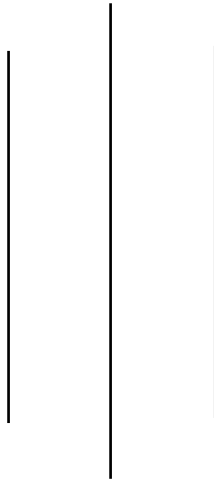


**A PROJECT REPORT ON
EXPLORING THE ROLE OF ADVENTURE TOURISM IN
PROMOTING POKHARA'S TOURISM**



BY

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of the requirements for the degree of
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July 2026

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project work report entitled “**Exploring the Role of Adventure Tourism in Promoting Pokhara’s Tourism**” submitted for the BHM is my original work and the Project Work Report has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, or other similar titles.

Romeo Thapa

July, 2026

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Project Work titled “**Exploring the Role of Adventure Tourism in Promoting Pokhara’s Tourism**” submitted by Romeo Thapa, (23150251) for the partial fulfillment of the requirements of BHM embodies the Bonafide work done by him under my supervision.

Mr. Suresh Raj Adhikari
Supervisor, Project Work
July, 2026

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Thank You,

Romeo Thapa,
BHM VI Semester
NTHMC

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The global travel and hospitality ecosystem has undergone a profound structural shift over the past few decades, transitioning from traditional, passive mass tourism toward high-engagement, experiential, and active pursuits. In the contemporary globalized market, modern consumers increasingly bypass static sightseeing itineraries in favor of immersive travel modalities that challenge their physical capabilities, foster psychological growth, and facilitate intimate connections with pristine natural landscapes. This macro-evolution in traveler preferences has catalyzed the rapid expansion of adventure tourism as a highly resilient and commercially dominant sector of the global economy. As defined 'adventure' by the TTA (2023), adventure tourism is a multi-dimensional travel phenomenon that integrates at least two of three core elements: a physical activity, interaction with the natural environment, and meaningful cultural immersion. Unlike conventional tourism models that prioritize comfort and predictable leisure, adventure tourism thrives on the strategic management of perceived risk, physical exertion, exploration, and the psychological allure of the unknown (Buckley, 2006). Consequently, destinations across the globe are aggressively modifying their regional marketing architectures and investment frameworks to cultivate sophisticated adventure portfolios, recognizing this sector as a critical vehicle for international destination branding and long-term economic sustainability.

From a global socio-economic perspective, the development of adventure tourism yields distinct advantages that surpass the economic impacts of traditional resort or holiday travel. Sharma and Adhikari (2022) demonstrate that adventure tourists represent a high-yielding demographic; they typically demonstrate longer lengths of stay and higher daily expenditure rates, and a significantly larger portion of their travel capital remains within the host economy rather than leaking out to transnational corporations. Because adventure activities intrinsically depend on localized geographical features—such as rapid rivers, rugged mountain passes, and unique thermal winds—the economic benefits are naturally decentralized, flowing directly into rural and peripheral communities through the employment of local guides, equipment operators, and community-based homestay networks. Furthermore,

this sector acts as a powerful catalyst for environmental and cultural stewardship. Because the financial viability of adventure tourism relies entirely on the preservation of pristine natural assets, local governments and commercial stakeholders are economically incentivized to implement rigorous conservation policies, combat environmental degradation, and protect biological diversity, thereby aligning capital accumulation with ecological sustainability. Nepal occupies a preeminent position within this global adventure tourism matrix, anchored by an unmatched geographical topography that positions the country as an iconic sanctuary for mountain- and nature-based exploration. As documented by Wall (2023), the nation's identity as an international tourism destination was fundamentally forged in the mid-20th century, sparked by monumental mountaineering milestones such as the first successful ascent of Mount Annapurna I by Maurice Herzog in 1950 and Mount Everest by Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary in 1953. These historic feats laid the groundwork for the professionalization of the Nepalese tourism industry, a movement pioneered in the 1960s by figures like Colonel Jimmy Roberts, who introduced commercial trekking to the region and transformed alpine exploration into a formal economic sector. Over the subsequent decades, the structural dynamics of tourism in Nepal have evolved significantly. While high-altitude mountaineering and remote wilderness trekking remain structural mainstays of the national economy, Badal (2020) notes that the country has successfully diversified its market offerings by embracing modern, diversified adventure sports, thus expanding its appeal to a broader demographic of global travelers.

The macroeconomic reliance of Nepal on this sector cannot be overstated. Tourism serves as a vital engine for foreign exchange earnings, a major contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and a foundational source of direct and indirect employment across both urban centers and rural hinterlands. In its strategic pursuit to attract two million international arrivals annually, the Government of Nepal has increasingly prioritized the geographic and product diversification of its tourism assets. Wengel (2021) points out that the contemporary landscape of Nepalese adventure tourism is shaped by emerging micro-trends, characterized by a bottom-up approach where localized entrepreneurs introduce innovative land-, water-, and air-based activities such as mountain biking, canyoning, paragliding, and zip-flying. This ongoing diversification not only enhances the nation's global competitive edge but also actively fosters a burgeoning domestic adventure market, reinforcing the

