

# A study on sustainable tourism and its practices with reference to “Bhutan”

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The research is based on A study on Sustainable tourism and its practices with reference to “Bhutan “.Tourism is a growing sector and is expanding spontaneously by enhancing its brands and quality in order to attract various tourists from all over the world. Bhutan is an upcoming destination and developing destination by attracting quality tourists and practicing sustainability. As Bhutan has a long term strategy of controlled tourism and focuses on countries reputation as a exclusive and distinctive destination while ensuring destination while ensuring long term sustainability of the industry and contribution to the economy. One of the key factors in the success of Bhutan tourism strategy has been the privatization of the industry. Bhutan has focused on the strategies to promote and develop its eco-tourism and nature based tourism. With the eco-tourism being the fastest growing market in the tourism industry in general and with the strength of the country natural assets.

The paper also attempts on various issues like sustainable tourism, practices ,strategies and participation of local community.

A descriptive analysis will be presented along with appropriate facts and figures. This paper will be useful for tourism organisation, academician, decision maker and all other stakeholder involved in tourism.

**Key words:** Tourism development, Sustainable development, Sustainable tourism,



## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Sustainable tourism, one that establishes a suitable balance between the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, plays an important role in conserving biodiversity. It attempts to minimize its impact on the environment and local culture so that it will be available for future generations, while contributing to generate income, employment, and the conservation of local ecosystems.

Sustainable tourism provides crucial economic incentives for habitat protection. Revenues from visitor spending are often channelled back into nature conservation or capacity building programmes for local communities to manage protected areas.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation defines sustainable tourism as tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future.

Sustainable Tourism refers to a level of tourism activity that can be maintained over the long term because it results in a net benefit for the social, economic, natural and cultural environments of the area in which it takes place.

## 1.2 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN BHUTAN

A few countries including Bhutan have demonstrated that tourism is not ugly. Bhutan is perhaps the best example where controlled tourism has been effective in ensuring the sustainability of the industry in the long run.

It has contributed significantly to foreign exchange earnings and government revenues, to income and employment generation and to regional development to a certain extent. It has created opportunities for the development of locally owned and operated private sector enterprises. Tourism has been an important mechanism for publicising the country's culture and traditions to the outside world, and interactions with tourists have contributed to a sense of national identity, making Bhutanese proud of their country's unique culture and environment. Tourism has further enhanced the need to conserve the country's natural and cultural assets.

Bhutan's tourism potential is considerable with comparative advantages in many areas to ensure economic growth and diversification. Cultural tourism, eco-tourism and adventure/sports tourism (rafting, canoeing, climbing) which are based on the country's natural beauty, biodiversity and unique and distinct culture offer numerous opportunities for further development of the industry. The tourism industry can also generate jobs at a time when unemployment is becoming a problem with limited job opportunities in the government and private sector.

Bhutan has a clearly established framework for the development of tourism. It has clear tourism policies, excellent tourism resources, a developing and expanding private sector, qualified and experienced personnel, established marketing channels and contacts. In short, the initial phase of setting up the tourism sector, of privatising the industry, and of establishing Bhutan as an exclusive, distinctive destination has been achieved. The future development of tourism should now involve a process of refinement whereby attempts are made by the industry itself to mitigate any negative environmental and cultural impacts; explore and develop the numerous niche markets, such as eco-tourism, that offer significant growth potential and are consistent with the other development objectives of the royal government; and increase the participation of local communities in tourism activities.

The future development of tourism should be guided by the concept of high-value tourism and should include a well-defined and effective policy on sustainable tourism. Such a policy should continue to advocate caution and control instead of aggressive tourism development, and be inclusive rather than sector-based. The policy should also promote value consciousness and heritage conservation. Bhutan has considerable tourism resources today because of the cautious approach adopted by the government. This approach should be applied to policies regarding the future development of the industry to ensure that tourism development is consistent with the royal government's goals of environmental and cultural preservation. Bhutan's traditional way of life and culture, its religion and its pristine environment have always been the main tourist attractions. A sustainable tourism policy should ensure that these values are promoted amongst visitors and that our cultural and natural heritage is preserved.

The following are a few issues that need to be addressed urgently to ensure that tourism in Bhutan remains sustainable.

- **Organizational Development:** The future sustainability of tourism will depend largely on the effective functioning of the Department of Tourism and the industry association. To this end there is an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of the Department and establish an effective co-ordination and organization of the private sector.
- **Product Development:** The addition of facilities and services which will improve and enrich the tourism product, lead to greater visitor satisfaction, contribute positively in terms of environmental, economic and sociocultural impacts will further help to reduce the seasonal nature of tourism and also spread tourism activities and benefits to other regions of the country. There is also a need for the development of more niche, high-value special interest market segments - e.g. Photography, zoology, botany, white water rafting. Related to product development there is a need for more emphasis on a classification system for tourism facilities and specification of minimum standards.
- **Marketing Strategies:** The collection and processing of more complete market information, and improved analysis of characteristics of market behaviour is another basic requirement for developing future policies and plans. Also the development of new products and attractions requires effective joint marketing initiatives that combine public and private resources.
- **Human Resource Development:** The development of human resources, not only within the Department of Tourism, but also within individual private operators and other bodies is a must for the success of future programs.

Several initiatives have already been undertaken to

- a) Build up the resources to finance development of the industry
- b) Involve all relevant partners in drafting future policies related to tourism
- c) Form an industry association that will take steps to promote, encourage and assist in the development of tourism in Bhutan.

