of Nepal and intends to find practical ways to build a prosperous agri-tourism industry in Nepal.

2. Literature Review

USA - According to the Utah State University Cooperative Extension, visiting family and friends' fields grew in popularity in the 1920s, after the invention of the automobile. The period of international mass tourism (1950-): Especially the years between 1950-1960 are the years of recovering the economic conditions that the II. World War caused. After this period, increase in the automobile numbers and improving the life conditions lead to the growing of the sector in the following years. As of 2010, an increased interest in food production and organic practices brings travelers out to till the soil. agri-tourism is also known as agricultural tourism, agrotourism, agri-ecotourism, farm tourism, farm-based tourism, vacation farms, farm stays. Kokko [2011] has identified numerous distinguished prospect and potentials of agri-tourism industry. Examining literature presents the result that, the terms of farm tourism and agri-tourism often utilized in Western Europe. Agro-tourism/agrotourism is generally the usage of Eastern Europe like Greece, Italy and Turkey. Another usage, agriteinment is a term of combining agriculture and entertainment and

it is used in United States of America (USA) with a distinctive meaning with agri-tourism. Holdnak (2000) says about the first vacationing on farms was operated in North Dakota in 1880s and according to the same article the first farm vacation brochure listed the farm facilities for the tourists in 1949. He indicates the effects of preparing the list of farms serving vacation facilities on the numbers of agri-tourists.

In Europe, rural tourism first developed in France in 1951 (Dettori et. al., 2004). A survey study in France in 1992 indicates the French farmers declared that rural tourism is acquiring an increasing role and economic impact within their agriculture activity and also from the analysis, it also emerged that rural tourism mainly practiced by female operators (Dettori et. al., 2004). It is known that in 1994, there were 21 000 farms with 109 000 bedrooms serving accommodation facilities providing benefits to farmers and regional economies by the rents of the rooms, selling agricultural products in Austria (Kahraman and Türkay, 2004). Although agri-tourism was firstly emerged as individual enterprises, it developed as a sub-sector of tourism sector in cooperative manner by the effects of well planned processes. Essentially, rural tourism contains agri-tourism. However, not all tourism which takes place in rural areas is definitely rural, it can be urban in form, and merely be located in a rural area (Ivona, 2003).

American Farm Bureau Federation (2004) makes a definition of the concept as: Agri-tourism refers to an enterprise at a working farm, ranch or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates income for the owner. Agricultural tourism refers to the act of visiting a working farm or any horticultural or agricultural operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation that also adds to economic viability of the site. Other characteristics that impinge upon farmer's decision to participate in agri-tourism include age, educational level of the farmer, number of acres of farm, whether the farmer pays for advice, and whether the farm is organized as a partnership or corporation. Of these liability issues was cited as the primary challenge for all the farms. Directly linked to these challenges are the information needs of the operators which included information about risk management and liability programs, financial sources, government agricultural policy,

agri-tourism opportunities and direct marketing and advertising strategies. Operators were optimistic about the future of agri-tourism and its role in their individual economic viability. The successful implementation of the recommended development strategy and associated tourism targets will require the adoption of new policy positions on cluster destination strategies, tourist accommodation, facilities, transportation, infrastructure priorities and services, marketing, product development, manpower training, development standard and guidelines.

It is seen that, agri-tourism development issues are still not in the control of the Turkish national government. Although, this situation leads to non-planned activities, on the other side it presents free conditions for the agriculture producers who are interested in agri-tourism and rural tourism. It is found that the lack of legislative responsibilities such as taxation, are making the farmers more desirous for agri-tourism initiative. However, it is seen that bottom-up approaches are more successful for agri-tourism development because of the cooperative and local structure of this tourism form. Women are the indispensable operators of the projects because of their effects on the rural life and rural economy. Therefore agri-tourism depends on the existence of the women on the process.