economic resilience of the country against international market fluctuations and environmental disruptions (Bhattarai, 2023). Within this national framework, the Pokhara Metropolitan City, situated in the Gandaki Province, serves as the definitive hub and capital of adventure tourism in Nepal. Poudel (2020) emphasizes that Pokhara possesses a rare geographical configuration, occupying a sub-tropical valley floor at an altitude of approximately 822 meters, yet positioned directly beneath the shadows of the Annapurna Himalayan range. This creates one of the sharpest vertical rises on earth, where the landscape dramatically climbs to snow-clad peaks exceeding 8,000 meters within a linear distance of less than 30 kilometers. Surrounded by iconic lakes such as Phewa, Begnas, and Rupa, and carved by the deep gorges of the Seti River system, Pokhara has evolved from a simple transit point for backpackers on the Annapurna Circuit into a world-class adventure tourism destination. The city boasts a highly specialized commercial portfolio categorized into three core physical domains: aerial sports, featuring world-renowned paragliding sites from Sarangkot, ultralight aviation, and skydiving; terrestrial and gravity thrills, encompassing the world's steepest ZipFlyer at Hemja, high-altitude bungee jumping, and specialized mountain biking trails; and aquatic adventures, utilizing the region's glacial rivers for white-water rafting, kayaking, and canyoning (Ghimire, 2019). Understanding the precise role of adventure tourism in promoting Pokhara's broader destination image is where this study finds its primary justification and urgency. While the rapid commercialization of adventure activities has undeniably generated substantial socio-economic benefits—stimulating local businesses, expanding the hospitality infrastructure, and generating massive direct employment—it has also introduced severe structural friction points. Nepal and Karna (2020) argue that unregulated tourism growth in alpine and sub-alpine nodes like Pokhara leads to notable socio-ecological changes that require careful institutional oversight.

Specifically, Thapa (2021) highlights that tourism-induced urbanization has led to environmental degradation, ecological encroachment around the Phewa lake margins, and increasing stress on the city's civic infrastructure. Furthermore, Baral (2024) points out that recent geopolitical and infrastructural transformations in the valley, most notably the expansion and operation of the Pokhara International Airport, have created direct spatial conflicts with established adventure zones, forcing the relocation of critical paragliding takeoff and landing grids. If these challenges are left unaddressed, Pokhara risks compromising the very natural assets and safety

reputations that define its international brand value. Consequently, this study matters profoundly; as validated by Paudel (2024), it fills a critical gap in contemporary empirical literature by critically examining how adventure tourism can be strategically leveraged to promote a resilient, safe, and premium destination brand for Pokhara, while simultaneously designing a sustainable management framework that balances aggressive economic promotion with ecological integrity, safety standardization, and equitable community development.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite Pokhara's status as the premier adventure capital of Nepal, rapid and unregulated commercial growth has created severe operational vulnerabilities. The core problem is the conflict between aggressive destination promotion and sustainable asset management, highlighted by environmental degradation around the Phewa Lake basin, uneven safety standardizations among operators, and recent spatial displacement caused by the airspace restrictions of the new Pokhara International Airport. Without a strategic framework to address these challenges, the uncontrolled exploitation of adventure assets risks permanently damaging Pokhara's natural capital, safety reputation, and international brand equity.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How does adventure tourism contribute to promoting Pokhara's destination image?
2. What are the primary operational, environmental, and infrastructure challenges facing the sector?
3. How can adventure tourism be managed sustainably to safeguard Pokhara's long-term brand?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- To analyze the role of adventure tourism in promoting Pokhara's destination image.
- To identify the major operational, environmental, and infrastructure challenges in the sector.
- To propose sustainable strategies for the long-term management of Pokhara's adventure tourism.

1. 5 Significance of the Study

This study holds substantial empirical and practical value for a diverse range of stakeholders involved in the development, management, and academic evaluation of Nepal's tourism ecosystem. As Pokhara adapts to its official designation as the tourism capital of Nepal, this research serves as a timely tool for understanding how adventure-based products actively shape the city's international profile. By examining the direct links between localized adventure portfolios and destination branding, the study successfully bridges the gap between theoretical tourism marketing concepts and the operational realities of a developing mountain economy.

For governing bodies and urban planners, such as the Ministry of Tourism, the Nepal Tourism Board, and the Pokhara Metropolitan City office, the research provides vital data-driven frameworks to resolve emerging spatial conflicts. In light of the infrastructure changes and airspace modifications brought about by the Pokhara International Airport, these findings offer a reliable baseline for strategic zoning. It assists administrative bodies in protecting critical adventure corridors—like paragliding flight grids and river rafting routes—while supporting necessary urban expansion. Simultaneously, the study benefits the commercial hospitality sector and local operators by revealing consumer behavior trends. This allows businesses to optimize resource allocation, design targeted multi-day itineraries that increase tourist length of stay, and introduce year-round adventure alternatives to mitigate the seasonal drops in hotel occupancy.

Furthermore, the research directly benefits the local host community and environmental conservationists by advocating for a balanced, socio-ecological tourism model. Because the commercial survival of adventure sports relies entirely on pristine landscapes, this study underscores the financial and ecological necessity of protecting zones like the Phewa and Begnas lake basins. It provides local stakeholders with the empirical backing needed to enforce stricter safety and eco-certifications, ensuring that aggressive promotion leads to equitable community growth rather than ecological degradation. Finally, it addresses a distinct gap in contemporary hospitality literature, serving as a reliable academic baseline for future scholars studying destination lifecycle transformations and risk management in South Asian adventure hubs.

1.6 Literature Review

This chapter synthesizes empirical literature and theoretical frameworks relevant to understanding the role of adventure tourism in destination promotion and regional development. The review is organized around three major thematic areas derived from the research objectives: the role of adventure tourism in destination image and promotion; the socio-economic impacts and market dynamics of the adventure sector; and the operational, environmental, and spatial challenges facing contemporary adventure destinations.