### **1.3 IMPACT OF TOURISMS**

**Environmental impacts on ecosystems** Whenever the negative impacts on the natural environment are dealt with, it should be considered that these impacts rarely effect only one entity, but that the ecological impacts of tourism usually effect ecosystems as a whole. The impacts on the natural environment do not only effect pristine nature areas, but also cultivated land, which is an important part of the natural and cultural heritage of a region and ecologically valuable because it's the habitat of many species.

Environmental impacts of tourism occur at the local, regional and global level. Climate change and the depletion of the ozone layer are two mayor effects of the increasing global traffic and industrial development, in which tourism plays an important role. Environmental impacts that primarily have effects on the local and regional level also effect the environment globally in the long run. Basically, loss of biological diversity is a major consequence of these impacts.

Negative socio-cultural impacts Tourism aids change and development and thus has major effects on the cultural development of a society. The reaction of societies towards tourism is diverse: some reject changes, others involucrate them into their traditions and some will abandon their cultural roots altogether. While cultural change is an unavoidable, natural part of human culture, the sudden and forced changes that tourism often brings can cause the complete breakdown of a society and may consequentially cause the loss of entire cultural tradition. Socio-cultural impacts of tourism are often hard to identify or to measure and a subject of personal value judgments. Tourism brings about changes in value systems and behavior of the people and cause changes in the structure of communities, family relationships, collective traditional life styles, ceremonies and morality. The ambiguity of socio-cultural impacts is due to the fact that tourism may have impacts that are beneficial for one group of a society, but which are negative for another.

- Negative socio-economic impacts: The tourism industry generates substantial economic benefits to both host countries and tourists' home countries. Economic improvement is the primary motivation to promote a region as a tourism destination, because tourism can cause massive economic development. But it also has hidden costs with unfavourable economic effects. Rich countries usually profit more from tourism than poorer countries. Least developed countries are at least able to realize the benefits of tourism. Large-scale transfer of tourism revenues out of the host country and the exclusion of local businesses and products reduce the revenues of tourism.

Natural and cultural heritage as a basis for tourism generally, the heritage of a region consists of its physical natural and cultural environment, its natural phenomena and its cultural traditions and immaterial cultural goods. Heritage is always affiliated with a region and/or a society (or a part of a society) and it is based on the region's history. It has its origin in the past; it has been passed over from one generation to the next and maintained until the present. Cultural heritage is directly related to the region's and society's history and also natural heritage has its roots in the past.

The natural and cultural heritage of a region is the main motivation for a tourist's visit, this is especially the case for cultural or nature tourism, or provides at least an important complementary offer for other types of tourism, e.g. congress tourism, recreation and sports tourism. The outstanding natural and cultural features of a region are those which make a place "special" - and worth a visit. Natural heritage Natural heritage consists not only of flora and fauna, but also of every other part of the natural environment, e.g. the inorganic nature such as rocks, geologic formations, rivers, lakes, mountains as well as the relation between these natural components as ecosystem. Strongly influenced by mankind and the society's economic activities.

Many tourist activities are based on the experience of landscape, like all kind of nature tourism, and nature oriented physical activities as hiking, biking, swimming, etc. Protection of heritage The natural and cultural heritage is often vulnerable to the impacts of modern development, consumer lifestyles and globalization. In addition, the use of heritage in tourism, in particular in excessive or poorly managed forms of tourism, as well as the development of infrastructure related to tourism may directly threaten the integrity of the heritage. The ecological setting, culture or lifestyles of a community may also be degraded because of the visitor's influence on the place.

The lack of environmental awareness from part of both, local people and visitors, their cultural insensitivity, an improper management and/or insufficient legal framework and law enforcement can lead to the deterioration of physical and immaterial natural and cultural goods. Therefore, to provide the basis for tourism development not

only in the present, but also for future generations, natural and cultural heritage must be protected. Considering protection and making use of tourism development as a means of conservation is a basic principle of sustainable tourism development.

## 1.4 PRINCIPLE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

- The different declarations of principles for sustainable tourism, the quality of tourism products offered by a region are a key factor for the economic success of tourism. Accommodation and food, but also by non-material criteria like hospitality or the quality of experiences. Applying adaptive management and monitoring.
- To ensure that tourism is developed in a way which is ecological, economic and socially sustainable, adequate management and monitoring must be established, following the basic principles of sustainable use of resources.
- It is important to note that different stakeholders involved in the tourism business are responsible for the implementation of different parts of the principles. Governments, tourism businesses, local communities, NGOs and the tourists can all contribute to make tourism more sustainable. In order to achieve the goals of sustainable tourism, the different actors should cooperate and stimulate each other to put the principles into practice.

## 1.5 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Tourism can be described as the activity of people traveling to a place which is not their home, staying at this place for a certain amount of time, exercising different activities at the place (leisure, business or other purposes) while these purposes are not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited, and traveling back home. Tourism is thus different from travel, which means the dislocation of somebody from one place to the other, because tourism involves, apart from the journey itself, the stay and the activities during this stay as main elements.

As tourism comprises of a specific sequence of certain recurring, consecutive elements, it is being described as a chain. The basic elements of this chain are the journey to and from the chosen destination and the stay at the destination. Additionally, the preparation phase (selection of the destination, booking and packing) and the wrap-up of the stay at home are considered as parts of the chain as they always take place in one or other form. The tourism product is defined as the combination of goods and services such as transport, accommodation, food and drinks, guiding services, provision of material and infrastructure for activities etc. that are necessary to enable the tourists to have a complex experience which starts at them leaving their home and ends at their return.

The tourism chain and related product items Stage Client's activity means Provider Generating interest Marketing, information, advert. Travel agencies, destination managements. Product check-out and reservation Marketing, advert, information and communication channels. Travel agencies, destination managements, providers of various services.

