



Research Paper

## Potentials and Challenges of Rural Tourism Development in Sudurpaschim Pradesh of Nepal

<sup>1</sup>Shiv Raj Joshi, <sup>2</sup>D.C. Pandey, <sup>3\*</sup>Arvind Singh Yadav

1. Associate Professor, Kailali Multiple Campus, Dhangadhi, Nepal.

2. Prof. Dept. of Geography, Kumaun University, Nainital, Uttarakhand.

3. Asst. Professor, SSJ University, Almora, Uttarakhand.

\*Corresponding author

### Abstract

The Sudurpaschim Pradesh of Nepal is a stunning and exquisite tourist destination that is currently seeing economic growth. More opportunities for the growth of tourism, the primary element in this province that directly impacts the livelihood of locals, will be visible to visitors. The key to unlocking unemployment and poverty and transforming them into good forces is tourism. The main goal of this study is to discuss rural tourism, one of the many different types of tourism that are popular in Sudurpaschim and Nepal. This essay delves deeply into the current status of rural tourism and how it affects the locals. This study discusses issues including the possibility of rural tourism in Sudurpaschim and how it might benefit both the local population and tourists who come to the area. It discusses the advantages, significance, possibilities, and challenges of rural tourism in all of its manifestations, including agro-tourism and religious tourism as well. It also talks about the home stay programmes that were developed here; they are essential to rural tourism. In order to have a clear meaning and an easy understanding of the information on potential, prospects, and difficulties of rural tourism in Sudurpaschim Pradesh of Nepal, the study was done on a small sample of participants and regular field visits.

**Keywords:** tourism, rural development, home stay, poverty, employment, sustainability, economy.

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### I. Introduction:

Tourism and the travel sector are important economic activities all over the world (WTTC, 2018). The tourism industry has emerged as a key force for sustainable socioeconomic development globally (Hwang and Lee, 2019). Tourism is an important source of foreign exchange, provides employment opportunities and generates economic growth in the country (Shrestha, 2011). Tourism is a product of three main elements; destination, hosts and the tourists. Tourism is a process which obviously affects various aspects of society and culture (Acharya, 2001, 2005).

The tourism society in Britain attempted to clarify the concept and defined in (1976) as: "Tourism is the temporary short – term movement of people to destination outside the places where they normally live and work, and their activities during the stay at these destinations, include movements for all purposes, as well as day visits or excursions (Bhatia, 1994). Upadhyay (2003) has given much emphasis to tourism to be developed as a leading sector of the economy of Nepal and said that tourism has become means of economic progress by various nations. Tourism is one of the productive business activities directed for the production of the goods and services. It provides goods and services to the customers (visitors, generally foreigners) and employment and income to the locals (Gautam, 2011).

Tourism is one of the key elements that alter socioeconomic patterns in rural area. Rural tourism's primary motto is "Serve what you have." The best illustration of rural tourism is home stay, which is quickly becoming one of the most well-liked forms of lodging where visitors pay to stay and take advantage of the familial atmosphere of the host nation. It is a place to go to observe the rural lifestyle's socio-cultural and ecological patterns. During a home stay, villagers offer everything is in their possession in their house and the surrounding area. The primary products of rural tourism are local goods. Whatever the host family has, one can enjoy it with them. Any socio-cultural and natural activities are displayed by the host. It therefore seems to be a

genuine natural phenomenon. The visitor discovers high observer expectations despite thinking there are fewer expectations. A visitor will be able to learn something new in one day that could become a lifelong dream. The study came to the conclusion that a lack of awareness, coordination, and cooperation between service providers and tourism business owners was the reason why home stay themes and factors were not addressed. Both the national and municipal governments fall short in properly promoting the research sector. Despite this, rural tourism in the target region may serve to raise the socioeconomic standing of the locals.

The Far West's Sudurpaschim province, often known as "Sudurpaschim," is a stunning location. The phrase "The Incredible Far West: once visited is not enough" is one we constantly read and hear. Rural tourism offers employment opportunities, increasing chances for income and financial stability. The host displays any socio-cultural and natural phenomena that are genuine natural phenomena. The visitor discovers high observer expectations despite thinking there are fewer expectations. A visitor will be able to learn something new in one day that could become a lifelong dream.