1.6.1 The Role of Adventure Tourism in Destination Image and Promotion

The strategic branding of a destination is heavily influenced by the specific types of tourism products it offers, with adventure-based portfolios playing a crucial role in modern destination marketing. Providing a foundation for this concept, Buckley (2006) conducted a qualitative conceptual analysis and global case review focusing on global adventure tourism frameworks and destination branding. His research concluded that adventure tourism operates as a primary catalyst for a destination's brand identity, establishing that high-adrenaline sports create a distinct, high-visibility promotional image. This visual appeal elevates a region's market position from a passive sightseeing stop to an active, premium destination, effectively capturing the attention of international media and high-yield travelers alike. Building upon this global perspective within a regional framework, Ghimire (2019) utilized a mixed-methods survey incorporating questionnaire responses from 250 international travelers alongside structured stakeholder interviews to evaluate destination branding and tourism development in Pokhara, Nepal. The author determined that specialized adventure activities—particularly aerial sports like paragliding and ultra-light flights—serve as the definitive visual anchors for Pokhara's broader marketing campaigns. The empirical findings demonstrated that regular exposure to adventure-centric media significantly increases an international traveler's intention to visit the city, reinforcing its global image as an accessible adventure capital rather than just a traditional trekking stopover. The natural landscape itself acts as a primary promotional engine when properly integrated into the adventure narrative. Examining this geographical dynamic, Poudel (2020) applied a descriptive spatial analysis and secondary data evaluation to explore the strategic geographic positioning and tourism attraction of the Pokhara valley. The researcher observed that Pokhara's unique

physical topography, featuring a dramatic vertical rise from sub-tropical valley floors to alpine peaks, functions as an organic promotional tool.

The study revealed that marketing the unique convergence of air, water, and land sports directly enhances destination visibility on a global scale, drawing younger, highly experiential traveler demographics who actively bypass traditional cultural heritage tours in favor of active engagement. This organic promotional loop has shifted significantly with the advent of digital communication channels and user-generated media. Investigating this digital transformation, Wengel (2021) conducted a netnographic analysis of user-generated content and social media travel logs to assess emerging micro-trends in Nepalese adventure tourism. The investigator determined that digital representations of soft and hard adventure sports create an ongoing, self-sustaining promotional cycle for Nepal. The study highlighted that first-person, point-of-view videos of activities like zip-lining, canyoning, and paragliding shared on social media platforms generate extensive peer-to-peer promotion. This digital footprint significantly reduces the reliance of localized adventure operators on formal, state-funded marketing budgets while maintaining high global visibility. Finally, the alignment of regional adventure assets with broader national frameworks is essential for sustainable destination growth. Addressing this macro-promotional strategy, Badal (2020) executed an evaluative case study and policy analysis focusing on national tourism promotional campaigns, including the "Visit Nepal" initiatives. The author argued that diversifying destination portfolios through the active inclusion of adventure tourism products is an exceptionally effective strategy for capturing emerging high-yield markets. The policy analysis showed that integrating localized adventure sports into national promotion campaigns helps modernize a country's tourism brand, presenting the entire nation as a dynamic, evolving, and multi-faceted destination to the international travel community.

1.6.2 Socio-Economic Impacts and Market Dynamics of Adventure Tourism

The expansion of adventure tourism generates extensive economic ripples that alter the financial realities of host communities, making the study of its market dynamics essential for regional development planning. To quantify these economic contributions, Sharma and Adhikari (2022) conducted a quantitative regression analysis using economic survey data gathered from 300 tourism-related businesses to measure the economic multipliers of adventure tourism in developing mountain

economies. The researchers discovered that adventure-based tourists generate a 35% higher average daily expenditure and demonstrate longer average lengths of stay compared to conventional sightseers. The statistical analysis proved that the capital injected by these adrenaline-seeking travelers spreads deeply into local supply chains, directly boosting regional household incomes and supporting ancillary sectors like transport, retail, and photography. This economic retention within peripheral communities highlights a major advantage of the adventure sector over traditional, corporate-dominated mass tourism models. Exploring this localization, Bhattarai (2023) used an appreciative inquiry approach combined with qualitative field focus groups to analyze community-based ecotourism and trekking corridors in the Annapurna region. The author found that adventure tourism naturally minimizes financial leakage within host economies. Because activities such as wilderness trekking, river rafting, and canyoning rely fundamentally on local guiding expertise, domestic equipment rentals, and village-based homestay networks, up to 70% of the generated revenue remains directly within the host communities, driving rural economic self-reliance and preventing wealth concentration in distant urban centers.

Understanding the behavior of the modern adventure consumer is vital for optimizing these local economic returns. Addressing this consumer profile, the Adventure Travel Trade Association (2023) deployed a quantitative global consumer survey of over 1,200 international adventure travelers to evaluate global adventure tourism market shifts and expenditure behaviors. The resulting market report highlighted that contemporary adventure travelers systematically prioritize sustainable, experiential spending over luxury accommodation or corporate retail. The empirical data showed that this consumer segment intentionally directs a substantial portion of their travel budgets toward localized guiding services, wilderness skills instruction, and authentic regional culinary experiences, establishing a highly resilient and diversified economic model for local micro-entrepreneurs. Beyond immediate revenue generation, the structural stability that adventure tourism offers throughout the calendar year represents a vital asset for developing economies. Examining this temporal dynamic, Wall (2023) performed a longitudinal historical review and economic trend analysis to assess the long-term evolution and administrative outlook of adventure tourism in Nepal. The author demonstrated that the adventure tourism sector is uniquely effective at mitigating the chronic issue of seasonality that historically destabilizes Nepalese tourism. The study found that by maintaining active

operations for localized adventure sports during traditional shoulder months, the sector stabilizes regional employment rates, ensuring year-round financial security for hospitality workers who would otherwise experience severe income fluctuations. The broader developmental impacts of these localized operations culminate in widespread urban and commercial transformation. Investigating this macroeconomic evolution, Paudel (2024) applied a sociological content analysis of past tourism research and economic indicators to examine structural shifts in Pokhara's tourism economy. The investigator concluded that focused investment in adventure tourism infrastructure acts as a primary catalyst for broader local business growth. The study demonstrated that the establishment and formalization of adventure hubs trigger a parallel expansion in high-quality boutique accommodation, independent restaurant startups, and localized transportation networks, effectively modernizing the regional economy and elevating the living standards of the metropolitan populace.