## 2.1 OBJECTIVE

- 1.To understand the importance of sustainable tourism
2. To identify the benefits of sustainable tourism
3. To develop Responsible Tourism in terms of destination
4. To identify current trends in the tourism industry

## 2.2 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- The scope of the research is it will be helpful for the public /private sector
- The study also shows the involvement of government and local community towards the promotion
- This study is also helpful for the students, stakeholder, and research scholars and for the Government employees.

## 2.3 LIMITATIONS

- Time constraint
- Insufficient data
- Lack of response from the tourists

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.4 SOURCES OF DATA

The data for the study was collected from primary and secondary sources .Primary data was collected by distributing Questionnaires among the target group i.e the tourists (International tourist and domestic tourists). The secondary data and the relevant materials were collected from magazines, internet, article etc.

### 2.5 SAMPLE SIZE

The sample size used for this research was 100 and my target audience was (50) domestic tourists and(50)international tourists. A structures questionnaire was constructed based on the objectives framed for the study which was used to collect the required data.

### 2.6 RESEARCH TOOL

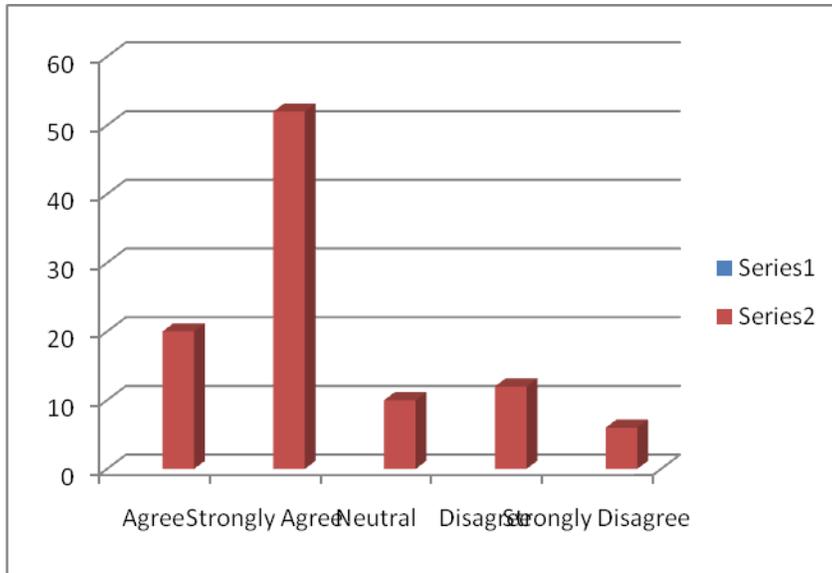
The tools used were the close ended questionnaires and use of excel sheets and analyses are based on primary data collected.

## 2.7 RESEARCH GAP

The research gap here was the study on involvement of local community towards the tourism development.

