



Nature-based tourism: economic growth under the guise of inclusive poverty reduction

AN ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONSES OF TOURISM ACTORS ON UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF NATURE-BASED TOURISM

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Abstract

This research has aimed to answer how tourism sector actors promote nature-based tourism in Nepal and respond to critical academic and media reports on the unintended effects on people and the environment. Theory shows tourism can have several unintended effects on the people and environment. By triangulations of and media-analysis, policy-analysis and expert interviews results show the media has a general positive attitude towards tourism though concerns are mentioned. The tourism actors currently promote the sector as a driver of economic growth as it profits benefit other sectors as well and the effect it can have on poverty reduction. This neo-liberal strategy of development operates by supply and demand. As there are no significant critical rapports on the operations the tourism actors do not have to account of address any of the potential and shown unintended effects on people and environment hence why it is not done. Under the guise of the goal of poverty alleviation investment locations are chosen based on the potential for returns instead of investing in the regions where the poorest of the poor live. Although it is likely the intention is to alleviate poverty the neo-liberal growth model creates the situation in which this is not achieved. Therefore this study concludes investment institutions should move away from the primary goal of alleviating poverty themselves yet empower those institutions who are able on a smaller scale. This can for example be done by significant infrastructure development projects.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
List of figures, tables & and maps	6
List of figures	6
List of tables.....	6
List of maps.....	6
List of graphs.....	6
List of abbreviations	7
1. Introduction	8
2. Theoretical framework	12
2.1. The growth of tourism and nature-based tourism	12
2.2. Understanding the developmental effects of NTB.....	17
2.3. Neo-liberal development, NGOs and the construction of business case.....	22
2.4. Market-led tourism, consumers and the media	24
2.5. Objective and research questions.....	27
3. Methodology.....	28
3.1. Operationalization of the concepts.....	28
3.2. Conceptual approach	30
3.3. Research design.....	33
3.3.1. Phase 1: Forming theory	33
3.3.2. Phase 2: Media-analysis.....	33
3.3.3. Phase 3: Policy-analysis.....	35
3.3.4. Phase 4: In-depth interviews.....	37
3.3.5. Phase 5: Processing and writing	38
3.4. Justification of methods	38
3.5. Research limitations	40
3.6. Ethical statement.....	41
4. Analysis – Media trends regarding tourism in Nepal.....	42
4.1. Diversification of tourism products.....	42
4.2. Tourism reports through time.....	43
4.3. Trends and critiques regarding nature-based tourism	46
5. Analysis – Unintended consequences of NBT and the response of actors.....	51

5.1.	Neo-liberal development through the concept of PPP	51
5.1.1.	<i>investment locations</i>	51
5.1.2.	<i>Need for return investments</i>	55
5.2.	Inclusion of the poor in policy	56
5.3.	Multiplier-effect	58
5.4.	Trickle-down effect	59
5.5.	Spillover-effects.....	60
5.6.	Overseeing the bigger picture.....	61
5.6.1.	<i>Tourism and the environment</i>	62
5.6.2.	<i>Differentiating between tourism and its impact</i>	62
5.7.	Nature-based tourism and poverty.....	65
6.	Discussion.....	67
6.1.	interpretation of study findings	67
6.1.1.	<i>implications of neo-liberal development</i>	67
6.1.2.	<i>Economic growth under the guise of poverty alleviation</i>	68
6.1.3.	<i>Nature-based tourism, the consumers and the sustainability of the sector</i>	68
6.1.4.	<i>Transferring critiques into suggestions</i>	70
6.2.	Summarising the Nepalese tourism sector	70
6.3.	Implications for further research	71
6.4.	Limitations occurring during the research	72
7.	References	73

List of figures, tables & and maps

List of figures

Figure 1: A continuum of ecotourism types

Figure 2: Ideal characteristics of hard and soft ecotourism

Figure 3: Conceptual framework regarding nature-based tourism and poverty alleviation in Nepal

List of tables

Table 1: Overview of definitions public-private partnerships

Table 2: Overview of search terms regarding the media-analysis

Table 3: Overview of analysed policy documents

Table 4: Positive arguments retrieved from media-analysis

Table 5: Overview of concerns towards nature-based tourism

Table 6: Overview policy goals on poverty alleviation through tourism

List of maps

Map 1: International arrivals per destination (average 2013-2016)

Map 2: Multidimensional poverty index 2014

List of graphs

Graph 1: Distribution of articles from media-analysis set out against FDI p/y

List of abbreviations

NBT	Nature-Based tourism
PPP	Public-private partnerships
UN	United Nations
NGO	Non-governmental organization
IFC	International Finance Corporation
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
PPT	Pro-Poor tourism
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
USD	United States Dollar
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
VNY2020	Visit Nepal Year 2020
NTNC	National Trust for Nature Conservation
DFID	Department For International Development
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
SNV	SNV Netherlands Development Organisation
CPSD	Country Private Sector Diagnostic
CPF	Country Partnership Framework
ACA	Annapurna Conservation Area
WBG	World Bank group
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
NTB	Nepal Tourism Board
SME	Small & Medium Enterprises

1. Introduction

The tourism sector is one of the biggest employers around the world. It provides jobs to well over 200 million people and the sector has been growing since 1990 due to relatively cheap possibilities for (international) travelling (e.g. flights). Where tourism accounts for around 10 percent of the GDP in Western countries this is around 40 percent in the developing world (Sofield, Bauer, De Lacy, Lipman & Daugherty, 2004). Especially within the Global South much of the tourism activities are based in natural areas, or are organised by tour operators in relation to aspects of nature (e.g. sightseeing). People enjoying safaris, diving and trekking in the most beautiful and wild places that exist and tour operators make this accessible to paying customers.

Current trends have shown particular forms of tourism are growing. Activities such as hiking, climbing and wildlife viewing have seen a surge in the number of tourists who participate such forms of nature-based tourism (NBT) (Balmford et al., 2009; Kruk & Banskota, 2007). These forms of nature-based tourism are regarded in much of the academic literature as well as in tourism policies as an ideal way to achieve 'development', mostly as a mean for poverty alleviation in areas without many other options (Kruk & Banskota, 2007). Many studies show a positive relation between increased tourism and socio-economic development. Especially in countries as Nepal, where there are not many options for certain communities to gain income, tourism is seen as 'the right approach'. It is considered the right approach because it is (1) relatively labour intensive, (2) supposedly inclusive of women and the informal sector, (3) perceived as based upon natural and cultural assets of the poor and (4) considered suitable for poor rural areas with few other growth options (Scheyvens, 2007). Hence, this is why the global organizations like the United Nations as well as large development institutions such as the World Bank, and the government of Nepal promote tourism as a strategy for poverty alleviation (Medina-Munoz, Medina-Munoz & Gutiérrez-Pérez, 2016; Saville, 2001; Wester, Mishra, Mukherji & Shrestha. 2019, p. 431).

However, these arguments are not supported by all as there is just as much critique about the use of tourism as poverty alleviation strategy. For example, it was stressed by a study that out of the 13 countries, home to 80 percent of the world's people

living in extreme poverty, 10 countries did not see a reduction of poverty by tourism use (Scheyvens, 2007). Besides different outcomes between countries it can also lead to significant differentiated development outcomes within countries. For example, when there is a difference between levels of poor and who can be reached within this group with development projects (Saville, 2001). In a more local context other arguments are made regarding nature-based tourism which is, like mentioned, the form of tourism conducted in ecological fragile regions. One can for example question if an increase of tourism in mountainous areas or a tropical rainforest, will not affect the ecological carrying capacity. Hereby it is logical to make the connection between tourism, especially nature-based tourism, and the ecological impact this may have. Besides, one can argue the model of nature-based tourism is based on inherent inequalities as it is 'performed' in public resources (i.e. environment) capitalized by private sector operators who do not take the responsibility of maintaining them.

The research field of tourism and environment is quite saturated. Many topics have been researched and a lot can be found regarding the subjects already mentioned above. Still, certain topics considering nature-based tourism and the social consequences this may have, are not researched in-depth. For one, research shows the questionability of the term nature-based tourism as it can be seen as a paradox due to the fact it will always have an impact on the environment, and thus be ecologically unsustainable (Ranaweerage, Ranjeewa & Sugimoto, 2015; Brown & Hall, 2008; Tiwari, 2008; Chornesky, 1991). Second, certain ecological impacts are caused by tourism which will have an effect on the local population (Wall, 1997). And third, why policies still focus on tourism as poverty alleviation strategy. More so when, for example, a common livelihood strategy in rural and isolated nature conservation areas entails migrating to the city by which many of those policies may become irrelevant (Wallace, 2003; Petras, 1999; Shrestha, 2008; Khatiwada et al., 2017). Research directions mentioned in existing studies name for example, the need for more knowledge on "the subtle, indirect and/or complex effects of tourism impact" (Wolf, Croft & Green, 2019). Other research mentions the lack of critical views on 'pro-poor tourism' as an approach to poverty alleviation (Scheyvens, 2007). Within the case of Nepal such problems exist. It is therefore the following issue was identified which I will explore within this thesis.

The practices of development produce intended and unintended effects. This is

also the case in the sector of tourism. Still, tourism activities and promotion takes place nonetheless and is growing. First, unintended consequences are not accounted for in policy development by GOs and NGOs hence lead to different outcomes. And second, the current development models make it difficult to measure the outcomes in the first place. The fact these issues are not mentioned is due to NGOs and GOs dependency on funding making it a logical consequence that policy making consists of '(1) building a network of support and (2) excluding opposition, thus stabilizing a policy interpretation' through which policy becomes known, popular and eventually is made to succeed (Rap & Wester, 2013). This thesis research will combine the above mentioned elements in the following research question in the geographical context of Nepal.

How do tourism sector actors promote NBT, and how do they respond to critical academic and media reports on the unintended effects on people and environment?

The relevance of this question being that the strategy GOs, NGOs and other multilateral institutions use may implicitly do the opposite and exclude the poor. This will be explored in a series of sub-questions based on a series of subjects. First, to understand how the government and other institutions look at tourism a macro-view is necessary to understand how they conceptualise and promote tourism as a development strategy. Secondly, the general perception of the media towards the tourism industry will be analysed. Third, the questions of how development institutions and the government try to implement tourism projects/activities will be asked. Fourth, and interconnected with the third question I scrutinize how donors, governments and private tour operators seek to include poor people in tourism projects.

In the next chapter, I present the theories and concepts that I use in this thesis. Arguments on nature-based tourism and poverty alleviation strategies will be theorized. Adjoining, predominant livelihood strategies across Nepal I will discuss as well as a critical reflection on the working of non-governmental organizations and policy development. Hereafter, the methodology sets-out on how the research is conducted, why it was done and will integrate the conceptual framework. This framework will make sense of the uncoherent concepts explained within the theoretical framework and show the linkages relevant for this study. This will be a combination between theories regarding tourism, and more specifically, nature-based tourism, ecology, economy, development models

and poverty alleviation. In the empirical chapters this conceptual framework will be examined by triangulation of a media-analysis, an policy-analysis and expert interviews. The first chapter will set-out to explore how the media perceive and portray the tourism industry. The second chapter will describe the results of how tourism actors respond to the media reports and how they operate. Hereafter the theory and results are combined and discussed followed by a concluding statement how this research contributes to the discourse of tourism and development and describes possible future research directions.

2. Theoretical framework

In the main research question, I use several theoretical terms which need elaboration and context to be fully understood. These terms will also be combined into one conceptual framework that I use as the basis for research in this thesis. The main theoretical statement states the developmental effects of nature-based tourism cannot be measured in the way they currently are. The model introduced with the neo-liberal turn of development is complicated and has several unintended effects not included in the current straightforward measurement system. However, as it is a top-down approach to development GOs, NGOs and financing institutions nevertheless promote is as a sustainable way of development.

2.1. The growth of tourism and nature-based tourism

It is difficult to establish the start of tourism as it is difficult to establish what tourism entails. Significant was the start of the 'Grand tour era' in the seventeenth and eighteenth century with the peak between 1760 and 1790. It is seen as the first form of international tourism (Williams & Lew, 2015). The major objective was to educate young men on the classical topics in the cultural centres of Europe. Early 1800s there was a shift in which also the Alps and French riviera became attractive with places as Monaco and Monte Carlo. By the end of the 1800s the latter was established as the new place for the Europe elite which transformed to the first mass-tourism wave around the 1920s. Since then, tourism has grown into one of the largest sectors globally in terms of foreign exchange and employment (World travel and tourism council [WTTC], 2019).

The establishment of tourism in Nepal was around the 1950s. Before this two other stages can be identified where visitors with different purposes came to Nepal. It is said in ancient times famous people as Gautam Buddha visited Nepal during the rule of Jitedasti. When Princess Bhrikuti married with Srong-sten Gampo a special relation was established between Nepal and what is now Tibet resulting in frequent travel of people between these countries. It established a long era of travel between nearby countries often for religious purposes. The second era was with the introduction of Nepal to outsiders by the book of Captain Kirk Patric. Hereafter, Nepal became frequently visited by British natives. The earliest rapports of foreign visitors is dated 1881 where it stated

153 Europeans travelled to Nepal in a period of 44 years (Shrestha & Shrestha, 2012). In the 1950s Nepal became established as a locations for tourism when the European elite had started to show interest in exploration of the mountain regions. The first ascent of a 8000m peak and the ascent of Mount Everest by Tenzing Norgay Sherpa and Sir Edmund Hillary showed Nepal to be a destination for the world. From this point onward Nepal has tried to develop the tourism sector. Whereas first only expedition climbers came later this were explorative trekkers followed up with the more mainstream tourists. In the first year of counting 6179 people visited Nepal growing to over a million in 2019 (Shrestha & Shrestha, 2012; Ministry of tourism and aviation, 2019). Although the Nepalese tourism market has differentiated with several tourism niches most activities take place in nature. It is therefore these niches are conceptualised within the broader concept of nature-based tourism. This concept can be in itself seen as a niche from the overarching concept of tourism.

At the time of the first studies on tourism it was not recognized different types of tourism were described. It was in the 1900s where tourism became an established form of academic research. Butler (2004) suggests three eras of tourism development; the pre-1950 phase, 1950-1980 and 1980 to present. Herein the pre-1950 phase is regarded as the era wherein tourism studies had an descriptive approach. The 1950-1980 phase was where tourism became a theme as it became more grounded as it was seen in relation to other disciplines. After the 1980s tourism academics became more diverse as tourism grew worldwide and new niches (eco-tourism, health-tourism & heritage tourism) arose. Still and because of this last phase, it is difficult to define what tourism means. For one, it is an overarching concept with a variety of smaller research directions. And second, tourism is researched in a range of disciplines from economics to sociology and psychology. Historical attempts to define tourism (and how it is described in the dictionary) are; (1) A tourist is a person undertaking a tour, a circular trip, that is usually made for business, pleasure or education at the end of which one returns to the starting point, normally the home. Or, (2) The activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business or other purposes. (Williams & Lew, 2015). These are descriptive definitions without giving a clear example of what the tourist will undertake reinforcing the argument tourism is overarching. Within this thesis the niche of nature-based tourism

will be analysed. It is sometimes seen as the opposite of mass-tourism as the latter is often associated with; (1) participation of large numbers of people, (2) mainly collective organization of travelling, (3) collective accommodation & (4) integration of the holidaymaker in a travelling group (Pigram & Wahab, 1997). These points are arguable as also within mass-tourism different categories arise (organised mass-tourism vs. individual mass-tourism) though the main difference with NBT is seen in the amount of people at a touristic destination.