2.1 Status of Thaha Municipality

2.1.1 General Situation

Thaha Municipality is located in the northern part of Makwanpur District in Province 3. It borders the Kathmandu Valley to the northwest. It has an area of 191.2 km² with a population of 41, 623 and a cultivated land area of about 26.93percent. Furthermore, it has flat, slope land and is far away from industrial pollution. Due to its fertile land, Thaha has been rated high quality vegetable and ecological agriculture base of the province. The municipality is named after the Thaha (to know Rupachanda Bista) Movement, a political movement associated with the area. Simbhanjyang, Daman, Palung and Tistung offer beautiful landscapes. Daman is popular among domestic tourists to enjoy its winter snow and for the spectacular views along the Himalayan range as far as Mount Everest. The recent opening of the cable car in Chandragiri Mountain in the north of the municipality provides easy access to the Chitlang Valley for tourists.

2.1.2 Agri-tourism resources

Charming natural environment is one of the basic agri-tourism resources in Thaha. Enough amount of fertile land gift for the Agri-tourism in this area. Vegetable, fruits of price of 1 billion rupees export to the main cities and even in India. It is the place for knowing about unseasonal vegetables. 65 percent of population engaged in agriculture field. From 2051 commercial agriculture started mainly in potatoes, cauliflower, cabbage, carrots etc. For the livelihood of the families they also have livestock as cows, buffalos, goat, and cock etc. The area has a number of hotels including large investments in new hotels. Easy accessibility from the Kathmandu Valley, many of factories as goat Cheeses factory, Wine factory and Allo factory are engaging many people in this area. Vedechaura (GOAT development farm) horse riding, picnic spots etc are other part of people interesting in that area. The government officials as well as experts highlighted and stressed on the importance of preserving the tangible and intangible cultural heritages of Kunchhal and its surroundings so as to develop it as a tourist destination. Abundant agricultural products are another feature of Thaha. Rich resources in agriculture of, unique from one place to another bring diversity and create curiosity for agritourists. Olives are planted in farmland which makes Bisinkhel area the largest olive oil base of Nepal's towns. Ansubarma inscription has a long history in Lichhchabi Dynasty. This village abounds with home stays, resort known as "as big as a first, sweet as Goat cheese" in this area.

2.2 Recent Activities of Thaha

Daman and Indrasarobar of Thaha Municipality are listed in 100 tourist destination of Nepal in fiscal year 2075/2076 for the additional promotion of destination for visit Nepal 2020. Daman travel and tour year 2075 have opportunity for the local product which is given priority. Village Tourism Promotion Forum (VITOF) - Nepal organized a 1 night/2days FAM trip to Kunchhal of Makwanpur district on February 17 and 18, having a motto "every village must be a tourism destination". Kunchhal Village has also been declared as a tourism destination by Nepal Tourism Board. The trip was supported by Nepal Tourism Board (NTB). Thaha municipality have slogan of Agriculture, tourism, agri-tourism and development which committed in municipal council. Some tourism related organizations such as Nepal Tourism Board

(NTB), has positively collaborated and contributed in the promotion and development of agri-tourism in Thaha. NTB has initiated tourism development strategic plan in Thaha municipality. Nowadays lot of people have involved in production of KIBI in this region.

3. Methodology

TI have chosen field study, personal interview, group discussion and consulting with Mayor Labsher bista Subjective matter of Thaha municipality attraction, accessibility, accommodation, facility, tourist activities, actors, affinities-guest-host relationship, management. A total of 60 respondents from 12 wards (representing 5 from each ward) were selected on the random basis (Purposive survey) to explore their wiliness to participate in agri-tourism. Besides, for examining knowledge, awareness and activities for agr-itourism. This research started with theoretical, descriptive knowledge of Agri-tourism. Explanatory research focused on determining the major issues underlying agri-tourism planning, as well as on analyzing the strength, weakness, opportunity and threat factors related to the agri-tourism development in Thaha municipality. It will be more based on: Interpretivism / Constructivist belief. Research strategy is Case studies approach both qualitative and quantitative methods (mixed methods).