### **Meaning and Concept of Rural Tourism:**

Tourism is leisure travel, as well as the idea and practices of travelling, the industry of luring, hosting, and amusing tourists, and the industry of running tours. Tourism may be international or domestic i.e., within the traveler's country. The World Trade Organization defines tourism in terms that go "beyond the common perception of tourism as being limited to holiday activity only" as people who "travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for leisure, business, and other purposes for no more than one consecutive year" (Aryal, 2005). Tourism in rural areas is a complicated, multifaceted industry. It goes beyond agriculture and agro-based tourism. It encompasses farm-based vacations as well as adventure, sport, and health eco-tourism; hiking, hunting, fishing, rafting, jungle safari, angling, educational travel, arts and heritage tourism, and, in some circumstances, cultural and ethnic tourism. It also includes travel to places of historical interest. Actually, the idea of rural tourism is not wholly new. It is an intricate and varied activity. Through sustainable socioeconomic development of rural areas, it helps farmers to maximize human welfare and happiness, consequently lowering regional inequality and economic disparities and assisting in the fight against poverty. But there are a number of ways that rural tourism in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s is different. Today, more than 70% of Americans engage in rural recreation (WTO, 2012). A country experience that includes a variety of attractions and activities is what is meant by rural tourism. Suklaphata National Park, Khaptad National Park and Khaptad Baba Asharam, Saipal Himal and Surmasarobar, Api Nampa Himal and Conservation Area, Ghodaghodi Lake, Badimalika, Ramaroshan and Baidyanathdham, Patal buneshwor, Tripura and Niglasaini, Tikpur Park and Karnali Bridge, Ugratara and Parshuram Dham Dodhara, Suspension Brigde and Bedkot Tal. Wide open spaces, small-scale tourism development, and possibilities for visitors to directly experience rural and natural environments are all essential attributes. Therefore, rural tourism should be practiced in rural areas; it should be functionally rural—built on the unique characteristics of the rural world, such as small-scale enterprise, open space, contact with nature and the natural world, and heritage and it should represent the intricate web of rural environment, economy, history, location, culture, religion, symbolism, religious belief, sacred lakes, festivals, animal husbandry, agro-pastoralist, dress, and ornaments, costume, and domestic.

Through sustainable socioeconomic development of rural areas, rural tourism works to maximize human welfare and happiness, consequently lowering regional inequality and economic disparities and assisting in the eradication of poverty there.

### **Meaning of Home Stay:**

When travelling to rural areas, home stays are a common kind of hospitality and lodging in which tourists stay in locals' homes. Academic institutions can also arrange for home stays (for their students that study abroad or participate in student exchange programs). Home stays run rural tourism in a number of localities, including Pyaratal Community Home Stay, Tharu Home Stay, Bangra, and others in Sundarpaschim state. Home stays, where visitors can dine, sleep, and relax in a family context different than their home surroundings for leisure, business, and other objectives, are the foundation of rural tourism development.

### **Importance of Rural Tourism:**

Rural tourism has long been understood as an effective catalyst of change in depressed and deprived (of entrepreneurial capacity) areas and to explore a unique set of amenities. Because of funds directed to help private investment projects in rural tourism facilities, most peripheral areas are now relatively well endowed with key infrastructures (Almeida, and Machado, 2021). Obviously the tourists are dynamic actors whereas society and destinations are static within the domain of the tourism activity in the place (Acharya, 2005). Jobs are created by tourism in rural and poor areas. For instance, ecotourism and rural tourism are well-liked tourism types that create jobs and stop villager migration to densely crowded metropolitan slums. Tourism is an economic activity that is imposed, or at least grafted, on a pre-existing set of economic activities and traditional

ways of life (Price & Harrison, 1996). The region's provision of essential amenities has increased the level of living for rural residents. Rural tourism is a significant part of the tourism industry that has the ability to improve quality while giving residents simple ways to make money. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the country's territory is rural, while twenty-four percent (24%) of the population as a whole lives below the poverty line. As a result, rural areas are where the majority of tourist attractions are found. It could be religious, historical, socio-cultural, or natural nevertheless, rural tourism potential is high (25%), socio-cultural (20%), and religious (20%) (CBS, 2012 and 2020). The advantages of rural tourism are as follows:

- It creates various job opportunities at a central as well as grass-root level.
- It promotes mass production.
- It enhances the promotion and conservation of art and culture.
- It promotes huge growth in rural economic activities and rural marketing.
- It helps in the expansion of various profitable businesses.
- It brings changes in socio-economic status, lifestyle, and social relationships among the local people.
- It brings foreign currency and growth in GDP.
- It provides job opportunities for the locals and raises the profile of the place.