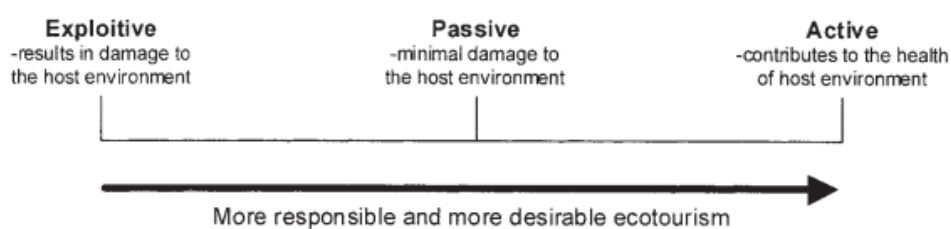
The term nature-based tourism has been used extensively in academics already hence, many definitions have been developed over the years. Besides, different terms are used with the same meaning as nature-based tourism, a small overview. One of the earlier definitions is of Laarman and Durst (1987, as cited in Valentine, 1992, p. 108) which use the term 'nature travel' to describe a form of tourism combining education, recreation and adventure. These early definitions explicitly mention 'education' as a part of nature travel although it is not the only component. Also Boo (1990, as cited in Valentine, 1992, p. 108) defines 'eco-tourism' as traveling to a relatively undisturbed and uncontaminated place with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery, wild plants, animals and cultural manifestations. Both the definitions of Boo and Laarman and Dust have the focus on the experience of the tourist. Lucas (1984, as cited in Valentine, 1992, p. 108) starts with the same approach in his definition namely: 'Tourism which is based on the enjoyment of natural areas and the observation of nature'. But after this he specifies it more in the way that 'this form of tourism has a low impact on the environment, is labour intensive and contributes socially and economically to the nation.' This definition, at least the second part, takes a different approach considering the first two definitions. Here the focus lays in the social and economic benefits of this form of tourism for the receiving country which implicitly states this form of tourism is beneficial for the receiving country. Arguably, it reflects the neo-liberal turn in development thinking, in which activities increasingly were framed in terms of their potential social and economic value. However, as common goods are capitalized by the tourism industry it is controversial to state 'nature-based tourism contributes socially and economically to the nation'. To illustrate, nature-based activities take place in forests, mountains, rivers and any other natural environment. Though these locations belong (often) to the (local) government (i.e. people) but are exploited in increasing terms by

private sector initiatives regarding tourism. Therefore the common good of nature is capitalized for tourism revenue. In the case of Nepal it can, for example, be Chitwan national park where private tour operators establish safaris and therefore appropriate trails which belong to the people of the area. In regards to this research this definition matters due to the fact nature-based tourism is considered beneficial and, thus, contributes to economic growth (e.g. neo-liberal development). Nature-based tourism has been linked to a plethora of different terms or seen as a subset of a larger scientific class. Gonsalves (1987, as cited in Valentine, 1992) sees nature-based tourism as a form of alternative tourism, 'alternative' in the sense that it was seen as encompassing the concern of mass-tourism and the impact on people and place. Richter (1987, as cited in Valentine, 1992) names it 'appropriate tourism' which is considered the same as 'alternative' tourism. With these terms the authors try to encompass the body of mass tourism and the impacts this form bring to places and people (Valentine, 1992). Other terms with which nature-based tourism has been associated, or has been replaced with, are 'responsible tourism', 'ethical tourism', 'environmental-friendly tourism', 'green tourism' and possibly the most popular term 'sustainable tourism' (Kutay, 1989; Borst, 1990; Lane, 1990, as all cited in Valentine, 1992). Researchers mobilize these terms to contrast forms of nature-based tourism with the growth of mass tourism, which is widely criticized by academics for its devastating effects on the environment and for its tendency to commoditize 'local' cultures (turning it into a capitalist product – available for those who can buy it). It is interesting to see how past research has associated nature-based tourism with terms as mentioned above. There are arguments which can sustain these associations though other research suggests these arguments are arguable. (Marzouki, Froger & Ballet. 2012; Wall. 1997) . To elaborate, mass-tourism is regarded as the draconian polluter of the tourism industry whereas nature-based tourism is considered sustainable. Though mass-tourism happens often in cities where ecological impacts will be low though nature-based tourism, although significantly smaller in population, happens in the most fragile of environments (e.g. mountain ranges, reefs & rainforests) (Tiwari, 2008; Chornesky, 1991). One can ask if nature-based tourism is sustainable at all (Wall, 1997; Korosi, 2013). Terms like 'ethical' and 'responsible' are relative terms and it makes for interesting debates as to why nature-based tourism is described as such.

Within literature there is made a difference within the concept of eco-tourism

regarding the impact it will have on the environment as the examples here above introduced. As I mentioned, according to several studies, ecotourism can be regarded as having at least a relationship with types of tourism as nature-based tourism, adventure tourism and cultural tourism (Johnson, 2006). For this matter the forms of eco-tourism discussed are deemed relatively the same regarding these other forms of tourism. There are several different ways in which eco-tourism is set-out in different categories. For example the study of Miller and Kaae (1993, as cited in Orams, 1995) which has an extreme outlook on ecotourism. At the one hand they describe all tourism (including ecotourism) will have a negative impact on the natural world regardless of management strategies. At the other end of their continuum they describe all tourism as ecotourism as humans are seen as living organisms and therefore part of the natural world. In 1995, not long after the introduction of eco-tourism, Orams (1995) made a scale of ecotourists from less to more desirable in terms of environmental damage as can be seen in figure 1. This scale ranges from the exploitive stage where people have no concern for the environment, resulting in damage towards an active form of eco-tourism where tourists contribute to the health of the environment. Within this range there is a dichotomy identified which has been theorized extensively (Weaver, 2005). Johnson (2008) identifies, within the range of figure 1, 'passive' ecotourism also as 'soft' ecotourism whereas 'active' ecotourism is identified as 'hard' ecotourism. It are these terms which have led to a significant body of literature on the dichotomy between those two terms.

Figure 1: A continuum of ecotourism types (Orams, 1995)

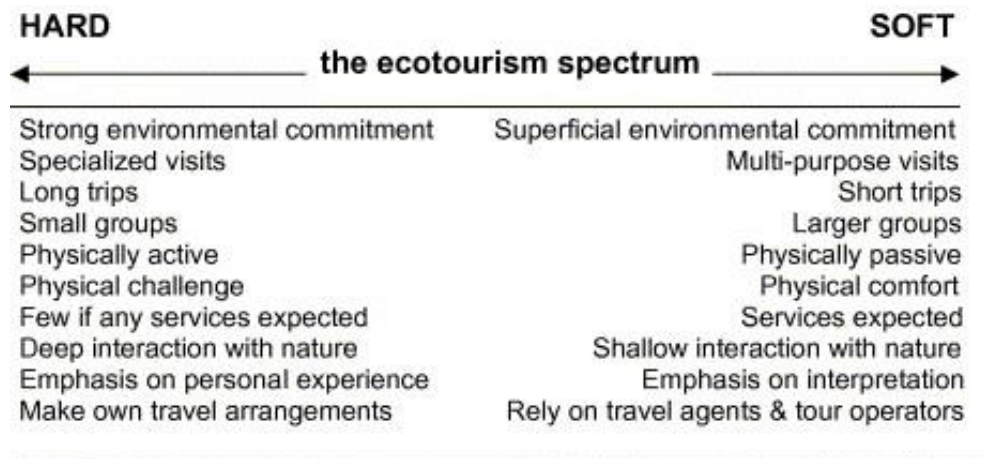


Source: Johnson, 2008

Soft ecotourism entails often a larger number of tourists who have more luxurious stays in serviced sites where there is a superficial environmental commitment and a shallow interaction with nature. Hard ecotourism on the other hand is considered to be in smaller groups with physical challenges in primitive conditions though with a strong environmental commitment and a deep interaction with nature (Weaver, 2005) (See

figure 2). From these definitions and indicators it can be derived soft-ecotourism is considered more environmentally harmful compared to hard-ecotourism. Though it differs into how scientists interpreted the term ecotourism.

Figure 2: Ideal characteristics of hard and soft ecotourism



Source: Weaver, 2005

Some have become cynical into what it entails and actually see 'the ecotourist' as the most dangerous of all. On the other hand ecotourism is seen as the answer to tourism that is sustainable in the long run. The notion ecotourism should only be considered when it is in the line of hard ecotourism is seen as unattainable and impossible within the economic models though it is also generally accepted that ecotourism is used for marketing purposes creating greenwashing.

2.2. Understanding the developmental effects of NTB

Based upon the definition Valentine (1992) has defined himself, namely; 'Nature-based tourism is primarily concerned with the direct enjoyment of some relatively undisturbed phenomenon of nature', this subsequently means the activity of nature-based tourism must 'not disturb' the location it happens in and must not produce any permanent damages, such as degradation, to the natural environment (Valentine, 1992). It is precisely this stipulation which makes the term nature-based tourism a paradoxical term, i.e. nature-based tourism always brings some degree of disturbance and arguably, thus damage to the environment – the 'base' of nature. The debate on this question exists already in literature and there is a variety of different statements to be seen in this subject. According to Valentine (1992) it is in the more popular discussions of nature-based

tourism where it is assumed that nature-based tourism is inevitably environment friendly. However, many authors strongly disagree with this assumption, as is the position of this thesis, -due to the fact it neglects to account for a variety of unintended effects of nature-based tourism. To give a few examples of the diverse effects nature-based tourism creates. In a case study on elephant behaviour it was found through a study of comparison that elephants experienced higher significantly more stress, alertness and aggressive behaviour when tourists were present during feeding time compared to when no tourists were present (Ranaweera et al., 2015). Another case was that of vegetation impact in South-Australia where significant impact was found in the relation between walking tourists and vegetation. This was done by taking different samples of vegetation based on the distance from the walking tourists and showed more damage to locations close by compared to those located further away (Wolf & Croft, 2014). These are two of many examples where nature-based tourism has a negative impact on nature. Negative in the sense it can cause harm yet not necessarily will be detrimental as nature is adaptive. It is in some cases preserving nature for nature-based tourism actually deprives local people of their livelihood. An example is the case of Tortuguero National Park in Costa Rica where local residents living of traditional hunting and gathering were forbidden to do this due to the preservation of the park. A process which is happening in different place around the world and is conceptualized as 'fortress conservation' (Siurua, 2006). Without attention regarding the local inhabitants in this process they were robbed of their livelihood while not being integrated and/or benefitted from these decisions (Wall, 1997). To state Farquharson (1992, as cited in Wall, 1997, p. 18) it are 'poor people who cannot afford to be conservationists' meaning they do not care about respecting environmental regulations (beneficial to the tourism industry) when they have empty stomachs. These problems and others such as the rising prices and little employment, contributed to local resentment against conservation. There are other examples which I will not elaborate here. The examples that I described show that tourism-based nature conservation is mainly for privileged visitors where local communities have little benefits and control (O'Grady, 1990, as cited in Valentine, 1992). The arguments hereabove show the difficulty of the debate regarding tourism and conservation. It shows an ever existing tension in the relation between conservation and tourism. Tourism-based nature conservation is often the case though it does not necessarily have to. As tourism is often

created out of the capitalist economic growth and conservation has trouble following this model. Research shows us there are multiple examples where tourism has led to a harmful interaction with nature and multiple examples where it has been the driver of healthy conservation.

These positive or negative relations between nature and tourism reflect on the socio-economic aspect of this debate and is in that sense also explanatory. As nature-based tourism and tourism in general, is seen as a sector with high development potential, though still within the neo-liberal model of economic growth, theories and concepts have been introduced as to how the poor will benefit from this economic growth.

Firstly, the trickle-down effect relates back to the, back then, presumed causal relationship between economic growth and income inequality. The general idea of the concept considers that the accumulation of wealth will be beneficial for the poor. So, by economic growth there will be income redistribution and increase investment incentives for the poor (Akinci, 2016). There are a number of studies that have supported the concept of trickle-down effect though others actually have found the concept of trickle-up more valid. A study by Akinci (2016) across 65 countries stated that to some extent the poor benefit from trickle-down though the rich benefit far more creating an increase in income inequality.

Secondly, there is the so-called spillover-effect. The body of literature, especially focussed on tourism, is small though it can be referred to as; 'the both positive and negative externalities resulting from economic activity or processes that affect any element not directly associated with the activity' (Yang & Wong, 2012). For example, the tourist who is travelling towards a trekking trail and passes through a town buying some last supplies (Hill, Nel & Trotter, 2006). Though further research into the effects relevant regarding this study are lacking.

Finally, the multiplier-effect presumes that spending within a sector (tourism for example) is distributed across other economic sectors (Ntibanyurwa, 2006). For example the food served in hotels can be beneficial for the agricultural sector. It has been acknowledged that the tourism industry has a relatively high multiplier effect compared to other sectors. Though, often it is problematic to get clear a clear answer on the relationship due to difficulty of measuring the effect of tourism by itself (Pascariu & Ibanescu, 2018). There is however a wide acceptance of the value of multiplier effect and

the level of economic development being that (more) developed regions show higher scores of multiplier effects. Second to that is the more diversification the country has the higher the score can be due to a range of sectors that can be involved. Also locations with more luxurious stays (3 star hotels compared to 2 star hotels or camping's) show higher multiplier effects (Pascariu & Ibanescu, 2018). Compared to the trickle-down effect the multiplier effects shows a significant larger body of literature suggesting the positive result of multipliers. Still, if multipliers have positive results, or negative for that matter, it is difficult to attribute the result to a specific activity. Therefore it is not really to say if and how the multiplier has benefitted.

The latter argument also counts for the other effects mentioned but are nevertheless all three are actively incorporated by GOs, NGOs and finance institutions. There is a wide consensus by international agencies such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and practitioners, tourism is a catalyst for economic growth and an effective means of relieving poverty (Medina-Munoz et al., 2016). Academics do not have reached consensus yet as even sources are contradictory if there is a consensus or not. Since the general believe by multilateral organizations is the usefulness of tourism as a catalyst, tourism has been actively used in policies and proposals by different actors as a mean to achieve Millennium Development Goal 1; the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.