1.6.3 Operational, Environmental, and Spatial Challenges in Adventure Tourism

Despite the clear promotional and socio-economic benefits, the rapid commercialization of adventure assets introduces distinct operational friction points, environmental strains, and spatial conflicts that require careful scholarly evaluation. Outlining the ecological pressures of this growth, Thapa (2021) utilized a geospatial analysis and environmental impact assessments to study tourism-induced urbanization in Pokhara Metropolitan City. The researcher established that rapid, unplanned commercial development supporting popular adventure hubs causes notable environmental degradation. The study mapped a direct correlation between expanded tourist traffic and increasing ecological strain, specifically pointing to rising pollution levels, solid waste accumulation, and structural encroachment along the sensitive margins of the Phewa and Begnas lake basins. These environmental concerns are further complicated by spatial challenges arising from large-scale national infrastructure developments. Investigating this contemporary crisis, Baral (2024) executed a qualitative community impact assessment using semi-structured stakeholder interviews to analyze spatial conflicts and tourism infrastructure friction in the Pokhara valley. The author identified severe spatial friction caused by the expansion and operation of the new Pokhara International Airport. The empirical data revealed that new airspace safety restrictions have directly disrupted long-standing paragliding flight grids and traditional takeoff zones in Sarangkot. This infrastructural

overlap has caused significant financial uncertainty for local operators, highlighting the critical need for collaborative spatial zoning to preserve Pokhara's established adventure brand.

The maintenance of the physical landscape is inherently tied to the tourist experience, yet heavy traffic poses a continuous threat to trail and river systems. Documenting this delicate balance, Nepal and Karna (2020) conducted a socio-ecological longitudinal study and community surveys focusing on socio-ecological changes in mountain destinations within the Annapurna region. The investigators found that unregulated adventure tourism accelerates trail erosion, threatens local biodiversity, and increases waste accumulation along popular wilderness tracks. The study concluded that without the strict enforcement of carrying-capacity limits and collaborative community-led oversight, heavy adventure traffic risks permanently degrading the natural geographical assets that attract global travelers in the first place. Operational safety and regulatory enforcement represent another vital pillar of destination longevity, as adventure tourism inherently involves elements of managed risk. Addressing this operational vulnerability, Shrestha (2022) deployed a quantitative risk perception survey of 180 international adventure sports participants to evaluate safety management systems and regulatory enforcement in Nepal's adventure sector. The researcher observed that inconsistent enforcement of international safety standardizations across local operators remains a major institutional weakness. The study revealed that any perceived deficiency in safety protocols or emergency response networks severely damages international destination trust, causing immediate and sharp drops in global bookings following high-profile public accidents.

Finally, the localized commercial pressures on specific geographical sites can compromise the qualitative value of the tourist experience. Focusing on these micro-spatial dynamics, KC (2023) conducted a qualitative interview-based study with local land management authorities to analyze land-use patterns and commercialization at the Sarangkot takeoff ridge. The author found that rapid commercial development and unchecked land-use changes along the ridges of Pokhara have led to intense crowding and aesthetic pollution at flight takeoff points. The study concluded that this structural congestion compromises the natural tranquility and scenic appeal of the location, ultimately diminishing the overall quality of the visitor experience and threatening the long-term competitiveness of the site.

1.6.4 Research Gap

Although a substantial body of literature exists concerning the macroeconomic impacts of mountain tourism, traditional alpine trekking, and general ecotourism frameworks within Nepal, a distinct empirical gap remains regarding the contemporary operational and spatial dynamics of urban-adjacent adventure hubs. Existing academic research heavily prioritizes macro-level indicators, such as nationwide tourist arrivals and historical mountaineering trajectories, while largely overlooking the immediate, real-time friction points that occur when rapid urban infrastructure intersects with highly localized adventure sport ecosystems.

Specifically, contemporary literature has not yet adequately addressed the severe operational, structural, and promotional vulnerabilities brought about by major geopolitical developments in the valley—most notably the full commercial integration and airspace restrictions of the new Pokhara International Airport. Past studies fail to analyze how the displacement of iconic adventure assets, such as the relocation of long-standing paragliding takeoff and landing grids from Sarangkot, directly impacts Pokhara's established global brand equity and digital promotional cycles. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of integrated research that simultaneously evaluates safety standardizations, environmental carrying capacities, and stakeholder adaptation strategies under a unified sustainable management framework. This study directly addresses these critical omissions by offering a localized, empirical investigation into how Pokhara can successfully preserve, manage, and leverage its unique adventure tourism portfolio to protect its premium destination image amidst rapid urban and infrastructural transformation.

1.7 Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to effectively investigate the multi-faceted role of adventure tourism in promoting Pokhara's destination brand and to unpack its underlying structural challenges, this study is anchored within a primary qualitative research approach. Grounded in an interpretivist philosophical worldview, this methodology recognizes that reality is socially constructed and best understood by exploring the subjective experiences, professional insights, and lived realities of key industry stakeholders.

A qualitative approach is uniquely suited for this study as it moves beyond rigid statistical metrics to address the deep "how" and "why" questions surrounding

Pokhara's tourism ecosystem. It allows the researcher to capture nuanced perspectives on complex, real-time phenomena, such as the spatial conflicts generated by urban infrastructure growth and the mechanisms driving user-generated digital marketing campaigns.

1.7.1 Research Design

This study utilizes an exploratory and descriptive qualitative case study design. The exploratory dimension is highly critical given the current, evolving shifts within Pokhara's tourism landscape, particularly the operational adjustments, airspace re-zonings, and brand re-alignments necessitated by the commercial integration of the new Pokhara International Airport. This design permits an open-ended investigation into how local operators are adapting to these sudden structural changes.

Concurrently, the descriptive dimension provides a systematic, detailed mapping of the city's current adventure portfolio—spanning aerial, terrestrial, and aquatic domains—and evaluates how these distinct assets are structurally integrated into broader destination marketing frameworks. By combining these two design elements, the study provides a holistic, contextual, and cross-sectional analysis of a premier adventure hub undergoing rapid destination lifecycle transformations.