It can assist people find nearby healthcare and educational institutions as well as provide incentives for infrastructure investment in the form of rural roads and rail networks. Visitors can increase business and cultural links while also promoting connectivity by increasing awareness. Due to over tourism and poor management, it may have certain negative effects, such as environmental harm, a disregard for regional customs and cultures, and an imbalance in the socio-cultural environment.

#### **Sustainable Tourism:**

Sustainable tourism is a concept that covers the complete tourism experience, including concern for economic, social and environmental issues as well as attention to improving tourists' experiences and addressing the needs of host communities (UNWTO, 2020). However, sustainable tourism is a derivative form of sustainable development and helps to reduce poverty.

#### **Sustainability:**

The goal of sustainability is to satisfy current needs without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to satisfy their own. Three pillars—economic, environmental, and social or, more colloquially, profits, planet, and people make up the idea of sustainability. Sustainability encourages people to consider decisions' long-term effects on the environment, society, and people rather than only their immediate advantages or benefits. Economic, ecological, and human factors are the three main facets of human existence that comprise sustainable growth of civilization (UNDP, 2019).

#### **Development:**

The process of development never stops. There is a connection between development and growth. This process depends on a variety of factors, including advancements in the physical, economic, social, cultural, political, and technological spheres. The three main building blocks of development in the context of rural tourism are money, technology, and people. There should be both qualitative and quantitative changes during the development process. Development, however, calls for both qualitative and quantitative change.

#### **Rural Tourism and Rural Development:**

A person moving from their usual place of residence to a rural location for a minimum of twenty-four hours to a maximum of six months for leisure and pleasure is referred to as engaging in rural tourism. All tourist operations in a rural location are referred to as rural tourism. The process of improving rural areas with the aid of contemporary ideology and ideas is known as "rural development." Marzo-Navarro (2017) stated that rural tourism promotes the development and economic growth of the destination areas, for which it is a priority to achieve the objectives of economic, sociocultural, and environmental sustainability. The World Tourism

Organization (UNWTO) (2021) has recognized that “tourism is one of the driving forces of global economic growth and is currently responsible for the creation of 1 in 11 jobs.

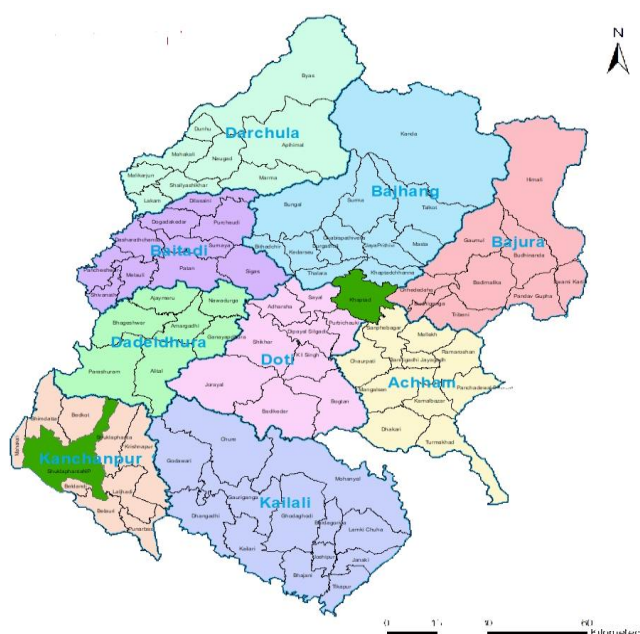
With a persistent growth in production and income for the rural poor, the process is built to lessen or progressively eliminate poverty. According to a World Bank document, rural development is methods for helping the rural poor improve their economic circumstances. It entails spreading development's advantages to the poorest among them, who seek livelihood in rural areas. The group includes small-scale farmers, tenants, and the landless laborers.

There has been much disagreement over the definition of rural development. From one perspective to another, rural development is defined differently. The concept of rural development may be defined with an emphasis on income in order to address the issue of rural poverty. Or it may be described as a sociological theory that holds that the rural poor are a source of untapped ability and a group that should be given the chance to gain from development through better access to nourishment, health, and education.