Question remains who the targeted population is and what their current livelihood strategies are. It is clear nature-based tourism is seen as a popular and effective way to alleviate poverty in areas without the possibility of diversification (Kruk & Banskota, 2007). Referring to local communities as the target population regarding poverty alleviation (as is done previously in this thesis) though question remains what 'local community' actually entails. Inequality exists within communities and on all different geographical scales, and it needs to be clear who benefits of certain choices and for whom these choices may have a positive or negative impact. When one visits for example the Khumbu valley to trek towards Everest Basecamp an amount of lodges is past. It is those who own the lodges profiting from the tourism industry and obtain an annual income which is significantly higher compared to the national average (Shrestha. n.d.). However it is mainly those lodge-owners (i.e. the ones located along the major trekking routes) who benefit in the actual local context. Though, most of the revenue

originating from the tourism industry remains in the commercial centre of Kathmandu. Hence, there are little trickle-down effects expected to the people in rural areas where many people carry out the tourist activities (Hummel, 2004). It becomes, clear 'local community' cannot be regarded as a group with homogeneous characteristics. The context of the area, subject and impacts matter due to differences in, for example, cast, ethnicity, gender or class. Nepal is a highly homogenous country in that sense. In 1854 the Varna caste system was rearranged in the Muluki Ain document. This document divided all Nepali people in four hierarchies (castes) with sub-groups within these four categories. Every caste was subject to its own social status and chances in life. Although the caste system as well as all discriminatory laws were repealed in 1963 the system remains entrenched within Nepal society by shifting from the public domain to the private domain (Subedi, 2010). Besides the caste groups around 101 different ethnicities are identified in Nepal speaking in 123 different languages. The difference between ethnicity and cast is difficult to gratify though (arguably) the most significant difference is ethnicity has been formed throughout history whereas the caste system is a social construct which was implemented in a short time. However, the meaning as to what both terms entail has become somewhat intertwined (Levine, 1987; Subedi, 2010; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nepal, 2011). These and other factors make for a variety in different livelihood strategies which subsequently are impacted differently by, say, nature-based tourism.

In the case of rural Nepal one can identify five main livelihood strategies within communities; (1) non-farm wages, (2) business/enterprise, (3) commercial farming, (4) remittance oriented and (5) diversified subsistence strategy (Khatiwada et al., 2017). Across these livelihood strategies diversification of substance has become the most dominant one in rural Nepal. A trend also visible across the Himalayas in general as overall the non-farm income accounts for almost 58 percent of the total household income (Rahut & Scharf, 2012). One of the increasing trends as a livelihood strategy on its own but also within the strategy of diversification, is outmigration from rural villages to city centres in Nepal or abroad. It is the escape from poverty or ambition for more as to what is possible which is mainly from rural households towards urban centres, more industrialized countries or the Gulf States (Shrestha, 2008; Maharjan, Bauer & Knerr, 2012; Choda, 2008). Mainly men try to find jobs to be able to send remittances home to

relieve pressure of woman trying to run the households. Literature suggests there is no clarity whether outmigration reduces the workload back home since results show different trends across different areas (Maharjan et al., 2012). Though, it is very clear the trend of outmigration is growing and becoming an increasingly more popular livelihood strategy. It was estimated most economic growth across the years was due to increased remittance flows back to Nepal. In 2017 around 26 percent of the GDP was remittances with more than a quarter of Nepal's workforce working outside the country.

The rise in population in combination with the decrease of farm sizes has resulted in a failure to make basic requirements as a livelihood strategy which has meant other income opportunities have been on the rise. Also, changes in environmental conditions have made it more difficult for people to earn an income and increasingly leaving their place of origin behind, with them being defined by authors as environmental refugees (Massey, Axinn & Ghimire, 2010). All in all, this has made outmigration has risen significantly in rural areas making it an increasingly more important household livelihood strategy (Choda, 2008; Massey et al., 2010; Maharjan, Bauer & Knerr, 2012; Ansari, 2017). Still, in certain areas it was found migration did have effect on securing the livelihoods in the short run but as remittances affected crop production negatively it is arguable if migration is beneficial in the long run (Maharjan et al., 2012). As this lack attention from policymakers and focus remains on agriculture and tourism without including the bigger picture it is questionable if those policies will have an effect and how policies are actually designed.

2.3. Neo-liberal development, NGOs and the construction of business case

The neo-liberal development model, which has been named a few times, originates from political-economic theory. It was formed in the late 19th century by mostly Germans and Austrians. The former neo-classical thought of balance between demand and supply became outdated in the advancing capitalist economies. Neo-liberalism became the mainstream economic model, starting from around the eighties, with two main principles. First, factors of production such as labour and capital get paid what they are worth and second, free markets will not let factors go to waste (Peet & Hartwick, 2015). Meaning, as little interference as possible to have the most efficiency. This meant development went from a focus of helping the poor directly towards a form of development where

economic growth was central. With this growth the poor would eventually benefit. Friedman, one of the founding fathers of neo-liberalism, stated it as followed; “Millions of able, active and vigorous people exist in every underdeveloped country” and “require only a favourable environment to transform the face of their countries” within neoliberal policies aimed at creating “more competitive markets with brave, more innovative entrepreneurs.” (Peet & Hartwick, 2015).

By the end of the eighties the neo-liberal system became the standard within international economic policy. It was the so-called ‘Washington consensus’ which formed the basis of the new set of policy instruments (Peet & Hartwick, 2015). Especially institutions as the World Bank and IMF applied these new instruments to the Third World borrowing countries. The World Bank, founded in 1944, had shifted from strategy a few times before it eventually took a neo-liberal direction in the early eighties. Based on a rapport from the African Strategy Review Group state control was found to be ineffective and expressed private sector activity should be enlarged (Peet & Hartwick, 2015). Although neoliberal policies, especially the Washington consensus, were nuanced in the early 2000s due to mass protests the current operations from the World Bank remain with a strong focus on economic growth (Peet & Hartwick, 2015). The ideals of the failed Washington consensus were redesigned in what Peet & Hartwick (2015) call ‘new liberal neo-liberalism’ taking form in the Millennium Development Goals.

Within this neo-liberal development framework actors (i.e. NGOs, governments, donor institutions) developed the financing methods based on these new policy instruments. It was at the same time neo-liberalism became mainstream, the amount of NGOs also grew explosively. Such ‘independent’ organizations were ‘greeted as the magic bullet’ solving the top-down, state-led development programs (Hearn, 2007). Although the discourse of NGOs had been theorized it was significantly uncritical. The origins of the theory still laid within the dominant system of neo-liberalism and thus based upon liberal theory. Due to the lack of input from independent academics it was not until the mid-1990s substantial critical literature began to emerge (Hearn, 2007). Yet, although a significant amount of criticism, also from within the industry itself (e.g. Fowler & Edwards), the trends from the 1980s have only become more intensive and increasingly institutionalized (Wallace, 2003; Hearn, 2007). Besides, Petras (1999) mentions, there have been few leftist critical perspectives on the negative impact of NGOs. For one,

criticism remains 'outside' making it vulnerable to censure and second, it is still under-theorized (Hearn, 2007). It is the entrenchment of NGO sector within the neo-liberal society through which problems arise. The NGOs operate with funding originating from larger institutions as national governments, the World bank, IFC or the United Nations. It is this funding process creating a dependency on larger institutions making NGOs tend to be competitive. Subsequently, issues covered by an NGO are treated as property protecting it from the possibility of new NGOs trying to set foot in the same sector. It is this issue-based funding making the design of development proposals focused on securing funding hence, issues in interest of the Western funding elites (Biswas, 2006; Petras, 1999). Thus, it is logical the statements by critical scholars mention the fact that NGOs are upholding the dependency of the Global South. Terms as 'neocolonialism' or even 'recolonization' through the NGO sector emerge from literature (Hanlon, 1991, as cited in Hearn, 2007; Petras, 1999; Wallace, 2003). It is Petras (1999) who views the NGO leaders as 'a kind of neo-comprador ... trading in domestic poverty for individual perks.' As mentioned, the complex mechanisms of development are tried to make manageable to obtain funding by following the agendas put in place by the multi- and bi-lateral institutions (Wallace, 2003). Hence, it is only a logical consequence the process of policy making by NGOs consists of '(1) building a network of support and (2) excluding opposition, thus stabilizing a policy interpretation' through which policy becomes known, popular and eventually is made to succeed (Rap & Wester, 2013).

2.4. Market-led tourism, consumers and the media

The neo-liberal form of development created new models in which the ideology of market-led development and reducing of public spending came forward. Also within the case of Nepalese tourism the private sector involvement grew. In 1998 the Nepal tourism board replaced the department of tourism and houses private sector actors as well as representatives of the ministry of tourism (Thapa, 2003). One specific way in which the neo-liberal development system takes form, also in Nepal, is through the concept of public-private partnerships. This model of PPP originates from the World Bank group in 1992. First of all it should be noted that when studying articles regarding PPP it becomes clear there is no consensus or uniformity about what the PPP entails. Within table 1 a few definitions are given about what PPP would be according to these organizations.

Table 1: Overview of definitions public-private partnerships

Organization	Definition of PPP
National Council for PPP USA	Contractual arrangement between a public sector agency and a for-profit private sector concern, whereby resources and risks are shared for the purpose of delivery of a public service or development of public infrastructure.
United Nations (UN)	PPP includes informal dialogues between government officials and local community-based organisations, to long-term concession arrangements with private businesses, but not privatisation.
World Bank	A long-term contract between a private party and a government entity, for providing a public asset or service, in which the private party bears significant risk and management responsibility, and remuneration is linked to performance.

Source: Akintoye, Beck & Hardcastle, 2003

It becomes visible there is a wide range to what the PPP entails ranging from mere dialogues to long-term contracts. Though there is no clear definition there is unity into what PPP should be about. Peters (1998, as cited in Akintoye, Beck & Hardcastle, 2003) identified five features of partnerships; (1) the partnership involves more than 1 actor of which at least one is public and one is private. (2) Each participant has principal rights meaning they are not bargaining for a higher authority. (3) The partnership should establish a stable and enduring relationship meaning no one-off deals. (4) There should be a genuine relationship as to which each party brings something to the table. (5) There is a shared responsibility for the outcomes of activities. Since the introduction of the PPP-concept it has been used across the world ranging from the Global South to the 'West'.

Within the development sector there has been a strong resurgence of PPP which are mostly regarding infrastructure led by the World Bank (Bayliss & Waeyenberge, 2017). The ideology of the PPP is that of the bias against state provision. There is the notion of poor decision making, corruption, general incompetence and excess bureaucracy as to why PPP should exist. Yet, according to Bayliss & Waeyenberge (2017) 'there is extensive evidence of the limits of PPPs in practice and this is particularly significant for poorer countries'. For example, the risks that should land on the shoulders of the private sector are never actually transferred as the government keeps the residual risk. Also from a policy perspective the success of PPPs should not be regarding the result in terms of budget and time but rather 'the increase of social value compared to the fully public alternative' (Boardman, Siemiatycki & Vining, 2016). Also more practical issues come forward with PPPs. Laing (2001, as cited in Sharma & Bindal, 2014) mentions overcoming mistrust between the private and public sector. Also the management capacity of governments in especially developing countries has to deal with the private sector (Sharma & Bindal, 2014). Arguments made hereabove are applicable to the case of Nepal as will be elaborated upon though in general it becomes clear attention should be on diversifying policy options for up-scaling the public sector provisions in developing countries (Bayliss & Waeyenberge, 2017). It gives the opening to have a more in-depth look about the finance policies within the development sector.

As the neo-liberal system is driven by demand the actors from the supply side are vulnerable as to what the consumer want. It is therefore necessary to account for changes in perception as this can be of influence on the demand. The role of media have become increasingly important as a factor of influence on that perception. A study by Wright (2018) showed that increased exposure to dangerous driving behaviour via media resulted in a positive impact on the attitude towards driving behaviour. Another example, more related to this thesis, is the case of flight shame. The 'Greta-effect', 'provoking fear towards climate change, complexity mixed with shame and addressing the social norm of flying' showed to be a bottom-up approach through the use of a social movement which started on social media (Morrison, 2020). It developed in mass protests (Fridays for future) which received considerable media coverage leading to a change in public understanding towards climate change. The combination of the mass protests and considerable media coverage where found to change both the awareness of climate

change and the threat (Gössling, Hume & Bausch, 2020). Besides the effect of media on the perception of consumers several other studies showed increased media activity is associated with better policy outcomes with some of these studies identifying causal effects. Due to media sending information to voters some evidence showed it leads to improved incentives and selection of politicians. Next to this, media are also able to force politicians to focus on issues considered not the most important (Strömberg, 2015). More generally, these arguments show media coverage can have an effect on the perception of consumers (e.g. flight shame, drivers or for that matter tourists) as well as influence politics. It forms the argument as to why media-analysis on the tourism sector of Nepal is necessary to identify how actors (government, donors, NGOs) deal with the portrayal of the sector.

2.5. Objective and research questions

Based on the theoretic framework the argument is neo-liberal development work creates unintended effects within the tourism sector of Nepal. The objective is to research in what way actors promote NBT and how they respond to critical academic and media reports on unintended effect on people and the environment by Nature-Based tourism.

Research questions:

How do tourism sector actors promote NBT, and how do they respond to critical academic and media reports on the unintended effects on people and environment?

Sub-questions:

1. How do the government, NGOs and other involved institutions conceptualise and promote tourism as a development strategy?
2. What is the general perception of media reports towards the tourism industry?
3. How do development institutions and government relate projects and activities to critical media reports?
4. How do donors, governments and private sector operators seek to include poor people in tourism projects?

3. Methodology

This research has been conducted during a six month period in the form of desk research from January until August 2021. Within this chapter the operationalization of the theory will be described as will be made clear how, where and in what way the data regarding this subject have been analysed and used. Next to this, the conceptual framework is integrated within this chapter.

3.1. Operationalization of the concepts

The first concept and on which the total thesis hinges is the concept of tourism, more specifically nature-based tourism. Within the research the definition of Valentine (1992) will be used which describes NBT as 'primarily concerned with the direct enjoyment of some relatively undisturbed phenomenon of nature'. This definition is chosen as it considers NBT in a broad way though being specific as to what it entails. As to the other terms mentioned in the theoretic framework, within this research eco-tourism, adventure tourism, homestay tourism in rural villages and other forms of tourism that fit the description of Valentine (1992) are considered NBT. More general, tourism and nature-based tourism are both used throughout this thesis. As most tourism activities are in some way nature-based in Nepal the term 'tourism' is used in the same context as nature-based tourism. It is important to note these forms are not the same though within this research are thought of to all be concerned with the direct enjoyment of nature. Some of the nature-based tourism activities can be categorised as mass-tourism though it is not within this thesis since, if compared to other well-known mass-tourism locations, populations are significantly smaller. This is not to say NBT in Nepal cannot end-up as a mass-tourism location.