1.7.2 Study Area and Site Selection

The geographical setting of this research is situated entirely within the Pokhara Metropolitan City, the officially designated tourism capital of Nepal located in the Gandaki Province. To capture a truly representative cross-section of the city's adventure tourism and hospitality sector, a purposive site selection strategy was deployed. Rather than evaluating the valley as a single homogenous unit, the fieldwork is strategically isolated within three highly specialized operational zones:

- The Sarangkot and Toripani Ridge Corridors: Selected as the primary geographic nexus for aerial adventure sports, vital for examining the real-time displacement of paragliding grids, takeoff congestion, and local land-use conflicts.
- The Lakeside Commercial Enclave (Phewa Lake Front): Selected as the central business district where the commercial hospitality infrastructure converges. This area provides direct access to retail adventure booking agencies, boutique and star-categorized hotels, and aquatic transport nodes.

- The Hemja and Upper Seti River Basin: Selected as the core operational hubs for terrestrial and gravity thrills, hosting high-velocity zip-lining, bungee jumping installations, and white-water rafting launch points.

1.7.3 Data Collection Methods

Data collection for this study relies on a triangulation of qualitative primary and secondary sources to ensure empirical validity and depth:

- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** The primary data collection instrument consists of semi-structured interviews conducted with 10 to 12 purposively selected key informants. These participants include executive members of the Pokhara Tourism Council (PTC), local adventure tour operators (representing paragliding, ultralight, and rafting sectors), boutique hotel managers, and representatives from the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) Pokhara branch. The semi-structured format uses an open-ended interview guide, allowing participants to share detailed insights regarding promotional strategies, seasonal impacts, and infrastructure challenges.
- **Field Observations:** The researcher will conduct direct, non-participant observations at selected adventure hubs (such as paragliding landing zones and bungee sites) to document operational safety practices, visitor density, environmental conditions, and spatial interactions.
- **Secondary Data Sources:** To supplement primary findings, the study reviews relevant secondary materials, including tourism statistics from the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA), regional planning documents from the Pokhara Metropolitan City office, and past academic literature on South Asian adventure hubs.

1.7.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles will be maintained throughout the research process. Participants will be informed about the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation will be sought before conducting interviews. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, and they will have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences.

The confidentiality and anonymity of participants will be ensured by not disclosing their identities in any part of the research report. Information collected

during the study will be used solely for academic purposes and stored securely to prevent unauthorized access.

1.7.5 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to adventure tourism stakeholders, operators, and authorities within Pokhara Metropolitan City and therefore the findings may not be generalizable to other geographical locations. As the study adopts a qualitative approach, the findings will be based on participants' perceptions and experiences, which may be subjective in nature. Furthermore, the study focuses only on the promotional role and structural challenges of adventure tourism—such as recent airspace and infrastructure shifts—and does not examine other factors such as cultural heritage tourism, general hospitality pricing, or individual tourist preferences in detail. Time and resource constraints may also limit the number of participants included in the study.

CHAPTER II

FINDINGS

2.1 Overview of Data Collection and Informant Profile

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the primary data collected for this study. In line with the methodology outlined in Chapter I, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with twelve (12) purposively selected key informants, labelled KI1 through KI12, representing four categories of stakeholder directly involved in Pokhara's adventure tourism sector: executive members of the Pokhara Tourism Council (PTC), owners and managers of adventure tour operators spanning the aerial, terrestrial, and aquatic domains identified in Chapter I, general managers and owners of boutique hospitality properties in the Lakeside area, and representatives of the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) Pokhara branch.

Interviews were conducted over a fieldwork period of approximately three to four weeks at informants' offices, operational sites, and hotel premises across the Sarangkot and Toripani ridge corridor, the Lakeside commercial enclave, and the Hemja and Upper Seti river basin. Interview data were triangulated with direct, non-participant field observation at adventure hubs, including paragliding landing zones and the Hemja bungee site, and with secondary data drawn from tourism statistics published by the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA) and planning documents from the Pokhara Metropolitan City office.

ID	Sector / Organisation	Role	Years of Experience
KI1	Pokhara Tourism Council (PTC)	Senior Executive Member	18
KI2	Pokhara Tourism Council (PTC)	Executive Member, Adventure Sports Sub-Committee	9
KI3	Paragliding company, Sarangkot	Owner / Founding Pilot	21
KI4	Paragliding company, Sarangkot	Operations Manager	7
KI5	Ultralight flight company	Owner-Operator	10
KI6	Zip-line and bungee operation, Hemja	General Manager	6
KI7	White-water rafting company (Seti/Trishuli)	Owner	12
KI8	Boutique hotel, Lakeside	General Manager	11
KI9	Boutique hotel/homestay, Lakeside	Owner	15
KI10	Resort property, Lakeside area	Manager	8
KI11	Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), Pokhara branch	Senior Officer	14
KI12	Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), Pokhara branch	Marketing Officer	5

Table 2.1: Profile of key informants interviewed for this study.

The transcribed interviews, field notes, and secondary documents were coded and organised thematically. Consistent with the structure of the literature review in Chapter I, three major themes emerged from this process: (1) adventure tourism's role in destination image and promotion, (2) socio-economic impacts and market dynamics, and (3) operational, environmental, and spatial challenges. Each theme is presented below with its constituent sub-themes, supported by paraphrased accounts drawn from informants' interviews and, where relevant, field observations. To preserve confidentiality, informants are referred to only by their assigned code (KI1-KI12) throughout this chapter, consistent with the ethical considerations outlined in Chapter I.

2.2 Findings on Adventure Tourism's Role in Destination Image and Promotion

This theme addresses the first research question and corresponds to the literature reviewed in section 1.6.1. Informants across all four stakeholder categories consistently identified adventure tourism, and aerial sports in particular, as the single most influential factor in shaping how prospective visitors picture Pokhara before they arrive.