4. Data Analysis

The main issue in the settlement located inside the Thaha municipality is issue of livelihood based on agriculture. The local people living in most of settlement of these area (Palung, Tistung, Daman, Chitlang, Bajrbarahi, Agra and Simbhanjyang) are agriculture pron area have economically weak. Due to lack of awareness and alternative means of livelihood these settlements have alcohol prepared from vegetable and grains, increase in use of insecticides and chemical fertilizers in farming, very low price of vegetable Understanding the farming system and its relationship with tourism is necessary because farming, fishing and animal husbandry are the principal tourism activities for agri-tourism.

4.1 Occupation trend

It referred to any activity that serves as one’s regular source of livelihood. The respondent were asked to

give information about their occupation They were categorized into different groups, Majority of the urban consumers i.e.50 percent belonged to agriculture group and 50 per cent belonged to service group illustrate in figure no 1.

Table 1: Schematic View of Occupation Trend

Major Occupation		
	Frequency	Percent
Agriculture	30	50.0
Government Job	10	16.7
Hotel	2	3.3
Goat Farming	1	1.7
Resort Homestay	2	3.3
Business	3	5.0
Dairy Product	1	1.7
Cow Farming	1	1.7
Private Job	2	3.3
Farm	5	8.3
Other	3	5.0
Total	60	100

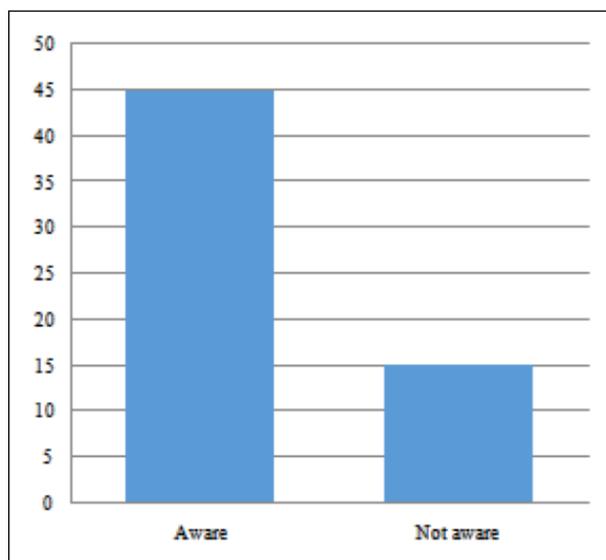


Figure 1: Aware of term agri-tourism

Table 2: To go visit and Agri-tourism

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	55	91.7
No	5	8.3
Total	60	100.0

4.2 agri-tourism knowledge

Awareness was taken up as to whether the respondents knew about agri-tourism and agri-tourism farms in Thaha which illustrate in fig 2 and 3. The response was taken in a dichotomous form i.e. aware or unaware and was expressed in terms of frequency and percentage. The data in revealed that more than one fourth of the total respondents were not aware of agri-tourism i.e. 25 per cent. Similar trend was noticed regarding the awareness about agri-tourism farms in Thaha where 32 percent. It may be due to the reason that agri-tourism is a new venture, nor is very common in Thaha and not so much publicized. This finding is supported by (John and Glyn 2010) where by a lack of awareness was evident among farmers of agri-tourism development.

Strengths	Weakness
Extremely favorable conditions for agricultural production in the region , Dominant position in agricultural production of many goods in Thaha , Relatively strong support from sector institutions and organization	High fragmentation of agriculture, low agricultural productivity , Low qualifications of farmers , High level of employment in agricultural sector
Opportunities	Threat
Increase in extra-regional export and in export to international markets , Expected considerable funds transfers, Rise in income for people , Good assessment of Agriculture products in Market	Competitive products from other markets , Necessity to adjust agricultural production to other standards , Migration from rural areas

Figure 2: SWOT analysis for Thaha municipality

4.3 Willingness of Activities

Certain agricultural activities are preformed on the farm and the respondent’s willingness to participate in these activities was taken and presented in Fig 4. The data revealed that 86.7 per cent of the respondent were willing to participate in agricultural activities on an agri-tourism farm. The different kind of agricultural activities are divided into three categories, these are production activities, processing activities and operating agricultural machineries.