Agricultural development, which rural development includes and goes beyond, can be distinguished. Rural development may, in essence, entail a broad-based reorganization and mobilization of the populace of rural areas in order to improve their ability to effectively handle the demands of their everyday lives and the changes that follow. The World Bank asserts that rural development must be explicitly planned to boost output.

It recognizes that improved food supplies and nutrition, together with basic services such as health and education, not only improve the physical well-being and quality of life of the rural poor. The concept now encompasses "concerns that go well beyond improvements in growth, income, and output. The concerns include an assessment of changes in the quality of life, broadly defined to include improvement in health and nutrition, education, environmentally safe living conditions, and a reduction in gender and income inequalities. If a proper marketing plan is done for rural tourism, it could bring lots of benefit to our society. It could be a sustainable revenue generating project for rural development of our government (Nagaraju, and Chandrashekara, 2014).

#### **Study Area:**



**Fig.1: Study Area: Sudurpachim Pradesh**

Sudurpaschim is a provincial tourist destination in Nepal. The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal was divided into seven provinces. It is one of the seven new provinces, which were constituted as per the new constitution of Nepal in 2072 BS. It covers nine districts, namely Bajhang Bajura, Achham, Doti, Kailali, Baitadi, Dadeldhura, Darchula, and Kanchanpur. This province borders the Tibet Autonomous Region of China to the north; Karnali and Lumbini Pradesh to the east; the Indian states of Uttarakhand to the west; and Uttar Pradesh to the south. Initially known as "Province Number 7," the newly elected Provincial Assembly adopted Sudurpashchim Pradesh as the permanent name for the province, voting on September 28, 2018. It stretches from 28°.22 "to 30°.09" north latitude and 80°.03 "to 81.25" east longitude. Elevation ranges from 116 metres (Kailali) to 7132 metres (Apihimal, Darchula). The total area is 19539 sq. km (13.28% of Nepal's total area).

The mountain region is 7932.834 sq. km (40.6%), the hills 6,748.7706 sq. km (34.54%), and the tarai 4857.3954 sq. km (24.86%), with a population of 2,552,517 (9.63% of Nepal's total) (CBC, 2020 and Census, 2011).

**Objectives:**

1. To study the present situation and find out the problems of rural tourism.
2. To demarcate the potential of rural tourism.
3. To provide suggestions to overcome problems of rural tourism.

**II. Materials and Methods:**

A "Descriptive Research Design" guided the research's execution. Because the conservation trends of the study area's resources, including its rivers, lakes, ponds, forests, pastures, and grazing land, as well as how locals and tourists benefit from them, have been discussed, it is possible to draw conclusions about the conservation practices of the area's residents. To better understand how the local population views rural tourism and its rising potential, problems, and limitations, the study is based on both primary and secondary data. They were compiled using data collection techniques like surveys, interactions with people, observation, and interviews. The tourism industry participants from the local community, including hotel and home stay owners, local resource users, and certain individuals chosen from the civil society group, as well as the political leaders, officials, and tourism agents and associations. Only 40 of the 130 samples chosen for the study were utilized for discussion in order to get a basic grasp of rural tourism, including its potentials, problems, and development outlooks.