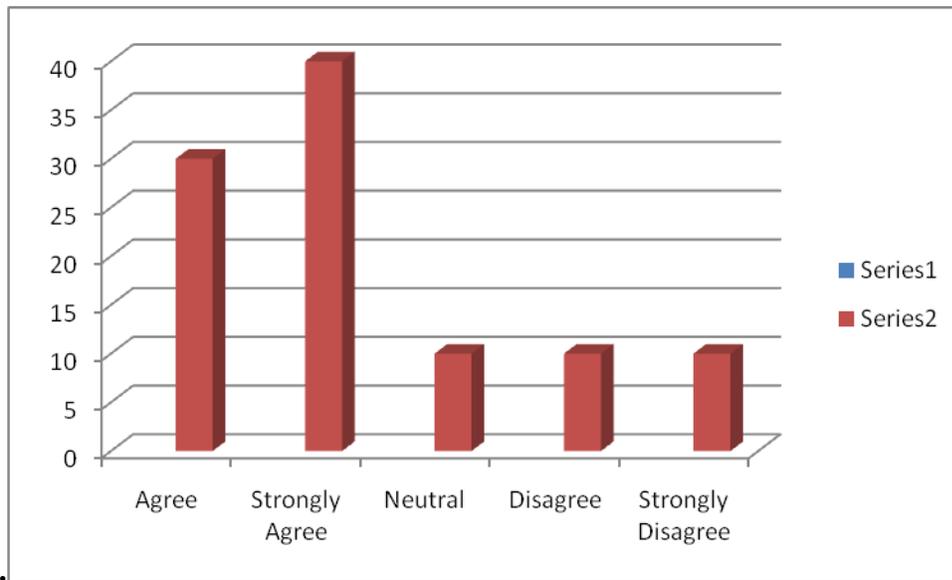
## 2.8 DATA ANALYSIS

### 1. Bhutan is a destination which encourages sustainable tourism.



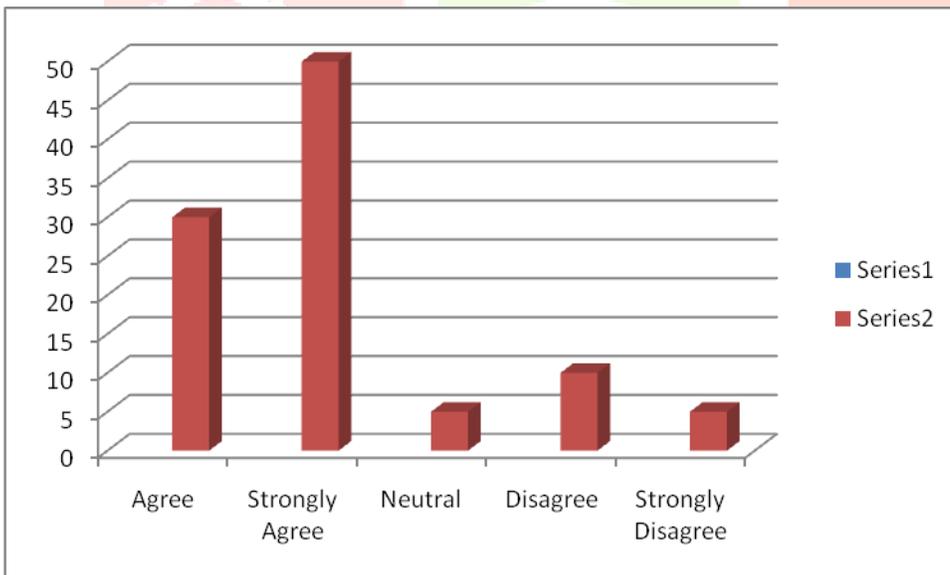
**Interpretation:** The above data shows that Bhutan creates opportunities and encourages sustainable tourism and promotes the destination in terms of quality tourists, so the response was strongly agreed that Bhutan promotes the practice of sustainable tourism.

### 2. Bhutan focuses on quality tourists in their destination



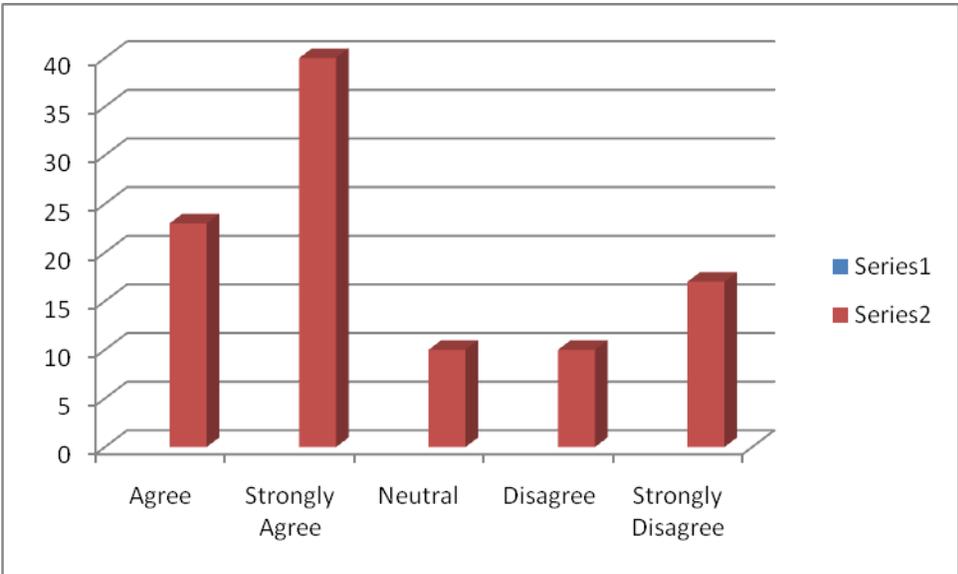
**Interpretation:** The above data shows that Bhutan do encourages quality tourists and creates responsible tourists.40% tourists strongly agreed that Bhutan promotes quality oriented tourists, and 30% tourists do agree that Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

### 3. Tourism promotes socio –economic development in the country



**Interpretation:**Tourism is also a tool for enhancing the socio and economic development in the country by creating job opportunities and scope for the people in the destination. As per the data 50% tourists agreed that because of tourism the destination is developing and there is improvement in infrastructure and increase in foreign exchange.

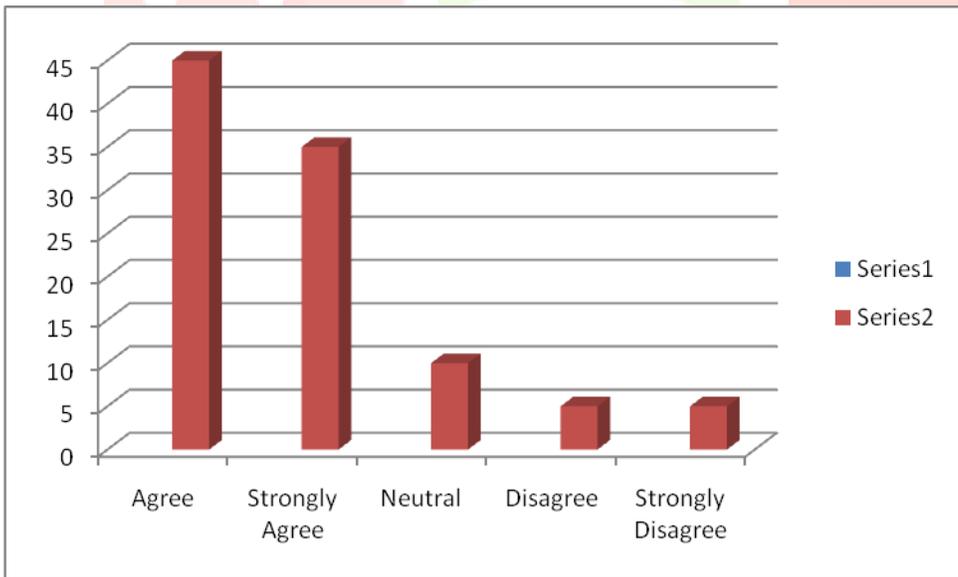
#### 4. Bhutan sets a example of sustainability and responsible



