

Tourism as Benefactor to Peace amidst the Structural Conflict: An Exploratory Case Study of Nepal

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Abstract : While peace is dividend to tourism, tourism can also be a vital force for world peace. The existing body of knowledge on a tripartite complex nexus between tourism, peace and conflict reveals that tourism is benefactor to peace and sensitive to conflict. By contextualizing the ongoing sporadic structural conflict in the transitional phase in the aftermath of a decade long (1996-2006), Maoist armed conflict in Nepal, the purpose of this study is to explore the potentials of tourism in peace-building. The outcomes of this research paper is based on the mixed methods of research (qualitative and quantitative). Though the armed conflict ended with the comprehensive peace agreement in 2006 but there is constant manifestations of non-violent structural conflicts, which continue to threaten the sustainability of tourism industry. With the persistent application of coping strategies, tourism is found resilient during the ongoing structural political conflict. The strong coping abilities of the private sector of tourism industry have also intersected with peace-building efforts with more reactive and less proactive (pro-peace) engagements. This paper ascertains about the application of the 'theory of tourism security' by Nepalese tourism industry while coping with conflict and reviving, and sustaining. It reveals that the multiple verities of tourism at present has heterogeneous degree of peace potentials. The opportunities of 'peace through tourism' can be promoted subject to its molding with responsible, sustainable and participatory characteristics. This paper comes out with pragmatic policy recommendations for strengthening the position of tourism as a true peace-builder: (a) a broad shift from mainstream conventional tourism to the community based rural with local participation and ownership to fulfill Nepal's potentials for peace, and (b) building and applications of the managerial and operational codes of conducts for owners and workers (labor unions) at all tourism enterprises and strengthen their practices.

Keywords : code of conduct, community based tourism, conflict, peace-building, tourism

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