**III. Results and Discussions:**

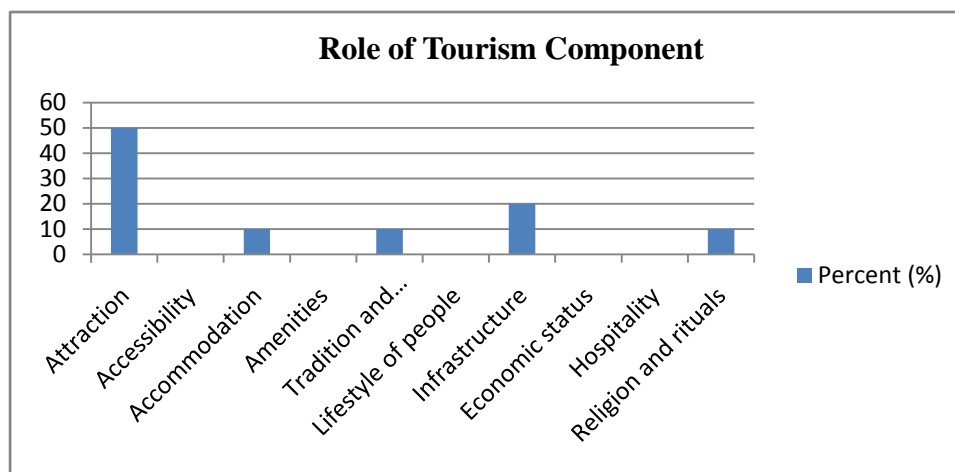
**Role of Rural Tourism:**

In the study, attraction is found to be the most important component of tourism, which plays a decisive role in tourism. Both natural and cultural attractions aim to promote tourism, with 50% of respondents prioritizing attractions and 20% prioritizing infrastructure, while the rest prioritized accommodation, tradition, and religion equally (Table 1 and Fig.2).

**Table 1: Role of Tourism Component**

S. N.	Component	Respondents	Percent (%)
1.	Attraction	20	50
2.	Accessibility	-	-
3.	Accommodation	4	10
4.	Amenities	-	-
5.	Tradition and culture	4	10
6.	Lifestyle of people	-	-
7.	Infrastructure	8	20
8.	Economic status	-	-
9.	Hospitality	-	-
10.	Religion and rituals	4	10
	Total	40	100

Source: Field survey, 2020



**Fig. 2**

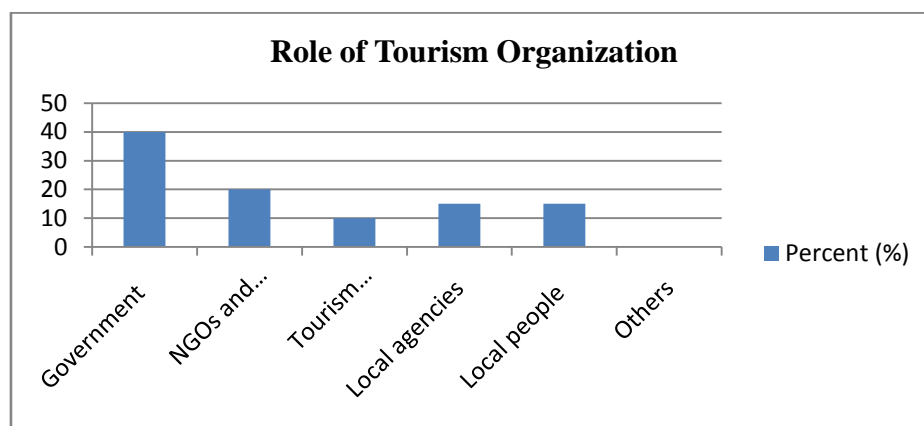
### Role of Tourism Organizations in the Study Area

Table 2 and Fig.3 show the role of tourism organizations and agencies in the development of tourism in Sudurpaschim. Local government focused more attention (40%), and NGO and INGOs' roles are found (20%), local institutions are (15%), and local people of the tourism agencies have given lower priority (10%) out of a hundred.

**Table 2: Role of Tourism Organization**

S.N.	Unit Or Organization	Respondents	Percent (%)
1.	Government	16	40
2.	NGOs and INGOs	8	20
3.	Tourism agencies	4	10
4.	Local agencies	6	15
5.	Local people	6	15
6.	Others	-	-
	Total	40	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020



**Fig.3**

### Role of Tourism in Employment Generation in the Study Area

In terms of earnings, tourism is an employment-generating industry that provides different opportunities to people. Table 3 presents the role of tourism in employment creation according to the opinions of the 40 respondents. Tourism was viewed positively by 24 respondents (60%), negatively by 12 respondents (30%), and neutrally by the remaining 4 respondents (10%). A negative response is not found at all (Table 3 and Fig.4).