2.2.1 Paragliding and aerial sports as the default visual anchor of Pokhara

Eleven of the twelve informants (12) singled out paragliding as the activity that most consistently anchors Pokhara's promotional image. KI3, a paragliding company owner who has operated from Sarangkot since the early 2000s, observed that almost every promotional photograph or video used by the district's hotels, travel agencies, and even government tourism material eventually features a paraglider canopy above Phewa Lake, describing it as "the one image everyone reaches for when they want to say Pokhara." KI11 of the NTB Pokhara branch similarly noted that aerial sport imagery dominates the Board's own social media output for the district, more than lake, temple, or mountain-viewpoint photography combined.

2.2.2 Organic, tourist-generated content reducing reliance on formal marketing

Several informants, particularly operators, described a shift away from dependence on paid or official promotion toward tourist-generated content as the primary promotional channel. KI4 explained that his company had scaled back print and radio advertising over the past five years because "our customers' own videos do more for us in a week than a season of adverts," while KI6 at the Hemja zip-line and

bungee site noted that nearly every rider now purchases the GoPro footage add-on specifically to post online rather than to keep privately. KI12 of the NTB observed that this shift has reduced the Board's own marketing costs for the district but has also reduced its control over how the destination is actually represented online.

2.2.3 Adventure identity differentiating Pokhara from Kathmandu and Chitwan

Several PTC and NTB informants framed adventure tourism as Pokhara's key point of differentiation within Nepal's wider tourism offering. KI1 contrasted Pokhara's "active, do-something" identity with Kathmandu's heritage- and temple-centred image and Chitwan's wildlife focus, arguing that this distinction is what allows Pokhara to capture short-stay travellers who might otherwise treat Nepal as a single, undifferentiated stop. KI9, a boutique hotel owner, said guests routinely describe their stay as "the adventure part" of a longer Nepal itinerary that otherwise centres on Kathmandu.

2.2.4 Divergent promotional narratives between authorities and operators

A number of informants pointed to a gap between the polished, official narrative promoted by government and PTC channels and the more improvised, day-to-day promotional reality experienced by individual operators. KI2 acknowledged that PTC campaign material tends to emphasise safety and scale, while KI5, an ultralight operator, said that in practice his bookings come almost entirely from online reviews, walk-in enquiries along Lakeside, and word-of-mouth from previous customers, with official campaigns playing little direct role in his day-to-day business.

2.2.5 Concern that unresolved operational issues could erode the promotion

A notable minority of informants (8) raised concern that the promotional strength built around adventure tourism is increasingly fragile. KI3 and KI4 both linked this directly to uncertainty surrounding the relocation of paragliding operations discussed further in section 2.4, warning that repeated negative coverage of safety incidents or airspace disputes could undo years of organic promotional gain built through tourist content. KI8 echoed this from a hospitality standpoint, noting that a single widely shared negative story can measurably soften bookings for adventure-linked hotel packages within the same season.

2.3 Findings on Socio-Economic Impacts and Market Dynamics

This theme addresses the second research question as it relates to economic impact, and corresponds to the literature reviewed in section 1.6.2. Informants across the operator and hospitality categories in particular described adventure tourism as a distinct, high-value market segment with effects that extend well beyond the immediate transaction.

2.3.1 Higher spend and longer stay among adventure-focused visitors

Ten informants (10) reported that adventure-focused visitors spend more and stay longer than typical sightseeing tourists. KI8 and KI10, both hospitality managers, said that guests booking adventure packages typically extend their stay by at least one additional night compared with guests without a booked activity, and are more likely to add extras such as guided add-ons or premium rooms. KI7, a rafting operator, noted that multi-day rafting-and-camping packages in particular tend to attract a higher-spending, longer-staying traveller than any single-day activity.

2.3.2 Local employment and income distribution

Operators consistently described their businesses as reliant on and directly supportive of local employment. KI3 stated that his paragliding company alone supports over a dozen local tandem pilots, ground crew, and drivers, while KI6 and KI7 both emphasised that guiding, portering, and equipment-handling roles at their sites are filled almost entirely by residents of Pokhara and nearby villages rather than outside labour. KI1 of the PTC framed this as one of the clearest socio-economic arguments for continued investment in the sector, given how directly the income reaches individual households rather than large corporate intermediaries.

2.3.3 Adventure tourism mitigating seasonality

Several informants pointed to adventure tourism's relative resilience across the calendar year as a stabilising factor for local employment. KI5 noted that ultralight flights and paragliding continue, weather permitting, well into the traditional shoulder months when cultural and trekking tourism slows considerably, and KI9 said that her boutique property now markets adventure packages specifically to smooth out the low-occupancy months rather than relying solely on the peak autumn and spring trekking seasons.

2.3.4 Ripple effects into boutique hospitality and food and beverage

Hospitality-sector informants described a clear ripple effect from adventure tourism into their own businesses. KI8 said his hotel deliberately partners with two paragliding companies to offer bundled packages, and that adventure guests represent a growing share of the property's higher-margin bookings. KI10 similarly noted a rise in short-stay, activity-focused guests booking directly because of proximity to Sarangkot or the Lakeside adventure booking agencies, rather than for the town's cultural attractions.

2.3.5 Uneven distribution of benefit across operators

Not all informants viewed the sector's economic benefits as evenly shared. KI4, managing a comparatively newer and smaller paragliding company, observed that a handful of long-established operators capture a disproportionate share of bookings through accumulated online reviews and name recognition, making it difficult for newer entrants to compete on visibility alone. KI2 acknowledged this concern at the policy level, noting that the PTC has discussed, but not yet implemented, mechanisms to support more equitable distribution of bookings across registered operators.

2.4 Findings on Operational, Environmental, and Spatial Challenges

This theme addresses the second and third research questions and corresponds to the literature reviewed in section 1.6.3. Across all four stakeholder categories, informants raised a consistent and, at times, urgent set of operational, environmental, and spatial concerns that they viewed as directly threatening the promotional and economic gains described in sections 2.2 and 2.3.