Second, throughout the actions of tourism actors withing the nature-based tourism debate are discussed. It needs to be clear as to whom these actors are. Within this thesis the actors are considered those who influence and make policy. Actors can be identified as the national government, specific the ministry of tourism and aviation as well as the Nepal Tourism Board, significant institutional donors, NGOs and experts.

Third, the term 'local community' is cited often though it is difficult to pin-out as to what it consequently, even within this research, entails as it is such a homogenous

term. This is the same for the often mentioned 'poor'. Within this research the terms 'local community' and 'poor' are used often in somewhat the same way yet difference should be noted. When referred to 'local community' it means a population living within proximity of each other and are affected by tourism activities. This do not necessarily have to be all poor people as communities are homogenous. When referred to the 'poor' those are meant who are affected by tourism activities yet do not have the possibility to overcome the impacts. For example, a poor person can be from a different caste and therefore have no network to fall back on, yet this person can live in a community where others do have this opportunity. Also, when referred to 'the poor' these persons are meant throughout different communities.

Third, the concept of PPP needs to be operationalized as multiple definitions exists and variations upon this concept. As the World Bank is actively involved with this neo-liberal concept in the context of Nepal the definition of this institution will be used to identify what PPP means which is as follows; 'A long-term contract between a private party and a government entity, for providing a public asset or service, in which the private party bears significant risk and management responsibility, and remuneration is linked to performance'. Though there are other definitions the above mentioned one is expected to be consistent with the way PPP concept is used in Nepal. Relevance for this concept is the fact the tourism actors operate through this concept and use effects associated with this concept to justify how it contributes to everyone in Nepal.

Fourth, a selection of more economic terms related to the macro oriented questions were elaborated in the theory. These concepts being the multiplier, trickle-down and spillover-effects are referred to as the most common ideas behind the PPP-concept. Regarding the trickle-down effect this means it is considered that the accumulation of wealth will be beneficial for the poor (Akinci, 2016). When referring to the multiplier-effect it considers that spending within a sector is distributed across other economic sectors (Ntibanyurwa, 2006). Then there is the spillover-effect which will be used according to the definition of Yang & Wong (2012) meaning the both positive and negative externalities resulting from economic activity or processes that affect any element not directly associated with the activity.

Fifth and final, most important regarding this thesis is identifying as to what is regarded as intended effect and unintended effect of tourism. Intended effect are

considered those effects that are mentioned within policy and expert interviews involved with policy development. These methods show how the tourism sector operates and what consequences are accounted for. This leaves unintended effects as the consequences, both positive and negative, that are not mentioned within interviews or policy. Most important factor is thus those consequences are not acknowledged by those actors and therefore the public knowledge regarding these consequences must come from critical media and academics.

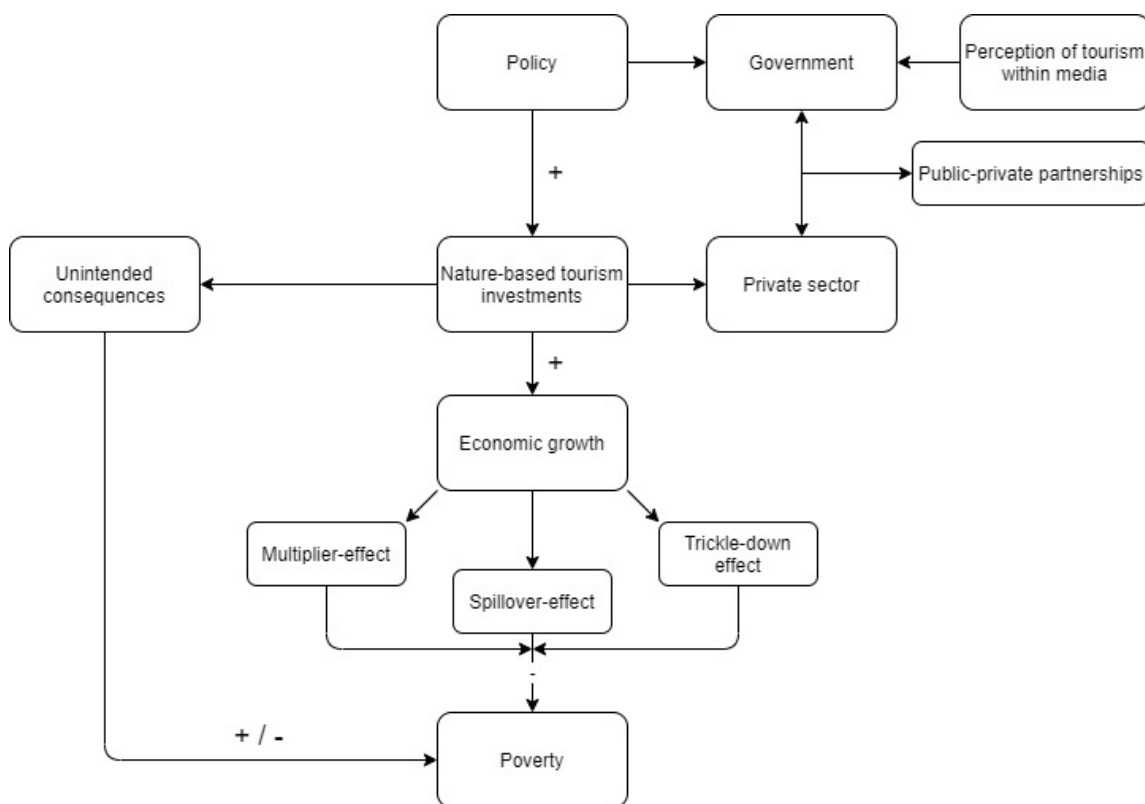
Together these different concepts still are incoherent and do not make clear on how together they make the arguments of this study. To understand the interconnectedness regarding these concepts a conceptual model was designed within the first phase of this research.

3.2. Conceptual approach

To be able to conduct meaningful research and contribute to society by being able to give a sound answer to the main research question, a conceptual framework is developed (See figure 3). There are several linkages between the concepts integrated in the research question of which some directly and others indirect. Literature shows a direct link between tourism activities and poverty alleviation for (some) local communities. Further research needs to make clear who actually benefits from tourism activities within the local community as it is presumed this is not homogenous. It is a strongly debated link between tourism and poverty alleviation by academics. In regards to this research the assumption of poverty alleviation through tourism activities is disputed due to a number of reasons. These reasons ranging from more macro-economic decisions made on a national level to local assumptions on the effects of tourism activities. Within figure 3 the model shows in what way the sector currently seems to be operating. The model shows the government is the one creating policy though interacting with the private sector through PPPs. Based on policies, investments are made by private sector investors positively engaged by policy decisions. During this process the next sub-question needs to be asked considering the way poor people are already included within these policies. Though these policies have the goal of creating economic growth which will end up benefiting the poor. To gain a full understanding the perception of media regarding the tourism industry is added as the neo-liberal development model depends on consumers

who are influenced by media. Most important regarding the model is considered the unintended consequences. Based on the theoretical framework several possible consequences can be added to this model. The fact nature-based tourism activities affect the environment negatively in some cases it is assumed this is possibly one of the (negative) unintended consequences for (some) in the local community. One can assume local communities depend on the environment in one way or another which may be negatively impacted because nature-based tourism and have the unintended consequence of also having a negative impact on the local inhabitants. Or from an economic perspective the assumption several economic growth will lead to income redistribution thus poverty reduction. There are sources questioning all three effects taken into account within this research. Although there are several examples to be made from theory none have been added as to be as inclusive as possible towards certain positive or negative unintended consequences.

Figure 3: Conceptual framework regarding nature-based tourism and poverty alleviation in Nepal



To be able to give a sound answer to the main question several sub-questions, some of which have already been shortly introduced, have to be answered. Hereunder all questions are written in full as to have an overview regarding this study.

Research questions

Main question:

How do tourism sector actors promote NBT, and how do they respond to critical academic and media reports on the unintended effects on people and environment?

Sub-questions:

1. How do the government, NGOs and other involved institutions conceptualise and promote tourism as a development strategy?
2. What is the general perception of media reports towards the tourism industry?
3. How do development institutions and government relate projects and activities to critical media reports?
4. How do donors, governments and private sector operators seek to include poor people in tourism projects?

As to the outcomes of this research some hypothesis are developed. Based on the literature the results will to some extent show the need for tourism activities in Nepal as there is significant attention regarding this sector. Though, as to the unintended consequences the ecological impact of tourism is expected to be undervalued and to have a negative impact on the inhabitants of the area. Next to this, it is predicted the multiplier, spillover and trickle-down effect will in some way do redistribute income on a national level though this effect will not be significant. Finally, the main lesson expected from the data will be there is a need for more inclusive policy making on different levels and subjects to reach the poor and make sure investments are in line with the overall development goals.

3.3. Research design

This study is conducted through qualitative research methods with the goal to capture how tourism actors deal with critical reports on unintended consequences within the debate of nature-based tourism as tool for poverty alleviation in Nepal. During the six months of research some five phases can be distinguished.

3.3.1. Phase 1: Forming theory

The initial phase started in November of 2020 when the idea of focussing on the tourism sector in Nepal came together. To conduct meaningful research adding to already existing studies, I found a niche regarding the linkages between nature-based tourism and poverty alleviation. The relevance of this being the fact large investments, made by private actors and financial institutions in Nepal, with the initial thought there where arguments missing as to why these investments would work. To back-up this argument literature has been studied mostly considering the concepts mentioned hereabove. Nepal as the geographical context of the research was decided early on as it showed the potential of a perfect case based on the arguments made from literature. A theoretical framework has been formed what has been the basis for the next phases. The conceptual model was developed hereafter to integrate the concepts and show the coherent story. It was later on decided to incorporate the conceptual model within the methodology to first have clear how the concepts will be used following up with how they are linked.

3.3.2. Phase 2: Media-analysis

After the research design the study was started by gaining an overview on the perception on how tourism is perceived by media. This has been done with a media-analysis. As it was expected there would be an enormous amount of articles regarding tourism, a selection of criteria was developed in the form of search terms and filters. The search terms have been based on the larger concepts and actors as the goal of this analysis is to only develop a perception on tourism and not judge small aspects within this debate. For the media-analysis a database (NEXIS) was used in which articles from all worldwide news outlets are collected. The collection of articles has been based on search terms related to the subject. To narrow down the search terms specific filters were added. Selected articles have been published between 1990 and now. The language has been filtered to English articles only. Published location has been narrowed down to Asia or in some cases

to Nepal where there were too many results left. In some search terms a subject was chosen such as environmental or travel & hospitality. These filters left articles published by mostly Nepali newspapers. No further selection based on specific newspapers or other criteria have been performed. It must be noted no specific attention has been given to the publisher of the article. Within the NEXIS database a collection of worldwide sources is given. As this media-analysis regards the situation of Nepal it has been filtered on this location though the attention has gone to the subject of the article and not the publisher. Within table 2 an overview can be seen on the search terms, applied filters and amount of results. Remaining results were only selected based on title and abstract visible within the database. By selecting articles out of these initial results around 100 articles were chosen to be analysed. With this purposeful sampling method biases have been avoided as much as possible.

Table 2: Overview of search terms regarding the media-analysis

Primary search terms in NEXIS database	Filters	Initial results
Nature-based tourism + Nepal	Asia / 1990-onwards / English	199
Eco-tourism + Nepal	Environment / Southern-Asia / 1990-onwards / Travel-hospitality & tourism / English	284
Nature-based tourism + government + Nepal	Southern-Asia / 1990-onwards / English	71
Tourism + poverty alleviation	Nepal	90
Nature-based tourism + policy	Nepal / English / 1990-onwards	6
Eco-tourism + policy	Nepal / English / 1990-onwards	18
Nature-based tourism + conservation	Nepal / 1990-onwards / English	66

The selection of the articles have been imported within the software of NVIVO and divided into folders based on the search terms and geographical coverage. Meaning, 4 folders based on subject which were split in articles based on local issues, national scale issues and other issue such as internationally oriented articles. Every article within a folder received a code so it would keep the overview as to what subject it was categorised. To reduce bias towards the hypothesis of the research inductive coding has been chosen though to keep an overview some deductive codes were developed. This was done by taking a random sample of one article out of every folder and code those inductively. Based on these codes five deductive codes have been created. Hereafter all other articles did get coded inductively though these were directly categorised within one of the broader codes. This resulted in a clearer overview making the analysis easier. During the coding process some articles have been removed as, with more in-depth reading, it was found there was no relevance. Eventually 72 articles lead to 487 codes. After the inductive coding a number of deductive codes have been developed in which the initial codes where categorised with the reason being it would be useful for the analysis and writing process.

3.3.3. Phase 3: Policy-analysis

The third phase started during the second phase due to time and to breach the monotonous process of coding. The aim for this research has been to find how tourism actors deal with critical nodes from media and academics and how this is incorporated in the policies. This makes it essential to gather relevant policy documents to analyse how nature-based tourism and poverty alleviation are conceptualized and connected with each other. Within the data gathering of policy documents purposeful sampling has been used by searching for specific policies regarding tourism in Nepal. Through the websites of the ministry of tourism, the Nepal tourism board and other websites (donors, NGOs, UNWTO, etc) policies were searched which would mention something regarding tourism. It has become clear relevant policies are not easily found or written in Nepalese; the Nepali government does not have an overarching tourism policy. To broaden the scope also policies from involved other actors where included which can be justified as the Nepalese government and these other actors work hand-in-hand through PPPs. Besides

these cooperating actors, a few policies from other institutions have been included due to the influence of the organizations on international policy development. In total 10 documents have been included regarding the policy analysis published between 2009 and 2020. No specific time frame for policy documents was used. Hereunder the titles of all policy documents and publishing dates can be found (Table 4).

Table 3: Overview of analysed policy documents

Publisher	Title	Date
Global Sustainable Tourism Council	GSTC Destination Criteria	2019
Ministry of Culture, Tourism and civil aviation	Unveiling of main works to be performed within 100 days	2018
Ministry of Culture, Tourism and civil aviation	Tourism Vision 2020	2009
Overseas Development Institute	Pathways to prosperity and inclusive job creation in Nepal: background paper tourism sector	2017
UNWTO	UNWTO recommendations on tourism and rural development	2020
ASEAN	ASEAN tourism strategic plan 2016-2025	2015
World Bank	Creating markets in Nepal; Country private sector diagnostic	2018
World Bank	Country Partnership framework for Nepal	2018

World Bank	Sustainable Tourism enhancement of Nepal's protected areas	2019
Government of Nepal office of the investment board / Ministry of industry	Tourism Sector Profile	2020

All policy documents have been imported in NVIVO. This coding process has been the same as to the media-analysis apart from that there were no deductive codes created before finishing the total coding process. As some policies were long documents certain parts deemed irrelevant have not been read and some parts was specifically searched for such as the terms 'tourism' or 'poverty'. Specific searches may have led to overseeing other parts of the policy though deemed unlikely as searches were comprehensive and the total documents did get looked through. Eventually the coding of the 10 documents have led to 189 individual codes.