**Table 3: Role of Tourism in Employment Generation**

S.N.	View	Respondent	Percent (%)
1.	Positive	24	60
2.	Negative	-	-
3.	Neutral	4	10
4.	Unknown	12	30
	Total	40	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

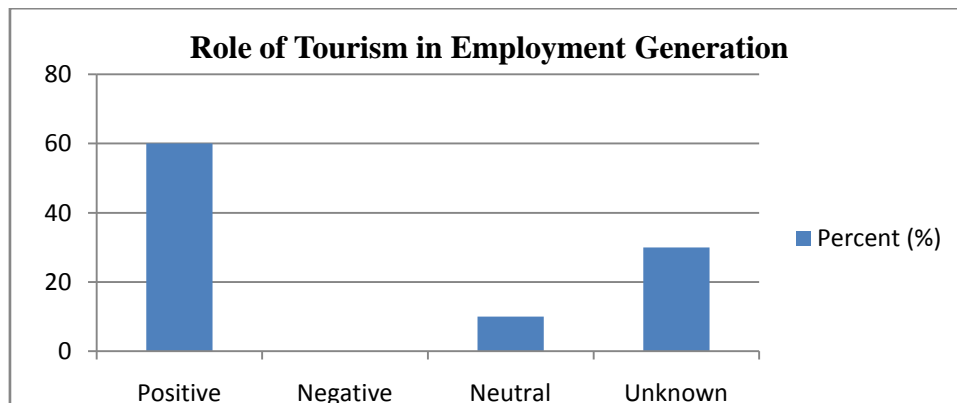


Fig .4

### Prospects of Tourism in the Study Area

The following Table 4 and Fig.5 shows the prospect of tourism in the study area. Out of total respondents, 25% of respondents' opinion is to be focused on rural tourism. Religious/pilgrimage and socio-cultural tourism are equally given second priority, that is 20%, and the rest of them are focused on business, urban, and agro tourism, which are the main prospects of tourism respectively in the study area.

Table 4: Prospects of Tourism

S.N	Prospect of tourism	Respondent	Percent (%)
1.	Rural Tourism	10	25
2.	Urban	4	10
3.	Business	4	10
4.	Social/Cultural	8	20
5.	Health	2	5
6.	Education	-	-
7.	Religious	8	20
8.	Mountain	-	-
9.	Agro	4	10
10.	Others	-	-
	Total	40	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

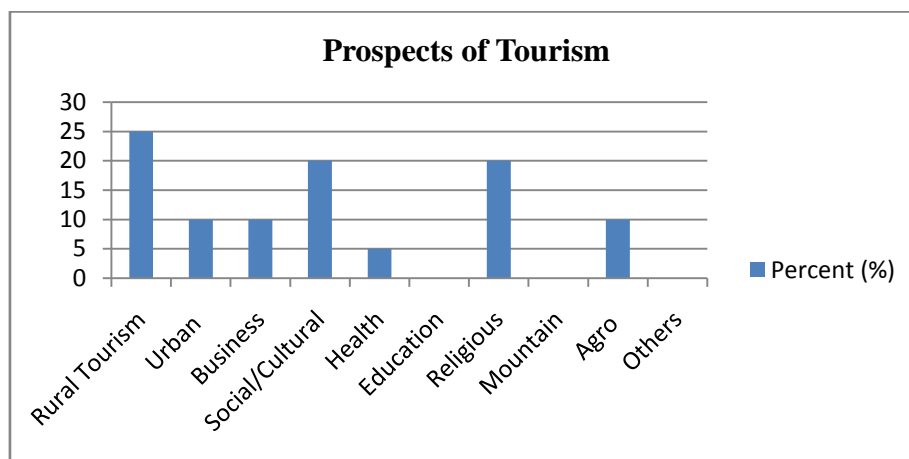


Fig .5

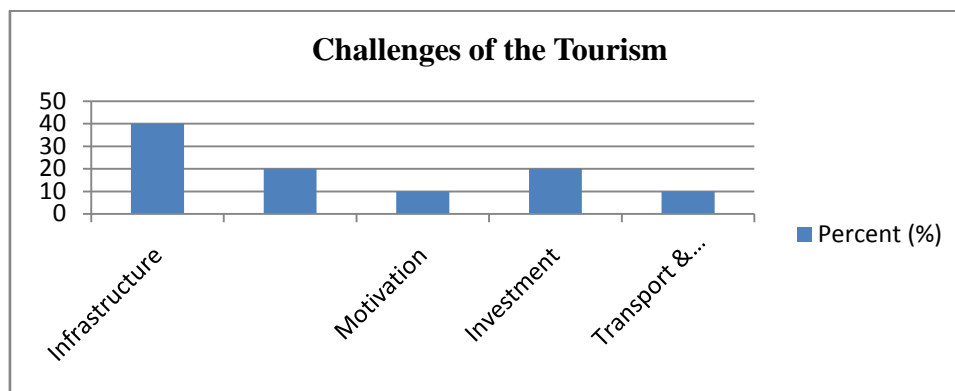
### Challenges of the Tourism in the Study Area