tourism

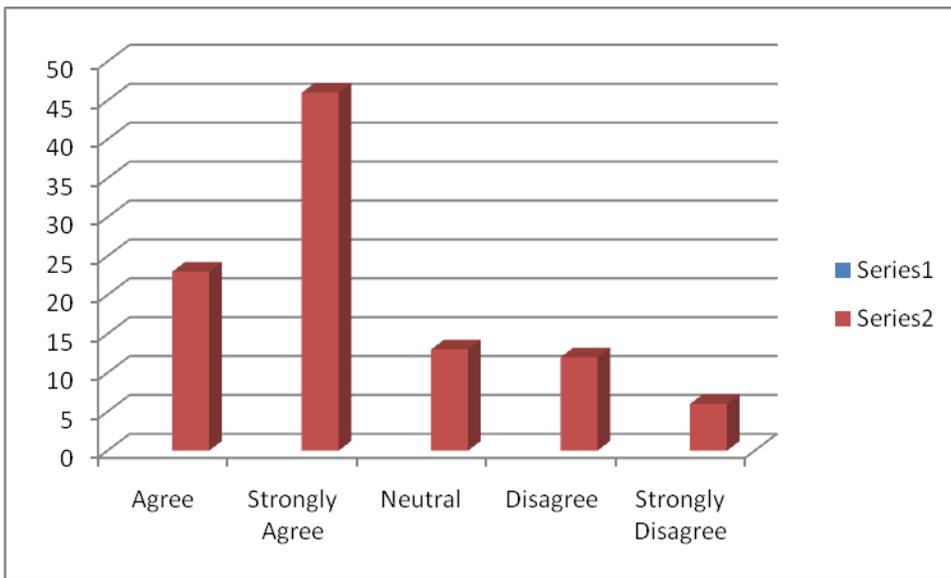
**Interpretation:** The data show that 40% of the tourists responded that Bhutan is the best example for sustainable and responsible tourism. Bhutan received 274 international tourists in 1974 when tourism policy began. This number rose significantly after privatization of the industry in the 1990s with 7158 tourist arrivals in 1999 and 44,252. This increase is dramatic within the Bhutanese context but it pales in comparison to some of its South Asian neighbours.

#### 5. Bhutan lacks in well trained and skilled labour for the industry



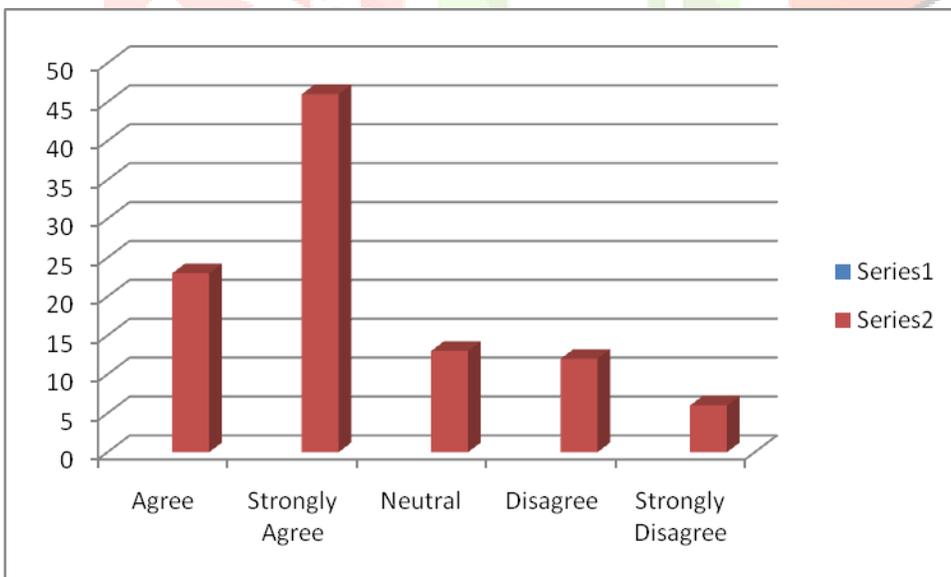
**Interpretation:** As per the response the above data shows that Bhutan do lack in well and skilled labour for the industry, because much focus is not given in training, as per the data collected it also shows that data government and private sector also encourage and take part in promoting tourism. And the giving opportunities for the teenagers.

**6. Tourism has also promoted Bhutanese culture by creating employment opportunities for traditional musicians and dancers.**



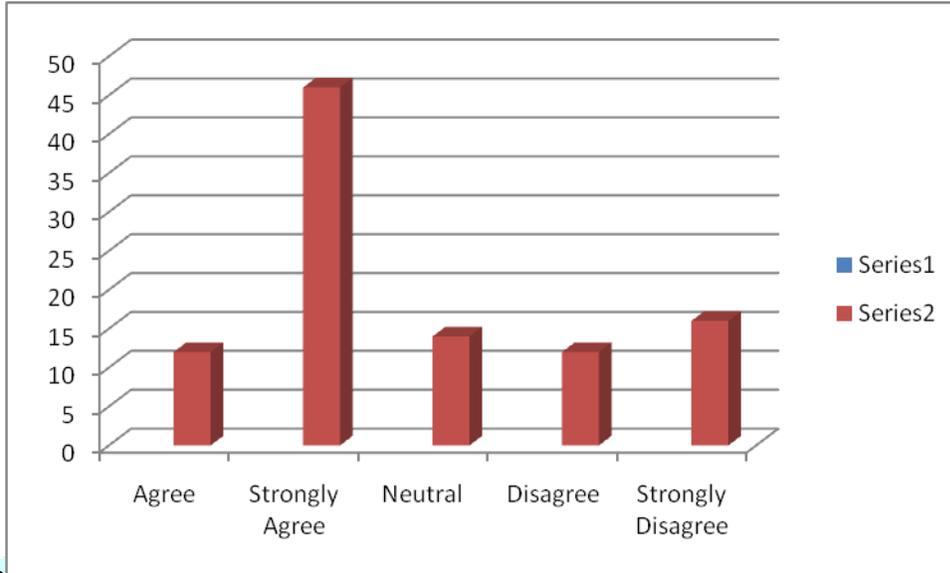
**Interpretation:** Bhutan's main tourism attractions are its traditional culture and way of life, its religious festivals, historic monuments and its pristine environment. Bhutan has received much international acclaim for its cautious approach to development that places a high priority on conserving the nation's natural and cultural heritage. So the data shows that around 30% tourists do agree that Bhutan promoted Bhutanese culture by creating employment opportunities for traditional musicians and dancers.