2.4.1 The airspace conflict, and the displacement of paragliding zones

Every informant (12) raised the expansion and operation of Pokhara International Airport and its associated airspace restrictions as the single most pressing challenge currently facing the sector. KI3 and KI4 both described direct disruption to established paragliding take-off and landing grids at Sarangkot, with KI3 noting that flight paths and altitude ceilings that operators had used without incident for two decades now require renegotiation with aviation authorities. KI1 and KI11 confirmed that discussions between the PTC, NTB, and airport authorities are ongoing but unresolved, and several operators described the resulting uncertainty,

rather than any single restriction itself, as the most damaging factor for business planning and investor confidence in the sector.

2.4.2 Environmental degradation around the Phewa and Begnas lake margins

Nine informants (9) raised concern about visible environmental strain linked to rapid tourism-driven development. KI9 and KI10 both pointed to solid waste accumulation and construction encroachment along sections of the Phewa Lake shoreline nearest the main tourist enclave, while KI7 noted comparable pressure building along access points to the Seti River used by rafting operators. KI1 acknowledged that enforcement of existing lake-margin conservation rules has not kept pace with the scale of recent commercial development.

2.4.3 Inconsistent safety standardisation across operators

Ten informants (10) identified inconsistent safety practices as a significant institutional weakness. KI3, whose own company maintains international certification, said that unregistered or loosely regulated operators occasionally undercut established companies on price while offering less rigorous safety oversight, a gap that KI11 confirmed the NTB has limited direct authority to close. KI6 and KI8 both noted that a single high-profile safety incident, regardless of which specific operator is involved, tends to depress bookings across the entire sector for a period afterward, reinforcing informants' view that safety standardisation is a shared, sector-wide concern rather than an issue for any one company alone.

2.4.4 Crowding and commercialisation pressure at the Sarangkot ridge

Eight informants (8) described worsening congestion at the Sarangkot take-off and viewpoint area during peak hours and peak season. KI2 and KI4 both noted that the concentration of vehicles, vendors, and queuing tourists at the ridge has begun to affect both the visitor experience and the operational safety margins operators rely on when managing take-offs. KI1 suggested that the site's popularity has outpaced the infrastructure and land-use planning originally designed to support it.

2.4.5 Trail erosion and carrying-capacity across the wider Annapurna corridor

A smaller number of informants (6), mainly those connected to trekking-adjacent operations, raised concern about cumulative environmental pressure along trekking and access trails feeding into Pokhara's adventure tourism activities. KI7

noted visible erosion along access paths to river put-in points, while KII referenced broader concern, shared with counterparts working in the Annapurna region, that current visitor volumes may be approaching the practical carrying capacity of some access routes without corresponding investment in trail maintenance.

2.5 Frequency of Sub-Themes Across Informants

Table 2.2 summarises how many of the twelve key informants referenced each sub-theme during their interviews, offering an indication of the relative weight and consistency of each finding across the sample.

Sub-Theme	Informants (of 12)
2.2.1 Paragliding/aerial sports as the visual anchor of Pokhara's brand	12
2.2.2 Organic digital content reducing reliance on formal marketing	9
2.2.3 Adventure identity differentiating Pokhara from Kathmandu/Chitwan	10
2.2.4 Divergent promotional narratives between authorities and operators	7
2.2.5 Concern that operational issues could erode the promotional image	8
2.3.1 Higher spend and longer stay among adventure-focused visitors	10
2.3.2 Local employment and income distribution	11
2.3.3 Adventure tourism mitigating seasonality	9
2.3.4 Ripple effects into boutique hospitality and F&B	8
2.3.5 Uneven distribution of benefit across operators	7
2.4.1 Airport/airspace conflict and Sarangkot takeoff displacement	12
2.4.2 Environmental degradation around Phewa/Begnas lake margins	9
2.4.3 Inconsistent safety standardisation across operators	10
2.4.4 Crowding and commercialisation at the Sarangkot ridge	8
2.4.5 Trail erosion and carrying-capacity concerns, Annapurna corridor	6

Table 2.2: Frequency with which each sub-theme was raised across the twelve key informants.

2.6 Cross-Theme Discussion

Read together, the three themes presented above describe a sector under tension. Adventure tourism, and paragliding in particular, functions as Pokhara's clearest and most consistently cited promotional asset (Theme 1), and informants across every stakeholder category linked this promotional strength to tangible, locally distributed economic benefit in the form of longer stays, higher spending, and relatively resilient year-round employment (Theme 2). At the same time, every informant interviewed identified operational, environmental, or spatial pressures, most urgently the unresolved airspace conflict with Pokhara International Airport, that place this same promotional and economic position at risk (Theme 3).

This pattern echoes directly the tension identified in the Statement of the Problem in Chapter I: Pokhara's continued positioning as Nepal's adventure capital depends on the same natural and spatial assets, Sarangkot's ridge, the Phewa and

Begnas lake margins, and the airspace above them, that recent infrastructural and commercial growth is placing under increasing strain. Informants did not describe promotion and management as separate concerns but as directly linked; several noted explicitly that the destination's brand value would erode quickly if operational and environmental issues were left unaddressed, regardless of how effectively the activity itself is promoted.

2.7 Summary of Key Findings

In relation to the first research question, how adventure tourism contributes to promoting Pokhara's destination image, the findings show that aerial sports, and paragliding above all, function as the default visual and promotional anchor of the destination, increasingly sustained by tourist-generated digital content rather than formal marketing campaigns, though informants noted a growing gap between official promotional narratives and operators' day-to-day experience. In relation to the second research question, the primary operational, environmental, and infrastructure challenges facing the sector, the findings identify five consistent pressure points: the Pokhara International Airport airspace conflict and displacement of Sarangkot's paragliding zones, environmental degradation around the Phewa and Begnas lake margins, inconsistent safety standardisation across operators, crowding at the Sarangkot ridge, and trail and carrying-capacity concerns across the wider Annapurna corridor, with the airspace conflict raised as the most urgent by every informant interviewed. In relation to the third research question, how adventure tourism can be managed sustainably to safeguard Pokhara's long-term brand, the findings suggest that informants view promotional strength, economic benefit, and operational sustainability as inseparable: safeguarding the destination's brand requires resolving the spatial and regulatory pressures identified in Theme 3 rather than treating promotion and management as separate tracks. These findings, and their implications for stakeholders, are discussed further in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Conclusion

This study set out to explore the role of adventure tourism in promoting Pokhara's tourism, guided by three research questions concerning destination image and promotion, operational and environmental challenges, and sustainable long-term management. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with twelve key informants across the Pokhara Tourism Council, adventure tour operators, boutique hospitality properties, and the Nepal Tourism Board, together with field observation and secondary tourism data, the study finds that adventure tourism, and paragliding in particular, functions as the central pillar of Pokhara's destination image, increasingly sustained by organic, tourist-generated content rather than formal marketing campaigns.