Sudurpaschim tourism faces numerous challenges and problems, including a lack of infrastructure, inefficient manpower, and a lack of transportation and communication, a lack of advertisement, investment, and motivation, a lack of conservation, deforestation, unplanned urbanization, and the loss of traditional norms and values in the likely tourist destination, as shown in the table below. Out of 40 respondents, 40% regarded well infrastructures as the most difficult, while 20% regarded advertising and investment as equally difficult, and 10% regarded motivation and communication as the least difficult (Table 5 and Fig.6).

**Table 5: Challenges of the Tourism**

S.N	Aspect	Respondent	Percent (%)
1.	Infrastructure	16	40
2.	Advertisement	8	20
3.	Motivation	4	10
4.	Investment	8	20
5.	Transport & Com.	4	10
	Total	40	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020



**Fig .6**

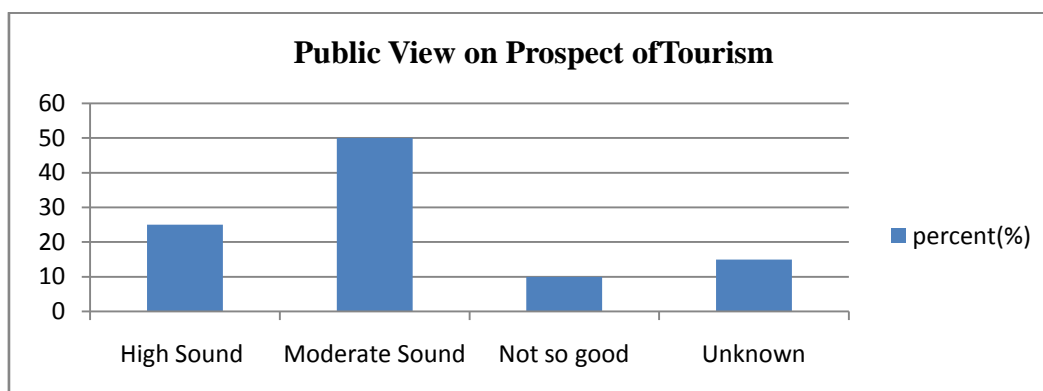
**Public View on Prospects of Tourism in the Study Area**

In Table 6 and Fig.7, it showed that the public view on prospects for tourism in Sudurpaschim province was positive. The people were asked about the prospects of tourism in the study area. According to their response, out of total respondents, 50% viewed the prospect of tourism in Sudurpaschim with a moderate sound, 25% of respondents have a high sound, 15% are unknown about it, and 10% expressed not so good or neutrally.

**Table 6: Public View on Prospects of Tourism**

S.N	View	Respondent	%
1.	High Sound	10	25
2.	Moderate Sound	20	50
3.	Not so good	4	10
4.	Unknown	6	15
	Total	40	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020



**Fig. 7**

Major Potentialities of Rural Tourism Development are:

- Natural beauty /physical beauty
- Climatic variety/ pleasing climate
- Wildlife /Biodiversity
- Rural settlement
- Cultural diversity / cultural heritage
- Historical and religious place



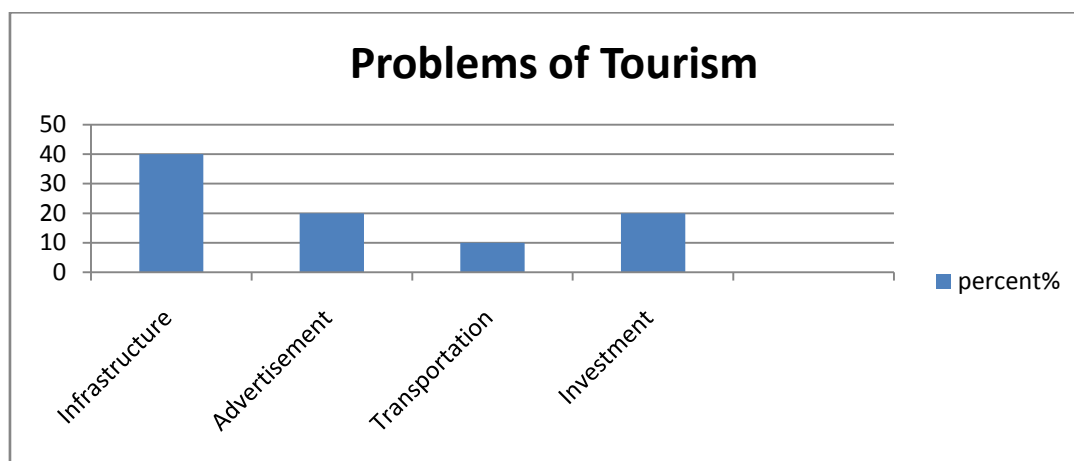
- Less expensive
- Good and humble behavior of peoples