**7. Bhutan Government is being more involved not only monitoring itself but also in developing future tourism policies.**



**Interpretation:** According to the survey the tourists strongly agreed that 46% that Bhutan government is being more involved not only in monitoring itself but also in developing future tourism policies.

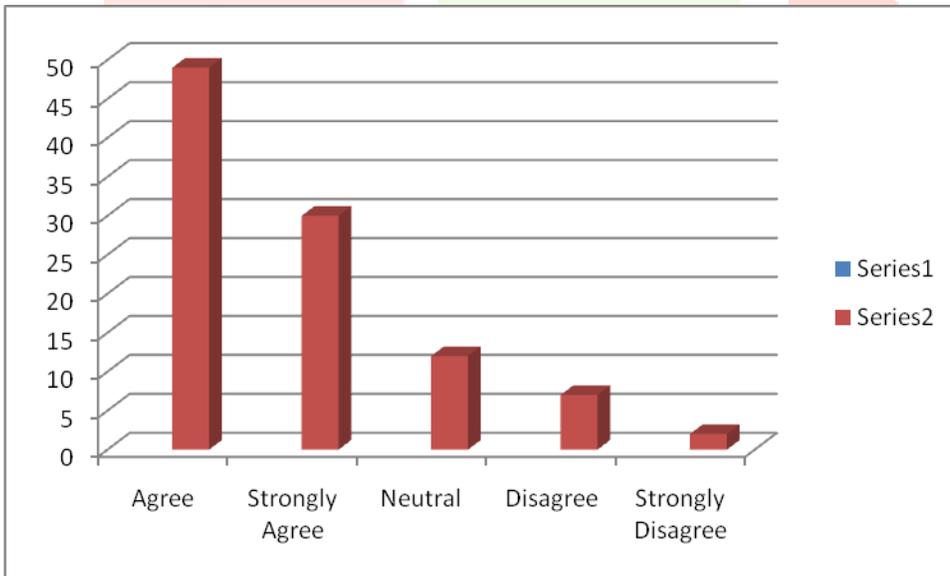
### 8. Bhutan promotes adventure tourism and niche



tourism.

**Interpretation:** Bhutan also promotes 46% of adventure tourism and niche tourism because the destination is highly suitable and is flexible enough to offer varieties of tourism to the tourists.

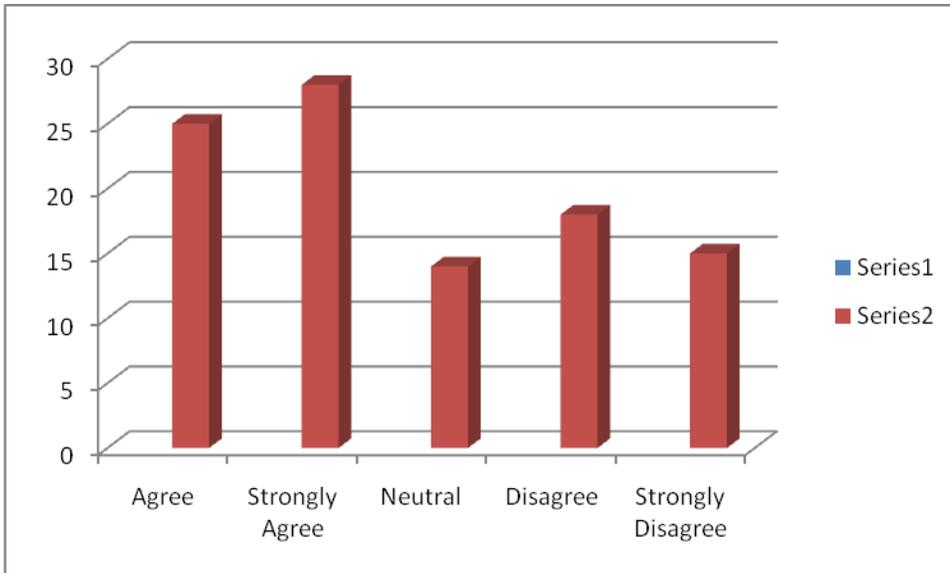
### 9. Bhutan looks forward for long-term economic and environmental sustainability of tourism.