3.3.4. Phase 4: In-depth interviews

To gain a better understanding of the debate on the tourism sector in Nepal, the policies as well as the history, additional research has been conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews as well as attending two webinars. To find participants willing to be part of the research a first email was send to via-via contacts. Besides, a message was posted within a LinkedIn group regarding nature and conservation. Through the LinkedIn group 1 participant was found. The email led to sound contact with a researcher based in Nepal willing to help out. Through a tip regarding a webinar several speakers on this platform were contacted which led to two direct participants and one more indirect participant. Five respondents for in-depth interviews were considered as enough in combination with the two other research methods though recruiting was continued but led to no new interviews. All participants were found to be connected to different actors within the debate making it interesting to see if opposing views would be given, strengthening the research. The interview guides have been developed based on the first analysis from the media and policy analysis and mostly upon the conceptualizations of the theory. As participants had different backgrounds all guides were individually

developed though based on the same principles. Also, as it was deemed interesting to have the interviews take its course the guides possessed relatively little questions. All interviews took between 30 minutes to an hour with one interview leading to a follow-up. Conversations with this participant have been a total of around 2.5 hours. Since participants lived across the world and were conducted during COVID-19, interviews were done on digital platforms most of which with video connection. Within the ethical statement anonymity statements can be read. After conducting the interviews all interviews have been transcribed with transcribing software followed up by a manual control. Software which was used was otter.ai and audiotrimmer.com. Hereafter the transcripts got imported within NVIVO and coded inductively. Most codes consisted of paragraphs to always see the context of statements instead. In total across 6 interviews (five transcripts) 93 codes were developed.

3.3.5. Phase 5: Processing and writing

Phase 5 consisted of analysing most of the data and bringing the different research methods together to gain a perception regarding the research questions. As expected the course of the research across the months was not exactly in line with the first outline. For example, the focus on conservation and nature was more prominent at first but eventually a more economic perspective came forward. This has been mostly due to the involved participants though also because of what came out of the policy-analysis. Due to the different approach on the same subject the theoretic frameworks has been adjusted as well as the conceptual framework. Based on the data some additional concepts were added considered important within the debate. Considering these changes the results have been written upon which a conclusion and discussion are based.

3.4. Justification of methods

The research has been conducted through a triangulation of research methods which need to be justified as to why they are appropriate to base conclusions of. Also the justification in which the data following out of the methods has been processed is to be set-out within this paragraph.

Within this research two qualitative content analysis (QCA) have been done by studying media articles and policies. QCA distinguishes from the traditional quantitative content analysis as it is more context-specific since it treats it as 'central to the

interpretation and analysis of the material' (Kaefer, Roper & Sinha, 2015). By allowing for the subjective interpretation of the data while at the same time conducting it in a systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Though, critique has also come forward as reading of text is always qualitative even when it is later on transferred into numbers (Krippendorff, 2013. p. 22, as cited in Kaefer, Roper & Sinha, 2015). Still, the context is deemed essential regarding this study and no added value is seen to quantify the data which means the QCA method is seen as a sound option.

As third method within this triangulation, interviews have been done. It is acknowledged interviews conducted through internet have its limitations as social clues are more difficult to read and in general bigger language barriers (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). As these interviews have been conducted with experts working within an international environment the consequences of missing social clues or language issues are unlikely. Besides these issues the cultural sensitivity and the fact the participants were no 'victim' social clues would also not be as important regarding this study. In-depth interviews can significantly add to the already gathered data as it can tell; (1) a broader narrative, (2) subjectivity of participants, (3) context of environment of participant (Wengraf, 2001, as cited in Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). Especially the latter (2 & 3) are relevant due to the organization the individuals work for making the context of the environment the reason as to why they may be subjective. Especially how people (or organizations where these people work for) make decisions is deemed a sound argument to use in-depth interviews according to Hennink, Hutter & Bailey (2020). By using open questions and topical probes in a semi-structured way attempts are made to test the knowledge according to their background and to see whether the participants could argue in favour of the policies or their positionality (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). It should be noted there are limitations to in-depth interviews which need to be taken into account such as; (1) no feedback from others, (2) skills to establish rapport, motivate and listen and react to participants, (3) flexibility to change topic order to follow the story and (4) transcriptions are time consuming (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). It is especially the flexibility to change topic which is considered a difficulty in this research as the participant are experts and knowledgeable. Here out following the considered limitation of the researchers own knowledge as it is deemed likely participants will have more knowledge

regarding the subject and thus making it difficult to reach the goal of testing the participants positionality.

The data of all three methods has been processed through the inductive coding with the software of NVIVO. As Kaefer, Roper & Sinha (2015) point out 'qualitative analysis software will not do the analysis for the researcher though it can make the analytical process more flexible, transparent and ultimately more trustworthy'. To analyse codes are developed which can be seen as essentially topics, issues or concepts present in the data. By highlighting these a pattern can be visualised methodologically which makes the writing phase easier. Glaser and Strauss (1976, as cited in Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020) stated that the coding stops when no new issues come forward anymore meaning the stage of saturation has been achieved. However, one can also argue no new relevant things will arise anymore though still interesting statements relevant for other topics can still be identified. Within this research inductive coding was chosen to not be limited with reaching saturation based on the already existing codes (deductive). As some bias can already be identified through the gathering of the articles as well as the non-random sampling of policies it was decided the data should be processed inductively. Herein it can be possible the data shows different issues as to what the researcher anticipated making it valuable (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). This process was done with all data creating a plethora of codes with difficult overview to analyse. Though, as has been mentioned, this was categorised to gain overview regarding the analysis.

3.5. Research limitations

Within the paragraph the most significant methodological shortcomings and limitations will be described and reflected upon. As this research will be conducted during COVID-19 no travel is possible making it impossible to visit the area of research. This means all conclusions are drawn from desk-research and interviews. Next to this, this also means the perspectives of the poor in Nepal are not included within this research although some opinions are expected to be reflected in media articles. Yet, as this cannot be verified no conclusions will be drawn from this latter hypothesis. As there are tens of thousands of articles related to this subject, there is a real possibility perceptions can differ from what will be described within this study. However, still a significant amount of articles will be

analysed in line with statistical guidelines of significance ($N > 30$). Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged there will be limitations to the credibility. As the articles are collected from a database they are presented without the context of placement. Meaning, no conclusions regarding priority for the article can be made. Also within the policy analysis only English policies will be included limiting the possibility of extended information within Nepalese documents. Some limitations of in-depth interviews have already been mentioned. Within the context of this research this is mainly the knowledge of participants making it difficult to create an environment where the interviewee needs to overthink his or her own arguments. By studying the background and by that time months of research this possibility will be limited as much as possible.

3.6. Ethical statement

This research has been conducted with the upmost care and responsibility towards the subject, scientific rules of thumb and especially interview participants. No ethical approval has been received as this is not obligatory regarding a master thesis. All participants have approved recording the interviews and the use of statements made during the interviews. Some participants did allow their name to be mentioned however as it is deemed irrelevant every participant has been made anonymous. In one case it has been not allowed to name the organization whom the participant works for. Within the context of this participants statements the organization has been made redacted. Regarding public documents stating the organization, names are mentioned as well as the publishers of policies. Statements of people in media articles have been anonymised though the quotes are public. However, naming the individuals is deemed irrelevant. Organizations making statements in media-articles have been named as they can add to the positionality of policy documents.

4. Analysis – Media trends regarding tourism in Nepal

To gain perception of the data which has been collected and eventually form a logical, inclusive and sound conclusion the results are set out in two empirical chapters. The first will portray the results of the media-analysis

4.1. Diversification of tourism products

When looked at the tourism sector at Nepal with a special focus on nature-based tourism several observations have come forward based on the 77 media articles analysed. The Nepalese tourism sector has been rising since around the nineties although late sixties there were certainly (mainly) Westerners visiting Nepal for expeditions and trekking. From 1990 onwards a significant amount of articles mention how the tourism sector have contributed to the national economy and the prosperity of Nepal. The Sherpas, an ethnic minority residing mostly in the Solokhumbu area have thrived of early expedition tourism and are now world renowned mountaineers. Besides being famous for their climbing capabilities the general income of this minority is much higher compared to the national average. It is an example of how tourism has benefited a significant group of people. Though mountaineering has been the conductor of tourism in Nepal across time other tourism sectors have come up. Media reports especially mention new tourism products during the years of 2011 and 2020 where Visit Nepal campaigns dominated the tourism sector such as the following quote from EKantipur in 2020;

'The Visit Nepal Secretariat wants to promote winter tourism in Nepal as well as introduce figure skating and ice hockey. "Through this event, we wanted to provide new tourism products for the off seasons and increase tourist flow during that period," said Ghimire. "We need to develop winter sports so that we can extend tourist stay in Nepal. Also, our wetlands have not been promoted as tourism hotspots like in other countries."

From the reports it is difficult to establish to what extent these products have been realised. As the 2020 campaign was cancelled products mentioned in the latter quote will probably not have been developed. Yet, it does become clear the tourism sector has already diversified to, for example other nature-based activities such as safari, bird-

watching, rafting or parapenting but also not directly nature-based activities as homestay tourism, heritage tourism or leisure tourism. Also other articles from other years mention the need to invest in tourism diversification;

'The hill state was looking for private investment in adventure tourism like mountaineering, paragliding, rock climbing and mountain biking, for which the state has a lot of potential that remains untapped. Similarly, we need investments in starting cruise services, including 'shikaras' and water sports.' (2016, Tangerine)

'The new working procedure will pave the way for entrepreneurs to enter the conservation areas where they will provide jungle safari, ultra-running, cycling, rock climbing, hiking, boating, canopy walk and paragliding among other adventure sports and activities to attract tourists.' (2019, Asia News Network)

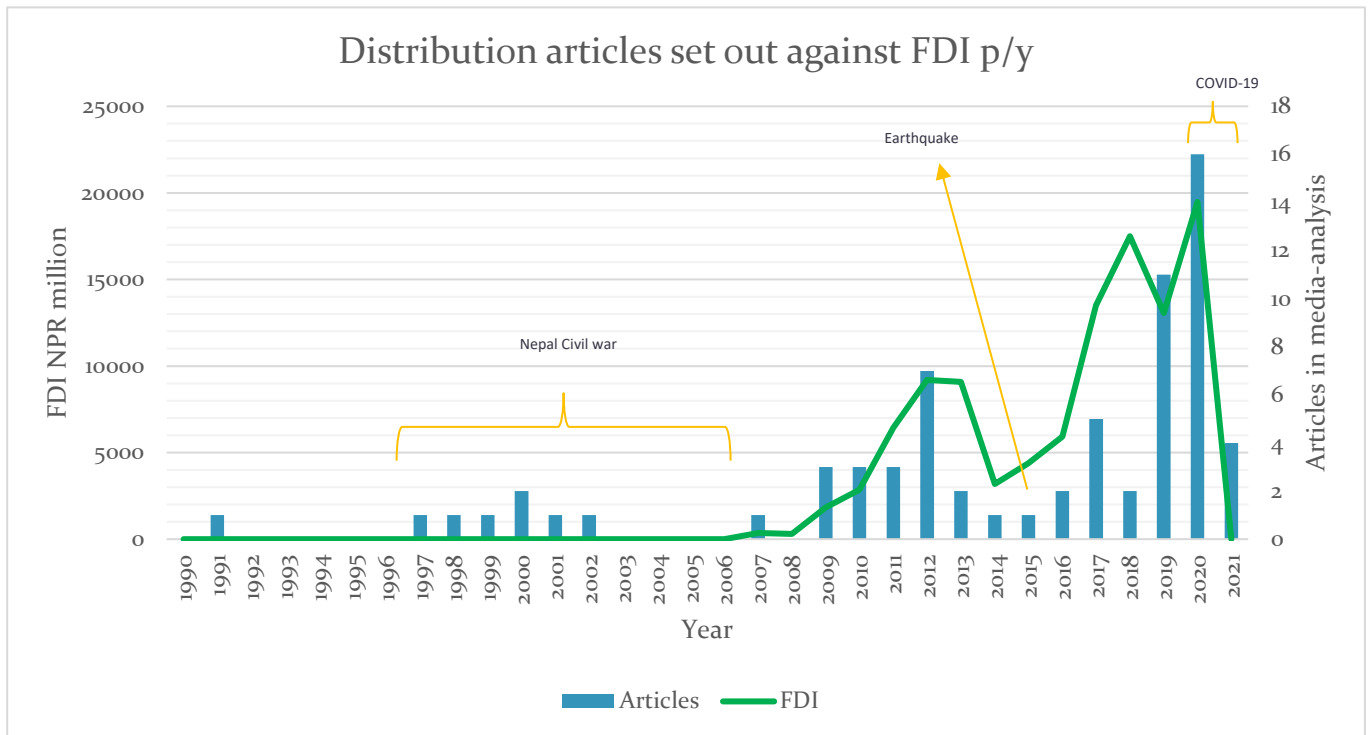
It shows the active search in diversifying the tourism sector as the argument is it necessary to attract new tourists. Although the latter quotes are focussed on the adventure tourism sector also other tourism sectors have shown potential. One of eco-trends of 2020, according to an article from 2019 published by the Himalayan Times, is the growth of the coffee tourism sector. It is already successfully practiced in a few districts though promotion is needed to establish it in the country. This would not only be beneficial for the tourism sector but also for coffee farming.

4.2. Tourism reports through time

The media reports range in year from 1991 to 2021. Within graph 1 the distribution of the media-articles is set-out. It is important to note the articles have been purposely sampled based on subject and not based on date. It is therefore considered a random sample regarding dates which represents the general trend. Based on the graph observations can be made. Within the nineties little reports have been used within this thesis. The database results show a rough distribution of the articles across time. Here out it appears not as many articles are published on this subject or are not digitalized. The articles from this decade do show a clear popularity of eco-tourism with also clear concerns about this form of tourism. Titles of these articles include for example; (1)

‘Promises and Pitfalls of ecotourism’ and (2) ‘Can it protect the planet?’. Though if the complete articles are analysed it shows mostly a positive attitude with concerns instead of a critical rapport with some positive notes.