**Rural Tourism Problems**

Following Table 7 and Fig. 8 shows that out of total respondents, 40% reported that poor infrastructure is the main problem of rural tourism development in the study area. Similarly advertisement and investment shows the respondent 20% respectively, and other problems transportation, communication, cooperation, promotion and hospitality and the 10% respondent blame the policy makers and the government policy and planning as the sense of negligence of the government.

**Table 7: Problems of Tourism**

S.N.	Problem of Tourism	Respondent	Percent (%)
1.	Infrastructure	16	40
2.	Advertisement	8	20
3.	Transportation and communication	4	10
4.	Cooperation	-	-
5.	Motivation	-	-
6.	Investment	8	20
7.	Promotion	4	10
8.	Hospitality	-	-
	Total	40	100



**Fig. 8**

The major problems and challenges of tourism in Sudurpaschim state are:

- Lack of transportation facilities communication and information centers.
- Lack of hotels, lodge, restaurant and trained guides and efficient main power.
- Lack of advertisement, promotion and incentives.
- Lack of recreation facilities.
- Lack of proper planning, policy and implementation .
- Lack of tourism products and security.
- Negligence of government.
- Backward in modernization

**IV. Recommendation and Conclusion:**

The study on rural tourism in Sudurpaschim Pradesh (Far West Province) found one of the most unexplored (hidden) and attractive places. Here we found many more attractions and interesting tourist spots (spots) full of natural, cultural, and biodiversity. Here are also the historical, cultural, archaeological, and religious sites. In Sudurpaschim Pradesh, it is referred to as "Dev Bhumi," whereas Khaptad is referred to as "Heaven on Earth." The major potentialities of tourism in this province are the scenic beauty, the peasant climate, and socio-cultural diversity. Major destinations are Suklaphanta, Khaptad, Badimalika, Apisaipal, Ghodaghodi, Bedkot, Ramaroshan, Chisapani, Tripura, Dehimandu, Melauli, Tikapur and so on.

Tourism and development are interrelated terms. These concepts are very broad. Rural tourism is very broad in its meaning. Despite this, the study is carried out for the local people and the growing prospect of rural tourism and its potential, problems, and challenges in order to fulfill the concept of rural tourism development.

The process of poverty alleviation and uplifting economic status by promoting rural tourism should be given more priority, thereby opening more possibilities for the development of rural areas.

The study found that rural tourism in Sudurpaschim has high potential (65%), and has contributed significantly to the local people and both hosts and guests. Most of the people are farmers in local areas. And most of the most attractive places are also located in rural areas. They are neglected because the government has made plans and policies focusing on urban areas. Rural tourism also encourages the growth in the agriculture sector. Rural products can be used for the development of rural tourism. Most of the rural tourism sectors are community-based. The whole community benefits in many ways. Local people are directly or indirectly involved and benefit either slightly or more. So the community-based rural tourism strategy is recommended to reduce disparity and poverty here. Rural tourism has more potential because it is better, cheaper, easier, safer, brighter, eco-friendly, more interesting and more comfortable. Rural tourism and agro-tourism are interrelated regarding agro-tourism, which is connected to the local people of the area. Rural tourism is multifaceted in its nature. The basics of rural tourism development are home stays where tourists can eat, stay, and enjoy themselves in a pleasant family environment. This study provides new perceptions and a better understanding of rural tourism development for both local people and concerned local bodies as well.



Photo 1: Field Visit, Home Stay, Bhada .



Photo 2: Bedkot Tal



Photo 3: Field Visit, Puraina tal



Photo 4 : Api Himal

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