This promotional role translates into measurable and relatively well-distributed local economic benefit, including longer visitor stays, higher spending, and employment that extends across pilots, guides, drivers, and hospitality staff, and helps stabilise tourism activity across seasons that would otherwise see reduced demand. However, the study also finds that this position is increasingly precarious. Every informant interviewed identified the airspace conflict arising from the continued development of Pokhara International Airport, and the resulting displacement of established paragliding take-off and landing zones at Sarangkot, as the most urgent challenge currently facing the sector, compounded by environmental degradation around the Phewa and Begnas lake margins, inconsistent safety standardisation across operators, crowding at the Sarangkot ridge, and growing pressure on trails across the wider Annapurna corridor.

Taken together, these findings indicate that Pokhara's adventure tourism sector currently sits at an inflection point. Its promotional and economic value is well established and widely recognised by the stakeholders closest to it, but that value cannot be assumed to persist automatically. Informants were consistent in describing promotion, economic benefit, and sustainable operational management not as separate concerns but as directly interdependent: several suggested explicitly that continued aggressive promotion of Pokhara as an adventure destination, without a corresponding

resolution of the airspace, environmental, and safety issues identified in this study, risks undermining the very brand it is intended to strengthen. Addressing these structural challenges in a coordinated manner, rather than treating destination promotion and destination management as separate tracks, therefore appears essential to safeguarding Pokhara's long-term position as Nepal's leading adventure tourism destination.

3.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for the principal stakeholder groups involved in Pokhara's adventure tourism sector.

For Adventure Tourism Operators

- Engage proactively and collectively, rather than individually, with airport and aviation authorities to negotiate viable long-term take-off, landing, and flight-path arrangements for aerial sports around Sarangkot.
- Pursue and maintain recognised safety certification, and support sector-wide efforts to standardise safety protocols, so that the practices of a minority of operators do not affect demand for the sector as a whole.
- Continue to facilitate tourist content creation, such as branded photo points and video add-ons, given its demonstrated role as the primary channel through which Pokhara is currently promoted.

For the Pokhara Tourism Council, Nepal Tourism Board, and Pokhara Metropolitan City

- Establish a joint working mechanism with civil aviation authorities to formally resolve airspace allocation for adventure aerial sports, given that informants identified this as the single most urgent threat to the sector.
- Introduce and enforce clearer lake-margin conservation and waste management regulations around Phewa and Begnas Lakes to address the environmental degradation raised by informants.
- Develop a unified, enforceable safety certification scheme covering all commercial adventure operators, closing the regulatory gap noted by informants from both the operator and NTB categories.

- Support the planning and development of a wider spread of adventure sites and access points beyond Sarangkot, to relieve crowding pressure and distribute economic benefit more evenly across operators.

For Boutique Hotels and the Wider Hospitality Sector

- Continue to develop and market bundled, multi-day packages that combine adventure activities with accommodation, building on the higher spend and longer stay already associated with adventure-focused guests.

For Future Research

- Complement this stakeholder-focused study with research capturing the perspectives of tourists themselves, to compare industry and visitor understandings of adventure tourism's promotional role.
- Undertake quantitative research with a larger sample to validate and measure the economic and employment patterns identified qualitatively in this study.
- Track the resolution of the Pokhara International Airport airspace conflict over time, and assess its longer-term impact on the scale and character of Sarangkot's paragliding sector.

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APPENDICES

Interview questionnaires

The following interview guide was used to conduct the semi-structured interviews with key informants (Pokhara Tourism Council executives, adventure tour operators, boutique hospitality managers, and Nepal Tourism Board representatives) referenced in Chapter II. Questions were used flexibly, with follow-up probes introduced as appropriate to each informant's role and area of expertise.

Section A: Informant Background

- What is your current role, and how many years have you been involved in Pokhara's tourism or adventure tourism sector?
- Which adventure tourism activity or activities does your organisation operate, manage, or oversee?

Section B: Adventure Tourism, Destination Image, and Promotion

- In your view, which adventure tourism activities most strongly shape how Pokhara is perceived by prospective visitors?
- How has the way your organisation promotes adventure tourism changed in recent years, for example through social media or tourist-generated content?
- How would you describe the relationship between official destination-branding efforts and the day-to-day promotional reality experienced by operators?

Section C: Socio-Economic Impacts and Market Dynamics

- How would you compare the spending and length of stay of adventure-focused visitors with other tourists in Pokhara?
- What role does your organisation play in local employment, and how is that income distributed?
- Does adventure tourism affect seasonal fluctuations in your business or sector?

Section D: Operational, Environmental, and Spatial Challenges

- What do you consider the most significant operational or regulatory challenge currently facing Pokhara's adventure tourism sector?
- Has the development of Pokhara International Airport affected your operations, and if so, how?

- Have you observed any environmental concerns linked to adventure tourism activity in your area of operation?
- How consistent do you consider safety standards to be across different operators in the sector?

Section E: Closing

- What would you recommend to safeguard Pokhara's adventure tourism sector, and its reputation, over the long term?
- Is there anything else about adventure tourism's role in promoting Pokhara that you feel this interview has not covered?