Graph 1: Distribution of articles from media-analysis set out against FDI p/y



Sources: Dutch ministry of foreign affairs, 2018 / trading economics, 2021

*FDI of 2007 onwards has been included / FDI of 2021 has not been included

Next to this, a decline in articles is noticeable in the period from 2003 and 2006. If this is set out against the history of Nepal this falls in the period of the Nepalese civil war, also known as the Maoist conflict. However this conflict ranges from 1996 to 2006 making it difficult to indicate if this has been the reason as to why less articles from this period have been analysed. Yet, the decline from 2002 onwards is plausible as it was in 2002 the conflict worsened and journalists got imprisoned. Even after 2006, the end of the civil war, published articles remain low which can possibly be explained as attention was given on the formation of a new federal state. Also from the few articles in the early 2000s, ecotourism is the main subject. Though no clear trend can be identified in these articles. Two articles contradict each other and both are based on expert statements. In 2000 an

article states that Nepali experts urge ecology-friendly tourism by starting eco-labelling hotels as a start. In 2001 another article makes a far stronger statement that ecotourism can actually do more harm to communities and the environment compared to conventional tourism.

From 2009 onwards the number of articles is relatively stable. Surprising is the little amount of articles from the year 2011 which was connected to the yearlong Visit Nepal 2011 campaign. Why this is the case is unclear. Meanwhile, 2012 shows a significant increase of articles which predominantly are focussed around the need for tourism promotion. The fact that these articles originate from just after the year which was fully focussed on tourism promotion is unexpected. 2012 was however a year with significant increase of foreign direct investments (see graph 1). This potentially has been the result of the year-long campaign and resulted in increased reports within media.

After 2012 a decline is visible until 2016. The earthquake in 2015 explains why the media has not reported on tourism that year. The only article in the analysis of 2015 regards how the tourism sector and schools need to be priorities for rebuilding Nepal. For the years of 2013 and 2014 no clear reason is found why reports declined. Yet, it is in line with an decrease of FDI during these years.

The last years have shown significant incline in reports with 2020 as the peak. This is both logical and surprising. The Visit Nepal 2020 campaign was a significant priority for the government with a large budget. At the same time March 2020 meant the introduction of the COVID-19 crisis and the borders closed as well as the shut-down of the campaign. The considerable amount of articles can therefore be regarded as surprising. Yet, if one looks at the specific dates of those articles it becomes clear close to 70 percent of those articles were published before the campaign and borders shut-down. If accounted for articles regarding the tourism sector after COVID-19 this number rises. The articles from 2017 onwards show a wide variety of subjects which is different compared to the periods of increased reports in earlier decades (see 4.3).

All in all, there is a connection visible between the amount of published articles and problematic years for the tourism industry. However, this connection is deemed modest as there are some clear exceptions (2011/2013/2014/2018). A more clear connection is between the total FDI and the amount of articles published per year. It cannot be distinguished if the FDI is influenced by the amount of publications or the other

way around. It should also be noted there is a chance of coincidence and the FDI is not specifically related to the tourism sector.

4.3. Trends and critiques regarding nature-based tourism

Though critical notes are made regarding the increasing dependency on tourism there is one common denominator within the last 30 years of articles, which is the overall positivity regarding the tourism sector. To a large extent almost all articles have an undertone of positivity and mention it as one of the most important sectors of the Nepalese economy. Within all search terms positive notes came forward. Within table 3 an overview is made with some positive arguments regarding the media-analysis.

Table 4: Positive arguments retrieved from media-analysis

Subject	Conservation/climate change	Ecotourism	Poverty alleviation
	Tourism can play leadership role for alternative and renewable energy	Ecotourism hailed as win-win solution for development countries	Increasing hotel income would benefit broader community
	Homestay tourism shows ample opportunity for wildlife conservation	New ecotourism plan will have minimum impact and maximum benefits	Ecotourism way in which local people can make money
	Nepal has shown an exemplary role in the overall conservation	Observations have convinced ecotourism works	Spill-over effect will drive non-farm job creation
	Responsible sustainable tourism can support wetland conservation		

Although not significant there seems to be a subtle relation between positive attitudes towards tourism and more critical articles between national oriented and more internationally oriented newspapers. The Asian News Network published the following article in 2019;

'Nepal's plan to introduce tourism activities in protected areas alarms conservationists'

On the other hand the more Nepalese oriented Kantipur newspaper published an article with the following title in 2019;

'Government to plant 50m trees next fiscal year'

The example shows the subtle difference between national and international oriented press.

Multiple articles emphasize on the cooperative role between conservation and ecotourism. By having tourism activities within the protected areas money can be generated to keep those same areas protected. Within a world with up and coming attention regarding climate friendly travel there has been a shift in marketing to attract visitors with these morals. In 2010 a new conservation area was announced with, according to an executive from the NTNC, the main attraction of it being developed as a carbon neutral tourism destination. Examples as these make one of the marketing strategies of Nepal. Other examples also state most of these new eco-friendly tourism products are often only marketing strategies. Within the media this is portrayed often by statements as; 'distinguish between green and greenwash' and 'ecotourism over-used and often little more than a hollow marketing tool'. One interesting other statement regarding this subject by an official of the Thailand-based tourism investigation and monitoring team which came forward was:

'The most damaging ecotourism initiatives are the ones which are the most successful financially, ..., because it leads to mainstream tourism'

The example shows the difficulty to distinguish the currently existing tourism forms. Has NBT become such mainstream it can be considered mass tourism or are there still clear differences. Although not directly related to the case of Nepal it is in line with what becomes visible in the analysis of articles. A lot of marketing is focussed on the natural beauty and eco-friendly potential of Nepal though great amounts of critical and concerned notes are made within the media regarding this topic.

Within table 5 a variety of concerns regarding ecotourism/NBT are mentioned. The environment is a broad term ranging from local forestry issues to the international climate debate. Because of this it is difficult to draw meaningful statements from data as it is a complex system. However, there are definitely results to be discussed as it forms an interesting debate. It was mentioned the media has an overall positive tendency across the articles regarding tourism but also mentioning a significant amount of critical notes (see table 5).

Table 5: Overview of concerns towards nature-based tourism

Geographical orientation of article	Year of Statement	Statement
International	2001	Mass nature tourism more accurate than ecotourism.
International	2001	Even eco-destinations as national parks and protected areas is destructive.
National	2012	Use of wetlands as tourism locations comes with certain risks.
International	1999	Much of what is marketed as ecotourism is simply mass tourism wrapped in a thin veneer of green.
National	2019	Plan to introduce tourism inside protected parks has alarmed conservationists.
National	2019	Growing human-pressure often results in human-wildlife conflict and fragmentation of their habitat.

National	2019	There is a relationship between climate and NBT as climate change adversely affects those countries that are highly dependent on tourism
National	2019	A developing country like Nepal, which is highly dependent on tourism, will be badly affected by changing climate scenario.
National	2000	Lodge density per kilometre of trail in ecologically fragile trekking regions is alarmingly high.
National	2000	The sensitivity of NBT products demands greater degree of awareness among the destination residents as well as visitors.
International	1997	Scientific knowledge of the impact of different types of tourism should be base of planning as success nearly always brings uncontrolled expansion and often destruction.
International	2001	All ecotourist initiatives cause problems for local people or the environment, but the best examples are those run by communities themselves
International	2001	From holiday brochures and postcards for developing countries, it is clear that indigenous people are often seen as a tourist attraction
National	2019	After Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park was established, locals were not allowed to get goods and services from there, which they have been doing for centuries. They are in fact suffering from the crop raiding by wild animals of the park. However, the proposed safari will be advantageous to not the sufferers but the outsiders--private companies. This is not good from the social justice point of view.

**Some words or parts from sentences were removed due to the length and irrelevance*

Those critical notes are for a large part focussed around NBT considering the actual environmental friendliness of those types of tourism and the effect on local communities. Quotes on these subject range in a continuum from mild concerns to alarming statements. This is not only present during the last years since concerns already were mentioned in an article from 1998 (see table 5). Although some concerns are on a more international level and not directly linked to the case of Nepal these are not any less and not to look out for. One media statement stood out most due to the connection between environment and community livelihood. It shows the incentive as to why the relation of NBT and the effect on the people should be explored;

'The concept of sustainable tourism rests on creating positive impacts on the environment, society and local people's economy. The popular mass tourism being practised in Nepal, where the private sector has strong control over the benefits, shows that the environment and community livelihoods enhancement aspects are less prioritised. Nepal also lacks laws that address these issues and encourages the agenda of sustainable tourism.'

The quote combines the critical arguments made within the media-analysis. Although there is a positive attitude, it is difficult to distinguish the various forms of tourism and those whom benefit from the revenues. It is the private sector which, as mentioned, has the controls over the benefits making the question of how they deal with the negative as well as positive articles from the media.

5. Analysis – Unintended consequences of NBT and the response of actors

Although several aspects have been mentioned about the tourism sector from a macro-perspective it remains unclear whether or not it is helping those mentioned as the ones who need to be reached in the goals of development institutions and the government. Within this chapter the responses of tourism actors regarding unintended consequences of NBT and the critical reports from media and experts are presented.

5.1. Neo-liberal development through the concept of PPP

As was mentioned, the government and institutions like the IFC and WBG want to increase tourism investments through the model of PPP. The private-sector partnerships concept is clearly a tool within the broader neo-liberal model. Building upon the literature and connecting it to the case of Nepal, the country seems like a perfect example. Based on an interview and the policy-analysis two examples/issues illustrate this argument. Large development institutions work with local governments to see what the plans are regarding an area. Then they follow-up with the federal government and see what the national plans are and try to line those two up. They do specifically mention the main driver should be the private sector to execute those visions. The large development institutions are there to help, support and facilitate the private sector investments that will create jobs and economic development. The two issues were identified with these strategic choices.

5.1.1. *investment locations*

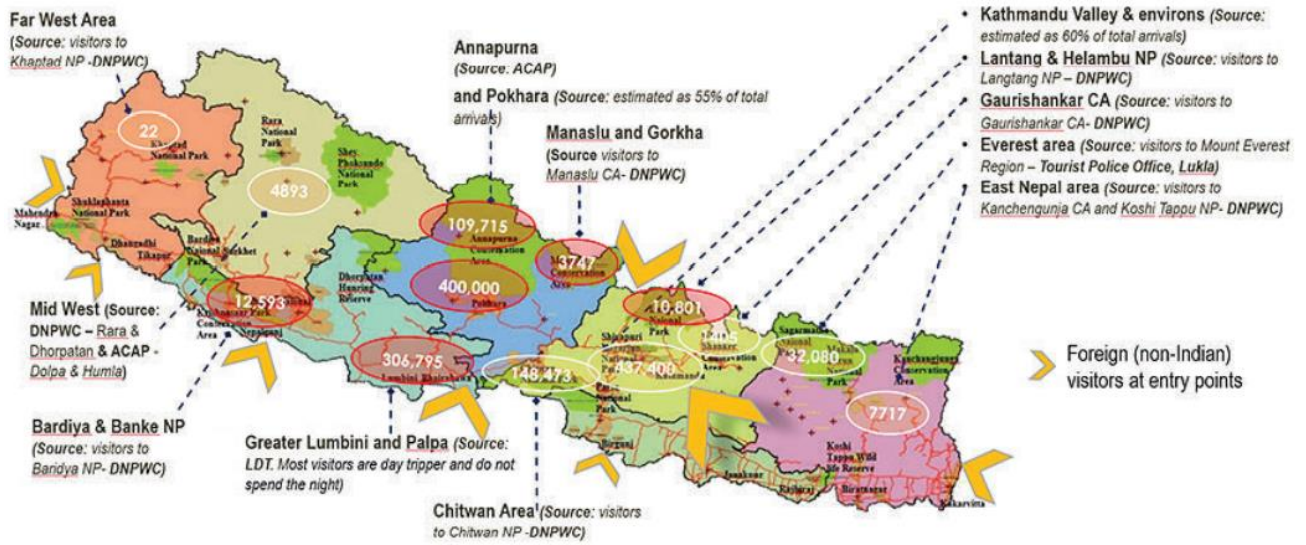
First of all, the issue with these investment models becomes visible when looked at map 1 & 2 (page 53). The World Bank group published the country private sector diagnostic (CPSD) where tourism was identified as one of the main growth drivers including five priority locations due to their potential and fertile investment opportunities. This is not very surprising as 3 of those 5 locations have already a huge influx of international arrivals and the remaining two are oriented relatively close-by. The CPSD states those locations are chosen based on a range of criteria which are surprising based on the following argument; Potential locations are ranked upon their development impact and feasibility. Based on those criteria three categories are identified; (a) destinations with high development impact and high feasibility, (b) destinations with little development impact

as they are already mature and (c), destinations with weak development impact as they are remote and attract low-range visitors. Although it is not clearly stated within the document it is assumed the five priority areas are identified as category 'a' locations. In the document category 'b' locations are identified as Kathmandu valley, Chitwan and Everest. Still, it makes sense to leave category 'b' out of development plans but it is category 'c' which stands out. Within the 'Country partnership framework' (CPF) from the World Bank, three transformative engagement areas are identified of which the third is;

'inclusion for the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized groups, with greater resilience against climate change, natural disasters, and other exogenous shocks.'

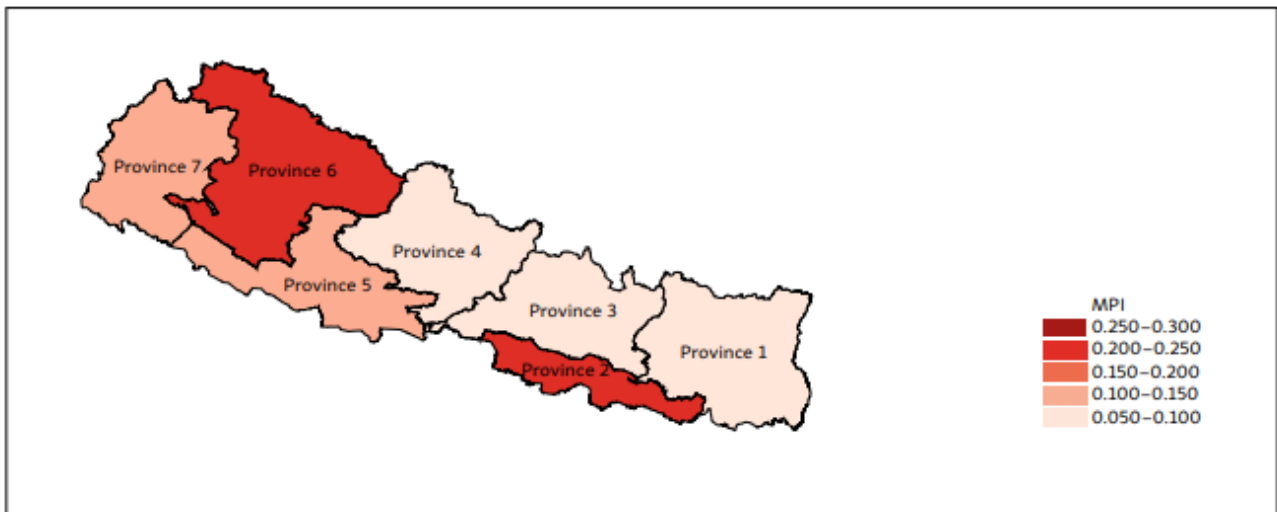
Also within the CPSD it is stated the tourism sector is important for poverty reduction and income redistribution, especially in the country's poorest regions as was acknowledged by an individual working within a large development institution. Except the issue is it are the locations identified as category 'c' which are the poorest such as far west-Nepal. Though, at the same time priority locations for tourism activities are those within category 'a' which are predominantly locations significantly 'richer' compared to the national average (see map 1 & 2). With the term 'richer' it is meant both in the literal and multidimensional sense (Map 2).