**Interpretation:** The data above shows that 49% tourists agreed that Bhutan is looking forward for long term economic and environmental sustainability of tourism. Bhutan has been sustainable so far due to the sound environmental and cultural policies of the royal government which has considerable authority over setting

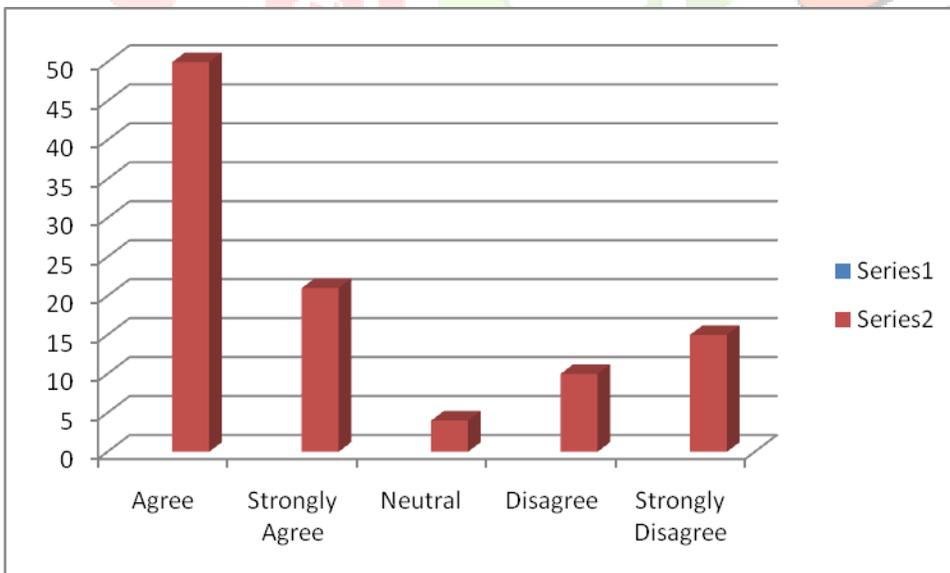
policy direction. The future sustainability of tourism will, however, depend on greater participation from the tourism industry

**10. Culture and ecotourism are being increasingly developed as a way to protect the natural beauty and cultural heritage of an area.**



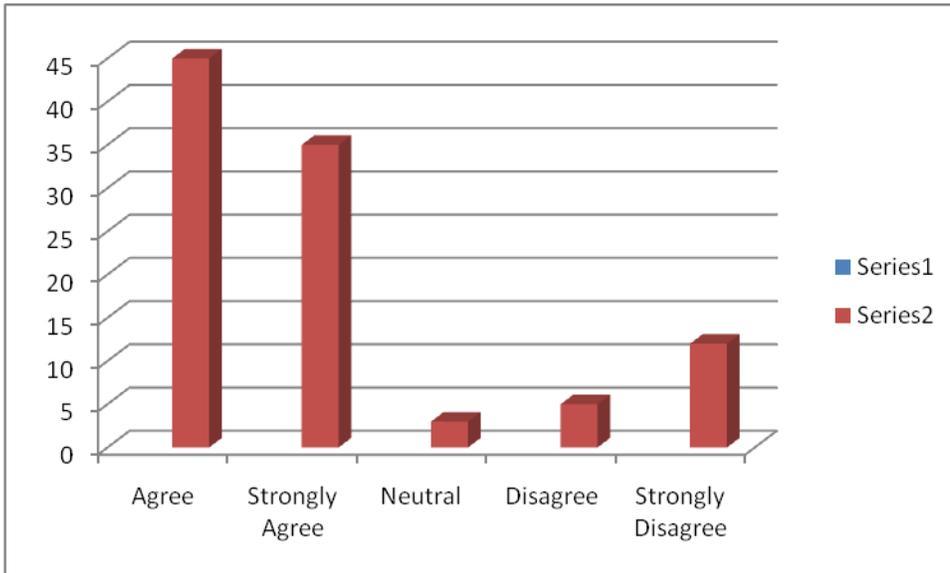
**Interpretation:** The above data shows that around 28% strongly agreed that Bhutan do promote culture and ecotourism and preserve and protect the beauty of the destination. Bhutan is a developing place for niche tourism.

**11. Bhutan is able to avoid the negative impacts of the trails and the visitors' activities to a minimum level.**



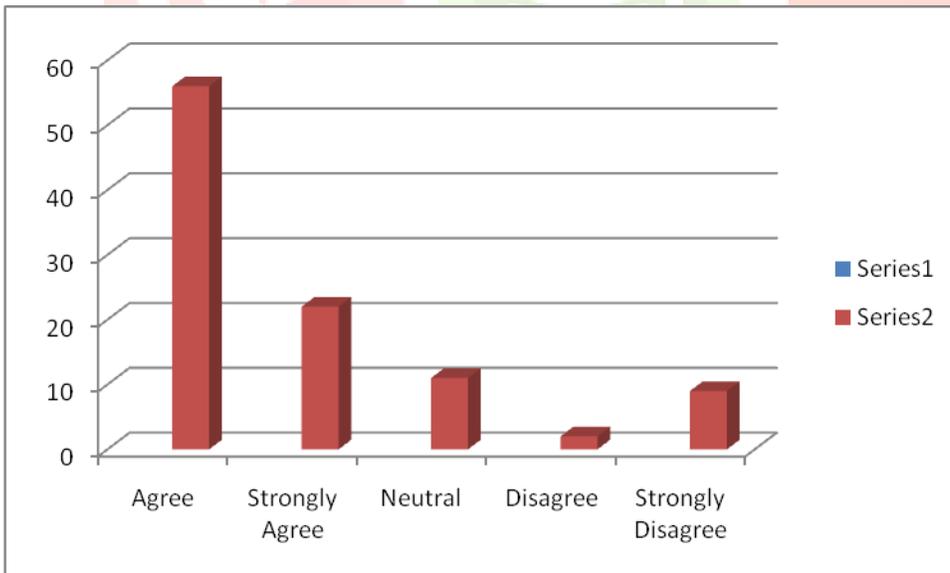
**Interpretation:** As per the above data 50% shows that Bhutan is able to avoid the negative impact such as socio-economic and environmental changes and more practices are beginning implemented.

