

Accessible Tourism: A Novel Idea for Promoting Tourism in Nepal

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Abstract : Inclusive Tourism is a relatively new topic in Nepal. Though the effort of creating accessible and inclusive tourism has already begun, it is still in its infancy. A major concern for Destination Nepal is the lack of awareness and absence of mandatory law in place to encourage Tourism operating sectors for coming up with accessible Tourism products. Given the number economic and social benefits to may be derived from inclusive tourism, it is a critical time for the tourism industry to understand and develop measures towards inclusivity in the gateway to Himalaya. Nepal was struck with a devastating earthquake on April 25th, 2015 which concurrently left more than 4,000 Nepalese with physical disabilities. Nepal has had to rebuild and is continuing to rebuild a lot of infrastructure and the process of rebuilding should be barrier free and use universal design measures. With universal design in place, this would allow access for minority groups such as people with disabilities and the elderly to the historic monuments in Kathmandu valley. Four Seasons Travel (4ST) has been a key player in not only creating accessible tourism experiences in Nepal, but also promoting accessible tourism to other tourism operators. Dr. Scott Rains had worked closely with 4ST on accessible tourism. Additionally, it organised an accessible trek which was field tested with a traveler with vision impairment in August 2015. Another accessible trekking experience, in partnership with Washington DC based International Development Institute, was coined as 'Wounded Heroes Trek to Nepal', where a group of Veterans that are amputees went trekking in the Annapurna Region. The event made it to the list of UNWTO World Tourism Day celebrations. Such initiatives led by private sector in partnership with various organizations have worked to create a 'Destination Nepal for all'. However, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to make Nepal a truly inclusive destination. Partnerships between the private sector and DPOs (Disabled People's Organizations) as well as the government are also a sound opportunity for employment creation for people with disabilities. Further, partnerships between the state, tourism service providers and DPOs need to be fostered to create job opportunities for people with disabilities. This can be exemplified through the social Entrepreneurship model with the help of accessible Tourism.

Keywords : accessible tourism, disability, earthquake, inclusion

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