Map 1: International arrivals per destination (average 2013-2016)



Source: World Bank group, 2018

Map 2 : Multidimensional poverty index 2014



Source: National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal, 2018

The Annapurna conservation area is the most clear example of this and at the same time explains the first issue of the investment model. During an interview the following quote was made on the activities in the ACA.

'If they [the World Bank] are focussing on the Annapurna again then I think they have learned nothing because there is so much money over there.'

This is the case as the CPSD shows and was confirmed during a webinar on investments in heritage tourism, organised by and tourism consultancy firm in corporation with the World Bank and with speakers of the government, architects, IFC and others. Besides conversations about non-traditional investments there were talks about three investment opportunities for new traditional style lodges. Together with architects, investors, tour operators, developers and operators they identified the need to change the idea of how tourism locations should be designed. Redesigning old-heritage buildings making them appropriate for higher end tourism markets. However it was again focussed on the Annapurna region. Reason being, (1) the tourism sector is well-established in the region, (2) infrastructure is there to easily reach the destination, (3) diversity in tourism products and (4) the reason hereabove make the risk of investment low and the change of a return-investment high. It are not necessarily the large donor institutions which need the return on the investment though it is the policy of all actors to work within the PPP-model making the private-sector essential and thus the need for them to gain a return on involvement in projects. This does not mean there is no development work to be done within the Annapurna region as it remains poor from a global perspective. Though the notion of Nepal having a very interesting and different model where benefits go directly to the poorest of the poor as was stated by an individual working within a large development institution is arguable.

5.1.2. Need for return investments

The second issue regarding the investment models is not related to the location of the investment but the need to be able to gain a meaningful return investment. It consists of two components of which the first is the need for profitable investments. IFC gives out loans so there is the inevitability these have to be paid back. To make these loans profitable most hotels funded by these models end up as large 30 room hotels leaving the opportunities inaccessible for the poor. There are little possibilities to receive loans for small lodges as the return would take too long or the risk is too high. This has also to do with the fact the poor cannot receive funding for business ideas as often no collateral can be offered as there is none. The government and donor institutions do not state this is the case and make the argument of multiplier, trickle-down or spillover-effects from those investments will benefit the poor as will be described later in this chapter. However the second component is the opinion that the kind of hotels that should be invested in seems to be divided amongst stakeholders. Out of the interviews and policy documents it seems there is not clarity which kind of overnight stay (basic lodge or luxurious hotel) is preferred. The problem herein is not the fact there cannot be a combination of lodges, luxury hotels and homestays but the fact it is not clear what kind of tourist is to be focussed on. On the one hand the government mentions in the plans of Visit Nepal 2020 the goal of increasing the tourism population to two million though not much regarding the spending per day of those tourists. At the same time the CPF states the goal of increasing tourism spending per day from 53 dollars (2018) to 64 dollars (2020). This means there is unclarity if Nepal wants to focus on hordes of backpackers with little budgets or fewer high-end tourists like the Bhutan model. In practice this might create several issues regarding conservation, the poor and therefore the notion of using tourism as development tool as policies of different actors are not in line with each other.

5.2. Inclusion of the poor in policy

In combination with these strategic choices multiple policies by those institutions have written goals of the need for more inclusivity and re-distribution of wealth. Within table 4 an overview is written down about how a variety of policy documents state the need to reach these goals.

Table 6: Overview policy goals on poverty alleviation through tourism

Institution	Policy	Statements
IFC/World Bank	CPSD Nepal	Choice location is based upon development impact as tourism is important for poverty reduction, employment generation and income redistribution
ASEAN	ASEAN tourism strategic plan 2016-2025	Strategic direction; ensure that Asean tourism is sustainable and inclusive
IFC/World Bank	CPSD Nepal	Nepal's comparative advantages in high potential destinations has the potential to create many better jobs and help less-developed parts of Nepal
Overseas Development Institute (ODI)	Pathways to prosperity and inclusive job creation in Nepal	Developing the tourism sector is key priority and given tourism is labour-intensive it is also expected to be employment-intensive
UNWTO	Recommendations on tourism and rural development	Recommendations; Tourism for the benefit and wellbeing of rural communities;

		building a fair, inclusive and sustainable sector
Overseas Development Institute	Pathways to prosperity and inclusive job creation in Nepal	Tourism has the potential to bring in significant foreign exchange while also being an attractive economic activity that is accessible by the poor in rural parts of the country
ASEAN	ASEAN tourism strategic plan 2016-2025	Asean will be committed to ..., so as to contribute significantly to the socioeconomic well-being of ASEAN people.
Nepal tourism board	Tourism vision 2020	Objective 1: Improve livelihoods ..., generating employment in rural areas enhancing inclusiveness of woman and other deprive communities, and spreading the benefits of tourism to the grassroots level

As can be seen there is the tendency within policy to write down plans which need to include every level of society. For the most prominent institutions within the Nepalese tourism sector (IFC/World Bank/NTB) the way to achieve this is by trickle-down, spill-over and multiplier-effects. The CPSD for example states:

'Tourism also has high spillover effects to the agriculture, transport, aviation, and hospitality sectors.'

Next to this the CPSD also includes a multiplier analysis which 'assesses the direct and indirect impact (in terms of growth and jobs) of a sector using a social accounting matrix'. Effects like these can be identified as top-down strategies of development as the investments take place within for example large hotels instead of starting from the grassroots level. The NTB describes it as spreading benefits towards grassroots level and thus not invest within the grassroots level of society. Herein the neo-liberal discourse is clearly observed instead of a more bottom-up approach to development. Still, with top-down or bottom-up approaches one has to ask the question if the chosen strategies will have the wanted outcomes. Within this case this means to ask the question if the (neo-liberal) multiplier, trickle-down and spill-over effects do work. At this moment a significant focus has been towards a model where those effects are seen as the way to lift the poor out of (extreme) poverty. Tourism is seen as a sector that not only creates revenue itself but as the driver for increased revenue within others as is mentioned within the CPSD.

5.3. Multiplier-effect

The most associated effect with tourism as driver for increased revenue is regarded the multiplier-effect. It is mentioned or insinuated a significant amount of times throughout the different forms of data. Literature suggests positive results from multipliers but the difficulty of the conditions and measuring the impact need to be accepted. It is in line what came out of an interview. The participant agrees with the fact multipliers are difficult. What can be done with tourism is increase the facility level making sure people can visit a doctor or increase the amount of toilets. One specific example mentioned from an area in far-western Nepal was the use of pack animals drivers out of the area itself instead of hired porters from outside the district. By changing the system the district income was doubled from 90 thousand USD to 180 thousand USD. The pack animal drivers were considered quite poor and by introducing this system the income was increased significantly as well as the general district income. This meant also some extra products as vegetables were bought increasing the overall economy.

However, there is a notable distinction to be made between how this multiplier came to be and the way in which it is proposed in policy. The example above was an development project focussed upon integrating the poor directly into the system.

Meaning, this project considers the effectiveness of multipliers from a grassroots level. The CPSD works with top-down investments measuring the potential for development impact and to an extent decides investments based upon these potentials. It is mentioned quantitative multiplier analysis is conducted of more than 7000 IFC projects across the world. By reflecting on the performances of projects in countries with a similar investment climate to Nepal choices can be made. It mentions specifically assessing direct as well as indirect impacts in terms of growth and jobs. Though, nowhere is mentioned as to whom these jobs went to and to who the growth has benefited. Still, the tourism sector is concluded to have the highest feasibility and scoring results for the potential development impact based upon a quantitative feasibility analysis. Also within a more general sense the UNWTO recommendations document describes tourism as to be 'a proven tool for economic diversification and a major employment engine with a multiplier effect on other sectors that contribute to rural development'. The government documents do not state anything regarding a multiplier-effect. Only in one article from 2020 a statement from the former CEO of the NTB mentions 'the tourism sector can be revived if done right and will help revive many sectors intrinsically tied with it'. Also one other article stated tourism is imperative to focus on due to the 'enormous' multiplier effect. Though attention is needed regarding the difference for the top-down application of multipliers and the grassroots local scale multipliers. It becomes not clear from policy documents who will benefit from the high potential of development impact meaning those who gain access to jobs. The benefit from economic growth, as is mentioned as well in the policies, is more clearly related to the trickle-down effect.

5.4. Trickle-down effect

Based on the literature question could be whether the trickle-down effect has the intended consequences. From the data it is difficult to say to what extent this concept is used within policy development and practice. One clear example in which it is used and has a big impact comes from the CPSD as this effect is used as an indicator for deciding investment locations. Specifically, the effect is used for indicating the impact on inclusiveness. The example shows this effect is used and seen as an effective way to, at least, indicate whether or not an area will have the potential of reaching the poor through top-down investments. During an interview the trickle-down was insinuated specifically

as something that needs to be created through an example in Uganda where income was redistributed to farmers providing hotels with their crops. At the same time a participant mentioned the trickle-down effect as something that is probably non-existent as it depends on how impact is measured. Besides cultural norms and values need to be accounted for such as ethnicity and caste. People from the same caste or ethnicity are willing to help each other out much more which is more difficult than to help out others. Meaning, if the trickle-down effect is used as an indicator it is probable locations with a high diversity of castes or ethnicity, although maybe poor, are less likely to receive investments. Also within areas of investment like the ACA, the top of society may be selective into who will benefit leading to increased inequality between communities.

5.5. Spillover-effects

Although there is relatively little literature regarding the spillover-effect it does come forward within the data. The CPSD makes an interesting statement namely tourism has high spillover-effects (it is named under opportunities so likely only positive consequences are meant) to the agriculture, transport, aviation and hospitality sectors. Tourists have a high demand regarding agri-tourism experiences as is mentioned as an example. And this is the case more and more. As described, there is a new coffee-culture rising with Himalaya-coffee, making experiences of the heritage of the product interesting. Also other products as Yak-products and Nepalese tea are areas wherein new tourism products have been developed. This was also confirmed by one of the interviewees. Next to this, the participant also added the extra benefit of the potential of selling it as a high-value product increasing the profit significantly. As mass-production is difficult on Nepalese agricultural ground there is potential for these smaller scale products. Regarding other sectors no specific examples were found though it is likely increasing amounts of tourists will lead to increased transport and aviation as well as hotel stays. Another participant acknowledged the statements regarding these positive spillover-effects though the effects were found to be much bigger with the ACA as to for example Western Nepal making it also an indicator for investment locations. The tourism vision 2020 also mentions the possibility of spillover-effects across borders from India and China. Adjoining destination are mentioned as opportunities to also benefit the Nepalese tourism sector.

5.6. Overseeing the bigger picture

Literature however states spillover-effects can be positive as well as negative and these effects do need to be taken into account as well. The negative spill-over effects can be regarded as unintended consequences due to literature stating it can affect any element not directly associated with the activity. Within the policy-analysis as well as the participants working for private sector actors do not mention anything regarding negative spillover-effects or any risk of promoting tourism at all. Also within the Visit Nepal 2020 campaign there was silence regarding the unintentional effects of tourism (See box 1 for description of Visit Nepal 2020 campaign). Hereunder the results are presented of negative unintended consequences.

Box 1: Clarification on the Visit Nepal 2020 campaign

Visit Nepal 2020 campaign

It has come forward a number of times though the Visit Nepal campaign needs some clarification. First of all, there is a difference between the campaign called 'Visit Nepal 2020' and the policy document 'Tourism Vision 2020'. The campaign was built upon the strategies set-out in this policy document which was published in 2009. The campaign was focussed around two goals; (1) reach the goal of 2 million visitors and (2) attract more private investors. By different events across the year Nepal showed the versatility and options to broadening the tourism options. New adventure tourism activities, cultural tourism and heritage tourism were some of the things which was focussed upon. The campaign was part of the second phase of the tourism vision strategy and emphasised consolidation, expansion and strengthening of phase one which focussed around diversifying and improving tourism services. However, in march all activities were cancelled due to the COVID-19 crisis. There is no rappers as of now which mention if and when a potential next campaign will be organised.

5.6.1. Tourism and the environment

A participant mentioned larger organizations are trying to change the policies regarding the strict conservation laws stating the ban on building within protected areas;

'Bringing in private investors and building high-end and medium-end hotels within the [i.e. protected] areas though sticking to building codes and making in conducive to the environment. So, we don't want to see huge five star building but convert a heritage building that used to be a museum 600 years ago into a really nice boutique resort'.

The example shows the incentive of neo-liberal development towards growth where there is need for expansion and the possibility to do this in a sustainable way. However, an example from another participant shows the other side of this argument. A large hotel Thai hotel chain has been developing a Himalayan view resort with 44 rooms and 20 villas on a mountain hill on a hour walk form the home of this participant. It is a great example of the PPP concept which should lead to the effects (e.g. trickle-down, etc) which have been described. However the participant mentioned the manager has been internationally recruited and the developer is, according to the interviewee, not the most corporate responsible. For example, as the hotel needs water, a large pipe has been installed 250 meters into the ground. Effectively draining all ground water from the nearby area. It is an example, though as hotels are built more and more outside Kathmandu it is likely more of these examples exist.