### 12. Bhutan has quality tourism accommodation.



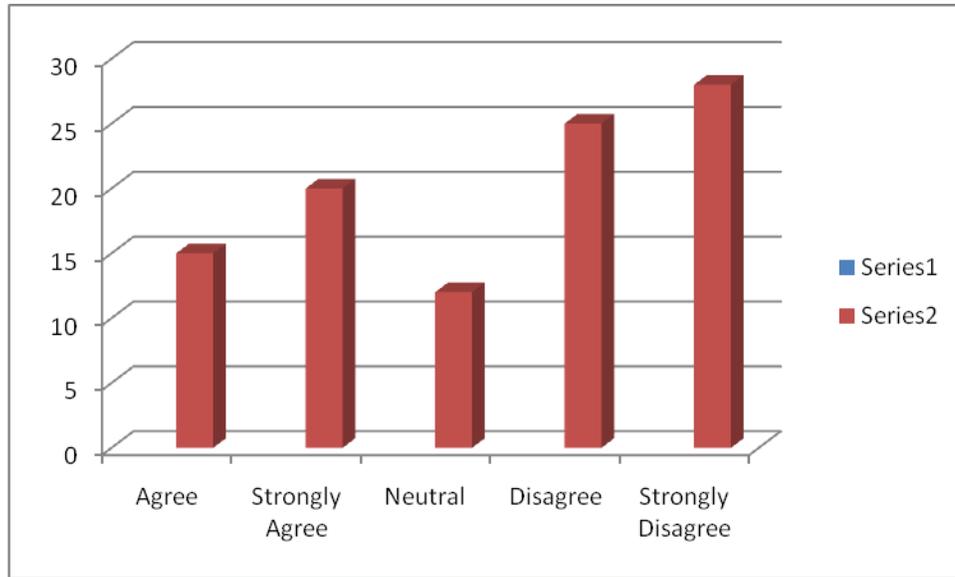
**Interpretation:** Bhutan is a tourists destination where the government is promoting accommodation and infrastructure development. The destination is coming up with motels, hotels ,resorts f. Around 45% people agreed that Bhutan is providing quality accommodation.

### 13.Sustainable tourism has emerged as a key part of national sustainability policies and strategies.



**Interpretation :** The above data shows that Bhutan is destination where it is upcoming in terms of sustainability and emerging with sustainability polices and strategies to frame certain rule and regulation to preserve the destination, where not only the government of Bhutan but private sectors and ngo also plays a vital role. So 56% tourists agreed that sustainable tourism has emerged as a key factor.

#### 14. Bhutan has achieved significant success in protecting traditional cultural practices.



**Interpretation:** 20% tourists agreed that Bhutan has achieved success in protecting the traditional cultural practices and festival to retain and attract tourists .so 28%responses shows that Bhutan is trying its level best to bring up its culture and heritage.

## FINDING, SUGGESTION AND CONCLUSION

### FINDING

- The findings from the study show that Bhutan is a destination which ensures and practices sustainable tourism and enhances quality tourism.
- Bhutan government takes initiatives to promote and market tourism all over the world and set the destination for future.
- The study also shows that Bhutan has created a lot of job opportunities and upgraded the socio-economic standards of the country.
- The study also shows that Department of Tourism has conducted several training courses for guides and has instituted a system of licensing cultural and trekking guides. All guides employed by any tour operator in Bhutan have to be licensed. This ensures that all guides have basic training in trekking and mountaineering techniques and are briefed on all aspects of tourism in Bhutan with special emphasis on the environmental and cultural issues.
- Bhutan's tourism potential is considerable with comparative advantages in many areas to ensure economic growth and diversification. Cultural tourism, eco-tourism and adventure/sports tourism (rafting, canoeing, climbing) which are based on the country's natural beauty, biodiversity and unique and distinct culture offer numerous opportunities for further development of the industry
- The future sustainability of tourism will depend largely on the effective functioning of the Department of Tourism and the industry association (Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators).

## SUGGESTIONS

- Bhutan aspires to be a knowledge-based society with a good grounding of sustainable development concept and principles.
- Key economic sectors are predominantly nature-based and, therefore, sustainable productivity of the natural environment is crucial for economic development;
- A very positive state of natural environment with a healthy population to natural resource ratio;
- Political stability and social harmony;
- A young democracy opening up new opportunities for participatory socio-economic development;
- A governance system rooted in traditional structures together with modern institutions that provide platforms for people's participation in the decision-making at all levels.
- To reduce the use of non-renewable and polluting sources of energy and given that hydropower is a national resource, hydropower is made available at affordable rates

## CONCLUSION

Bhutan is in economic terms highly dependent of tourism. E-tourism is in this report assessed as a mean to maintain the current positive development in tourism and as a driver for extending tourism to new markets. Effective use of information, communication, distribution and transactions through the new media, such as the Internet, can lead to an increased level of economic activity in the tourism sector in Bhutan. Also, the indirect economic impacts on transportation, accommodation and the retail/ handicraft industry can be substantial. The macro-economic impacts of e-tourism in terms GDP growth, improvement of the foreign exchange balance, and increased employment are in this report described in three scenarios based on a forecasted annual increase in tourism by 15%. In the event driven scenario where the Bhutanese tourism industry manages to increase the number of bed nights per tourist and their consumption by 15% and to increase the number of international arrivals by 5%, there is a short term increase in the GDP output from the tourism sector and the dependent sectors by 22.4%, an improvement of the foreign exchange balance by 1.2 million USD, and an increase in the employment in the tourism sector .The IT-infrastructure in Bhutan is being expanded through satellite technology but as of 2006, it lacks high speed connection at the various entry points, particularly among the approximately 200 tour operators managing tours for tourists