Sr. No	Agricultural activities	Respondent (N=60)		
		f		%
1	Participate in agricultural activities	52		86.7
2	Kind of activities	(N1=52)		
a	Production activities	Alone f	Family f	Friends f
		%	%	%
i	Milking of buffalos	13	17	22
		25	32.7	42.3
ii	Feeding of animals	17	18	19
		32.7	30.8	36.5
iii	Gardening	16	13	23
		30.8	25	44.2
iv	Ploughing the fields	12	18	24
		23	30.8	46.2
v	Harvesting of crops	18	15	21
		30.8	28.8	40.4
vi	Picking of fruits and vegetables	17	15	20
		32.7	28.8	38.5
b	Operate agri-machineries	16	17	19
		30.8	32.7	36.5
c	Processing activities			
i	Processing of dairy products	14	16	22
		26.9	30.8	42.3
ii	Fruit processing	13	17	22
		25	32.7	42.3
iii	Vegetable processing	12	18	24
		23	30.8	46.2
iv	Preserved fruits and vegetables	16	13	23
		30.8	25	44.2

Table 3: Schematic view of willingness of activities

4.4 Prioritization of destination

Criteria for the destination selection from the group discussion and individual interview survey of the Thaha municipality area among 8 variable as, attraction, accessibility, accommodation, facility, tourist activities, actors, affinities-guest-host relationship, management of 8 places Daman, Mulabari, Kunchal, Dadabas, Kotathumki, Indrayanichaura, Chitlang, Lemphu.

Total point get from group discussion of eight tourist destination of Thaha municipality that can be identify that weakness and strength of area. It reflects the present situation of Thaha municipality Agri-tourism. First of all in total point get from discussion Thaha municipality is rich tourist attraction point of view. In attraction sector total highest point of 193 obtained. It is nearby capital city Kathmandu and first highway Tribhuvan highway passes from it. Geanesh man high way is under construction from where it is 13 km away from Kathmandu. It is found that Thaha is accessible point of view get easily of total point 100. In tourism industry many people involve to encourage it obtain actor of 97 point. It is found that touristic activities, management medium type. Tourist activities got 89 and accommodation 88 points. It is found that tourist and business relation very weak and threat for both tourist and hotel, resort owner. It is found very low point 64 in the compare with attraction 193. Recreation activities in Thaha municipality not found satisfactory only 75 points.