5.6.2. Differentiating between tourism and its impact

The same participant who describes the story of the Thai hotel hereabove does however nuance the story. First, a consideration has to be made whether or not this hotel will be used by the so-called nature-based tourists. When looked more specifically in the direction of NBT and the impact it has on nature a distinction between hard and soft ecotourism has to be made according to this participant. Within the literature it was stated soft ecotourism has more luxurious stays with little environmental commitment and a shallow interaction with nature. Hard ecotourism considers the opposite to this. Derived from this soft-ecotourism is considered by most as most environmental harmful. The participant however stated this is the other way around. Soft ecotourists, often trekkers for example, do not have the need to trek into nature meaning just staying on

the path. They do enjoy just the nature along this path. Hard ecotourists have a clear purpose of what they want to see. This can take the tourist of the beaten trek leading to a more harmful interaction with nature. An anecdote of Antarctica was used as an example;

'Where the soft ecotourist just wants to see a penguin in the wild the hard ecotourist has to see the rare Stern. I ended up in a big argument with hardcore nature conservationists'

The moral to this story being the soft ecotourist are considered to have significant less ecological impact while significantly more economic impact. The participant mentioned all these tourist pay entrance fees of which, according to Nepalese rules, around 50 percent flows back to the bufferzone committees. 'What could be wrong with walking from one village to another', he mentioned. However, the management needs to be well-organized. In principle soft ecotourism should not be considerably harmful. It can go very wrong with mis-management but it can easily go right if it is well-organized. When talked to another participant who works for an important actor in the PPPs, regarding conservation and NBT, the effect got toned down with 'easy' solutions. For example; 'The good thing is that Nepal tourism is cyclical and seasonal with a huge rush during two peak tourism seasons. But then for the next six months it's pretty empty giving the area the time to go back to some kind of normal state.' Or; 'If you have already had 150.000 visitors that season, maybe you cap it out'. Another opinion from someone who has worked for the government mentioned it would be good to educate suppliers a bit on what ecotourism is and how we can support how we can balance tourism and nature. She mentioned:

'I think people tend to forget that it is the natural resources that we have. If we don't have that people are not going to come here again. All these digital marketing tools you see beautiful destinations all over the world with better trails, better facilities and with less money you can go to a better destination. Why would they come here when it is unmanaged.'

It becomes clear no mutual understanding comes forward from speaking to the participants. Hence is why the discussion is probably also so prominent within articles. As the impact is presumed different across different locations and the fact no experts

on conservation and tourism have been spoken to no clear answer can be given on the impact of NBT. Though when the literature is set-out against the statements of the participant it seems likely the latter statements regarding 'easy solutions' are too good to be true.

5.7. Nature-based tourism and poverty

Across all interviews and throughout the policy documents (see table 4) it is mentioned activities are focussed around inclusivity and helping people out of poverty. However, as came forward from an interview; who are the poor? A case study in far-West Nepal, mentioned by a participant, showed 97 percent of the people lived under the 1 USD a day mark. By international standards identified as extreme poverty. Though, five more categories within this group living in extreme poverty could be identified. Ranging from people with no land and only to produce food for a few days to land-owners able to produce food for longer amounts of time. The participant mentioned this is important to understand as it should be acknowledged who are able to be reached with tourism activities and who are not. In this case it showed the richest two to three groups (living under 1 dollar a day) could be reached but the poorest of the poor not. However he said that this is the case in almost every direction of development aid apart from handing out food or money. The issues of not being able to reach the poorest of the poor originates from several reasons. For example that poor people often do not have the time to attend meetings and committees to better their own situation. Or, the lack of social capital originating from being lower caste or a different ethnicity. Being unable to network and their broader social position within a community takes an important role whether the situation can be bettered. The issue to what extent the poor are reached was also asked to the participants involved with or part of the private sector. Although there is acknowledgement reaching the poor is not always possible and development projects are needed in combination with the private sector, the confidence is that the poorest of the poor are reached. 'Bank programs are mainly focussed on SMEs and micro enterprises which of course directly impacts the poorest of the poor', was mentioned during an interview. In addition a consultant mentioned an example in Egypt where they achieved the larger hotels to set up internship programs for locals, even some living on a dollar a day. However, when if looked at the example of the Thai hotel chain it was also added the participant doubted if even the low jobs would eventually be given to locals. Not to add the building process of the hotel was completely done by builders from India. Within the policies and the participants elaborating in favour of the private sector there is the tendency the poor are reached while other participants doubt if the private sector understands the meaning of poor. This starts on a national scale where it is decided which

districts will be focussed on (see 5.4.1) to the local issues as the example of the Thai hotel chain illustrates.

However, there is agreement on the fact tourism can benefit Nepal including the poor. The fact that there is no recognition regarding tourism in development aid and thus why it is now more private sector driven stems from the way the change in impact measurement. The issue in tourism is the difficulty in objective measuring the impact it has. As well as negative unintended consequences there are also positive ones. Even the intended consequences have not been recognised according to a participant. Financing institutions and governments donating money to NGOs regarding projects want clear results meaning a project building 18 new micro-hydrants giving 500 people access to electricity. This while tourism often integrates these objective results unintentionally. One participant elaborated with the following example; Within the Nepalese Humla district locals mentioned during the planning phase of a tourism project the fact that they thought tourists would not like it when they defecated on the trails. To remove this issue toilets were build providing local communities with sanitation. Due to the sensitivity to clearly stated results, tourism has become small in development aid. When the frontrunner in tourism development SNV stopped with tourism projects in Nepal, as a result of budget cuts, other parties also got out and it was taken over by the private sector.

6. Discussion

This research has aimed to explore how private-sector actors promote NBT in Nepal and in what way they respond to critical academic and media reports on the unintended effects of NBT.

6.1. interpretation of study findings

6.1.1. *implications of neo-liberal development*

The Nepalese tourism sector currently operates through a neo-liberal development model. Yet, a number of arguments have shown one can say the tourism sector operates with a neo-liberal growth model instead of a development model. Arguments can be made as to why growth is the same as development such as the effects which have been described. The positive attitude towards these top-down effects has however a notion of saviourism as there is only silence when it comes to the potential negative consequences of those effects. Multipliers cannot only benefit other sectors but also negatively impact them when, in this case tourism, is not performing well. As the Nepalese tourism sector is unstable this is a real scenario. Yet, saviourism is a significant term to use though based on the results it shows the private sector actors and finance institutions have formed the perspective as the only way for healthy development is through increased private sector involvement. Yet, it is this increasing involvement which is reason for concern. For one, what the private sector wants is economic growth and the main constraint in Nepal is investment. By having finance institutions solve this problem nothing should stand in the way of this issue. Yet, the argument Peter & Hartwick (2015) make is by having to return interest upon this investment the receiving country will end up as the lending country. And second, the private sector actors have become more influential and involved, making the argument of Laing (2001) regarding the ability of the government to deal with the private sector a real concern too. It makes the private sector have a power position as the management capacity of the government is limited (Laing, 2001; Sharma & Bindal, 2014). One example is the internal leadership issues of the NTB where there was mistrust between the private and public sector. Also other examples of the increased pressure of the private sector to develop products within protected areas show how step-by-step the

boundaries are moving under the notion of economic growth. It is in this sense a form of the neo-compradors as Petras (1999) described.

6.1.2. Economic growth under the guise of poverty alleviation

What was meant by the neo-comprador was the fact NGOs function to produce services for the donor countries and therefore mainly trading domestic poverty for individual perks (Petras, 1999). Although this study has not identified the role of the NGO in Nepal it is clear the finance institutions have a significant role as the neo-comprador. The institutions are run by the lending countries and, as illustrated with the example of Peet & Hartwick (2015), end up as the countries who benefit from return investments. This is done with the ideology and written goals of inclusive poverty alleviation and the belief the poorest of the poor benefit from the projects. Yet, if one looks at the investment locations of the finance institutions it becomes clear these locations are chosen based on potential returns. Regions as Far-West Nepal are not considered as there are too many constraints and infrastructural issues to have development impact. This are the places where the poorest of the poor live. This is besides the fact that with all development work it is difficult to reach the poorest of the poor as they often have no network or time to participate in development projects. It is therefore arguable as to what extent the finance institutions full fill their policy statements. The effect those statements do have is the positive limelight in which economic growth is set. By arguments the projects are focussed on poverty alleviation and new hotels or products will include new job opportunities for locals, it is difficult to critique those projects. Especially with a weak federal government system to control this does not mean it would be different if there was a stronger federal system. This means the private sector can operate with relative much freedom to promote the sector of NBT.

6.1.3. Nature-based tourism, the consumers and the sustainability of the sector

As the actors of NBT can promote and operate with significant freedom it is the role of the consumers to utilize the products but also influence the sector. Neo-liberal development is driven by supply and demand and it is the consumer who creates the demand. Theory shows the example of the current trend in flight-shame where demand decreased because of social movements emphasizing the negative environmental effects. Besides that this trend can influence tourism populations in Nepal too, there are also

issues on a national level able to influence consumer behaviour. For example, as was seen in 2015 the negative image created by the media, regarding the devastation of the earthquake, can have a detrimental effect of the amount of tourists who visit Nepal even if only a small part of the country is affected. Currently it is visible the private sector actors as well as the government do nothing in response to critical or negative reports in the media or by academics regarding the Nepalese tourism sector. For one, this can be due to critical reports not having saturated on a national level meaning it has not become a significant subject. One can argue there is a lack of critical articles but also there are too many positive sides to the Nepalese tourism sector. If speaking from the perspective of negative tourism effects one can argue a lot of negative consequences are invisible, long-term (not occurred yet) or too local for national or international impact. Take the Thai-hotel chain as an example; currently there is still water so the problem will not occur until the hotel is up and running. The fact is tourism sector actors do not include how negative unintended effects are managed in their policies or acknowledge that they even exist. On the other hand the tourism sector has also positive sides. Tourism projects such as the one in Humla made the district income double. The coffee-culture has taken-off due to tourism and has now seeped through as a national trend increasing profits on coffee products dramatically as it can now be sold as a high-end product. From an environmental aspect the impact depends on what kind of tourist one attracts and how the environment is managed. One can rethink the management of protected areas which is currently pressured to develop tourism products by having private sector operators include maintenance prices of the park in their investments as they are now maintained by public resources. This could also benefit the price of permits benefitting the consumer. It are reasons such as coffee-tourism and the lack of diversity options as to why tourism, despite the critiques, should still be a priority sector. However, at this point the tourism sector operations and environment are deemed not to be cohesive which arguably influences the sustainability of the sector and, as it operates through the neo-liberal model, therefore the entire economy.

6.1.4. Transferring critiques into suggestions

To make the tourism sector more sustainable changes have to occur. It has to become clear the current model of operations is to achieve economic growth which is not the same as development. The policy goals of inclusive poverty alleviation is considered a disguise and not the real priority. Though this does not mean those responsible for this cannot contribute to the tourism sector. One can argue, as was mentioned, the large financial donors should move their attention away from the goal of poverty alleviation and in the direction of larger projects as infrastructure development to empower those who are able to create healthy development solutions. Instead of investments these projects arguably should be on a basis of grants to remove the necessity of return investments. This creates also the opportunity to develop project in the areas where it is most needed instead of the areas where there is enough potential for a return. At this point there the financial institutions do work with grants alongside the investments though in regards to the goal of poverty alleviation it can be argued to move away from large top-down investments completely.

Yet, tourism can still contribute to the goal of poverty alleviation in itself. Across the years the dominant funding strategy has become to look at projects which present clear results; 9 hydro-dams have been built providing eight-hundred people with electricity. With the tourism projects such as SNV carried out between the late nineties and 2010 it is difficult to present such clear results (Great Himalaya Trail). However, this does not mean no impact has been made. The incentive of tourism being a multiplier also counts for small-scale developing projects based on grants. Tourism can provide the clear results such as access to electricity without being able to present it as a outcome of the project. To receive funding for projects therefore depends on the way impact is measured.

6.2. Summarising the Nepalese tourism sector

By triangulation of media-analysis, policy-analysis and expert interviews it can be concluded the Nepalese tourism actors conceptualise and promote tourism as a driver of the economy which will lead to economic growth and reduction of poverty. Currently the media has the general tendency of positivism towards the tourism industry leaving the tourism sector actors with relative freedom as the demand side is not affected by negative journalism. Due to the lack of substantial critical notes, as negative effects can

remain invisible, actors do not take those reports into account for policy development or even mention the possibility of unintended consequences. What is written in the policies is the potential of poverty alleviation through investments in locations with high development potential. Though, this means locations where the poorest of the poor live remain out of sight. Policies propagate their strategies include the poorest of the poor though as of now it seems this is more of a disguise which eventually victimise the targeted population. Still, the tourism sector has much potential to alleviate poverty. If funding institutions would change impact measurement to a more intersectoral approach to see how and where tourism projects have benefits, more grant-based projects could be started.

6.3. Implications for further research

To be able to more clearly define how these reforms should look like future research needs to be done as this is overarching explorative quantitative study. For one, the top-down approaches need to be analysed in their contribution to the poor. Second, the PPP-model should be studied from several different perspectives; (1) how the balance of power is between government and private sector, (2) to what extent the private sector keeps away from investing in the poor regions of Nepal due to risk on returns, (3) What the unintended consequences are of well-intended investments. Third, more research needs to be done into the impacts of hard and soft ecotourism as well as other forms of nature-based tourism. Besides measuring impacts by conservationists it could be beneficial to start sociological studies into how tourists would perceive the environment in different scenarios due to climate change and changing risks. If this results would be significant it can be an indication to change strategies. It is acknowledged social study on a future basis is difficult though with increasing methods such as virtual reality possibilities are there. Fourth and final, new research is needed into the levels of poverty as Saville (2001) showed. To what extent can grant based tourism projects reach the poorest of the poor and what would be the way to go. This also means research into the role of impact measurement plays in funding for tourism projects. It is probable more research directions would contribute to this discourse. One can suggest to explore other development models and move away from neo-liberalism. However, as the system is so

entrenched it is arguable to focus research on how inclusive development can be reached within this model as to change the model completely.

6.4. Limitations occurring during the research

Limitations regarding the methodological approach have already been mentioned with the methodology. The mentioned methodological limitations will here be reflected upon as well as reflecting on new found limitations.

The perception of the people has been difficult to retrieve from media reports. Interesting statements have been collected though it cannot be stated this is also how the majority of the people agree with this. Although a significant amount of articles was analysed and is considered a good sample-size it has to be acknowledged it is small against the total.

Within the policy analysis the main limitation is considered the little sample of Nepalese policies. Policies which seemed relevant were only available in Nepalese meaning they could not be included. Hence why most policies have been retrieved from international institutions.

Also the interviews showed to have some limitations. The mentioned expertise made it difficult to have a healthy argument on certain subjects as they were able to argument their side of the story well. This led to the limitation of bias from interviews. Within 3 of the 5 interviews bias has been a concern. By gathering participants from both sides of the story a well-balanced conclusion could be formed. 2 participants did not seem to have a significant bias as they currently did not have a part within this discourse. It would have been beneficial to speak to a conservationist with expertise in tourism impacts as no real data could be retrieved from the other participants resulting in a more theoretical argument instead of evidence tourism is or is not harmful to the environment and in what way.

Final limitation is the fact this research has been a birds-eye perspective meaning it is difficult to draw in-depth conclusions regarding the specific concepts mentioned. As it has been explorative, new missing linkages have been found which will open doors for new research opportunities.

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