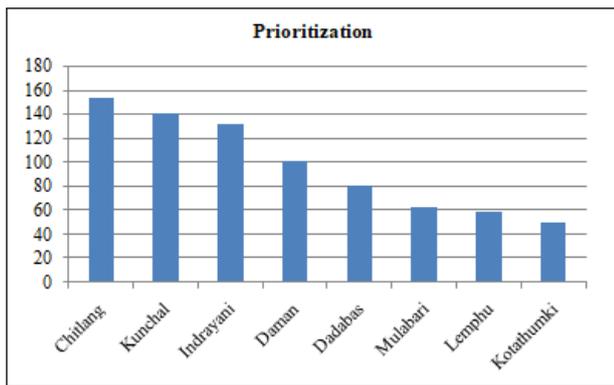


Figure 3: Schematic view of prioritization of destination

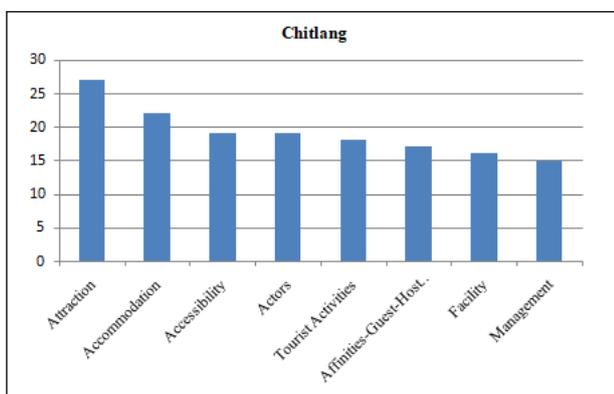


Figure 4: Schematic view of prioritization of variable

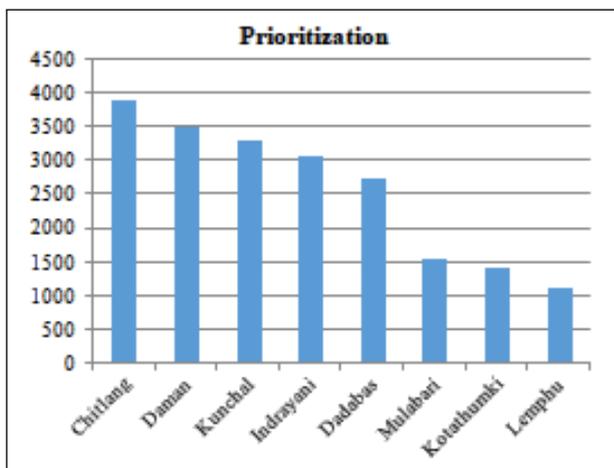


Figure 5: Schematic diagram on prioritization of destination

In prioritization list Chitlang got good position in compare with other places. In total point 30, attraction 27, accessibility 19, accommodation 22, facility 16, tourist activities 18, actors 19, affinities-guest-host relationship 17, management 15 in total 153 point obtain in first position.

Individual survey done in this area Chitlang get first position and but in second position found that Daman instead of Kunchhal village from group discussion. Kunchhal in third position and Indrainichaura fourth place. In individual survey Kotathumki and Lemphu interchange position.

Chitlang is historical important place. It is main border to entry in Chitlang to Kathmandu. Thaha municipality belong to main tourist destination in Chitlang area as house of king and Rana, historical Satadhara, goat cheese, Ansubarba inscription, Ashok Stamba(273 bc), Swachchandra Bhairab, Chamero cave, Syatha Ghar, Indrasarobar nearby Chitlang, Bajrabarahi, Kunchhal border. Similarly other Seven places have their own values and importance, situation, obstacle, means of promotion in Thaha area.

5. Obstacles of Agri-Tourism Development

5.1 Deficient capacity of receiving tourists

Tourism, a special social activity, incorporates travel, food, transportation, housing, shopping and entertainment. These six elements are presented by tourist facilities, tourism products and tourism service. Tourist facilities in Thaha were insufficient. Hotels or home stay, resort were too scattered to satisfy the market demand at all levels. It was difficult to find characteristic snacks to eat without any guide. In addition, no professional travel agency had been stationed in the Thaha and even no educated farmer guide had been appeared. And, no recreational activity was in line with local lives.

5.2 Deficiency of well-educated practitioner

Thaha had been a famous agricultural product for last two decades. As a tourist destination, it was still a nascent one. The dominating practitioner mainly originated from local farmers. Unfortunately, most farmers were less educated, less exposed and innocent. On one hand, farmers might treat guest whole heartedly showing unpolluted rural folk. And on the other, they were not like a brainy businessman facilitating a clean tourism atmosphere with a long-term perspective. Troublesomely, agri-tourism couldn't survive without community participation. It was urgent to cultivate tourism operators, full of patience, local knowledge and consciousness of environmental protection.

6. Counter Measures and Means of Promotion

First, tourism plans should be made within the whole Thaha municipality by government. Relying on Thaha center, market town, leisure agriculture service center should be constructed. Around Thaha Avenue, the development plan of leisure agriculture can be divided into eight places to form a development ring. Simultaneously, each place is a relative independent agricultural production underlying a circular economy model to minimize resources waste and protect the Thaha environment. It is necessary to do branding of agricultural product in different location. It is making rational plans to improve the capacity issues of tourist. At the entrance of the street, tourist service center is easily seen by a strange visitor. It provides delicate services such as map, tour consultation, restroom, nursing, information, tickets, transportation and mailing. Alongside the street, local culture museum, food courts, specialties shopping street. Cultivating professional practitioners a successful agri-tourism can hardly do without the collaboration of operators and local residents. Different level training would be conducive to agri-tourism in Thaha. Three levels need to take into account including tourism operators or managers, front-line employees, and local farmers. For local farmers, marketing ideas, quality training, risk and stakes analysis are necessary. For front-line employees like tour guides and products sellers, whole-hearted service idea is crucial. For tourism operators, the concept of long-term or sustainable development is more effective than those ideas just for money. In addition, well-managed tourism practices in and around Thaha could help educate agritourists on the value of municipality contribution to health and the long-term benefits to people, economics provided by Thaha. Certainly, these ideas are based on the balance between development and protection of Thaha which is controlled by local government.

7. Findings

Agri-tourism is a rapidly expanding sector of the tourism industry especially popular in agriculture land areas and alternative source of income areas of developing countries. Purpose of visit of tourist in Nepal for holiday and recreation about 70 percentage. Agri-tourism based in community is all about – maximizing benefits and minimizing impact. Bottom-up approach allows the participation of the

local people to the process. Small sizes of farms are more appropriate for agri-tourism development. Thaha offers a rich agriculture land with different attraction around and has an increasing numbers of domestic and international tourists every year. There is delay in preparing tourist development strategic master plan. The delay in land use plan and zone declaration hasn't been proper management of agricultural land. Every people have concept of main property is land. Main principle of Planning of Agri-tourism based on Traditional System in Hill and mountain region on LEKA; BESI ;KACHHAD(Plain region (BESI) of land mainly agriculture production, Middle land (KACHHAD) house build for live, and High land (LEKA) for animal grazing. Nowadays rural development issue is one of the most important problem of the countries for increasing the unbalanced economies between urban and rural geographies, agri-tourism gains an attractive role with its structure that is depend on local dynamics. Thaha 25 percent of people have not aware of Agri-tourism terms. Generally agri-tourism activities tend to develop in closer agricultural areas (Thaha municipality near to Kathmandu valley) to urban areas. Additionally, agri-tourism develops in the agricultural areas that have tourism potential in their closer environment. Thaha municipality has high value of tourism point of views regarding Agri-tourism in area. In attraction point of view Thaha municipality ward no 10 Chitlang got first position and overall variable of selection destination. Subsidy or grants should be given to agri-tourism owners for infrastructure facilities and agri-tourism development. Accessibility to agri-tourism farms through proper road ways, transportation facilities etc. The advertising program may include print advertisements relevant targeted publications, radio advertisements on targeted stations with specific targeted messages for specific programs.

8. Conclusion

The paper entitled, “Agri-tourism in municipalities case of Thaha municipality Current status, State, obstacle and countermeasures “has been conducted to study the historical perspective of agri-tourism in Thaha municipality to know the socio personal characteristics of the farmers practicing agri-tourism, the status of agri-tourism in Thaha municipality and the problems that are associated with it. The article gives a vivid picture about the type of farmers

practicing agri-tourism. The article throws light on the counter measures that are willing to expand area under agri-tourism and increase agritourists activities and add facilities for further expansion of the agri-tourism unit. The study also facilitate in identification of the various obstacles associated with agri-tourism. This paper helps to act as a good role model for various other farmers willing to go for agri-tourism. The article will facilitate the extension personnel, employees, planners and policy makers to plan necessary policies and initiate various awareness programme and promotional activities keeping in view the important findings and suggestions of the study for success of the agri-tourism venture in the municipality. Issues needing attention for the promotion and counter measure of agri-tourism are publicity, transport, accommodation, networking, capacity building of farmers, safety of tourists, public-Private partnership. Expansion of destination, diversification and specialization for the long stay in development of Tourism in Thaha municipality. It is necessary to provide package for tourist in this area. It is implemented that tax, fees from different sector involves in tourism activities.

Problems faced by the respondents in practicing agri-tourism insufficient fund for publicity, lack of knowledge and skills, lack of government support, weak communication skills, lack of mindset for commercial approach, unfavorable weather condition., insufficient literature related to agri-tourism practice, on willingness of the tourists to purchase farm

products, inability to introduce more activities, lack of training for agri-tourism, complexity in getting license from the government, lack of co-operation between different authorities.

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