

Exploring the Quality of Life Perceptions among Chinese Tourists in Pokhara

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Abstract

This study seeks to examine the influence of travel experiences in Pokhara on the Quality of Life (QoL) of Chinese tourists, with a focus on the notion that such experiences play a significant role in enhancing satisfaction across various dimensions of travel-related life domains. The investigation is grounded in the recollections of Chinese tourists following their most recent visit to Pokhara. To address the research objectives, a mixed-methods approach was employed. This involved conducting a survey of 400 Chinese tourists to assess their satisfaction levels and the importance ratings assigned to 14 key travel-related life domains, in addition to carrying out 25 in-depth interviews with Chinese tourists to gather qualitative insights. The data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis, which confirmed the study's hypothesis by demonstrating that both satisfaction and the importance ratings across the identified travel-related life domains significantly contribute to the overall life satisfaction of these tourists. The findings reveal that experiences in Pokhara substantially influence the QoL of Chinese tourists, affecting all assessed travel life domains. Based on these insights, the research concludes with practical recommendations for tourism operators in Pokhara. These strategies aim to enhance the well-being of Chinese tourists, thereby contributing to improved business performance and long-term sustainability within the local tourism sector.

Keywords: Chinese tourists, Overall life satisfaction, Domains of travel life, Experiences of travel trip, Quality of life (QoL)

Introduction

Background

Recent infrastructure developments in Nepal, driven by Chinese investments, have significantly transformed the tourism landscape in Pokhara, influencing the quality of life (QoL) perceptions among Chinese visitors. The rise of Chinese investments, particularly under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has improved accessibility and enhanced facilities, notably along the Nepal-China Friendship Highway, thereby enriching the travel experience for Chinese visitors and potentially elevating their QoL during their stay (Bhandari, 2019; Chan & Bhatta, 2021). These developments not only support Pokhara's economic growth but also play a vital role in improving cultural and natural site access, key factors that contribute to quality tourism experiences (Yu et al., 2021). Furthermore, the influx of younger, adventure-seeking Chinese tourists fosters cultural exchanges and strengthens bilateral ties, further enhancing their QoL perceptions during their visit to Pokhara (Xu et al., 2018).

Pokhara, cherished by Chinese tourists for its scenic beauty, adventure opportunities, and cultural significance, has seen enhanced connectivity with the inauguration of the new Pokhara International Airport (Khatiwada & Adhikari, 2021; Sharma, 2023). This connectivity, coupled with a diverse range of lodging options and continuous infrastructure improvements, continues to attract more visitors from China. Economic factors such as increasing disposable incomes and favorable visa-on-arrival policies have further spurred this growth, benefiting Nepal's economy while fostering meaningful cultural exchanges (Devkota, Paudel & Bhandari, 2021; Global Times, 2023).

However, the rapid increase in tourism underscores the need for careful and sustainable planning to address environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and infrastructure development. While improvements in infrastructure and accessibility are creating opportunities, there remains a growing need to ensure these practices align with sustainable tourism goals and environmental protection efforts (China National Tourism Administration, 2019; World Tourism Organization, 2020). Exploring the effects of these developments on the QoL of Chinese tourists is essential, as it provides insight into how tourism influences their well-being and their overall satisfaction during their visits. Given the rapid growth of Chinese tourism in the global market and its increasing presence in Nepal, understanding their experiences and challenges is vital for sustainable tourism strategies and policy development.

Statement of the Problem

While Nepal's tourism industry has seen substantial growth in terms of visitor numbers, it faces challenges in enhancing the average length of stay and daily expenditure, which are crucial for maximizing economic benefits. Despite significant infrastructure investments aimed at attracting tourists, there is a notable gap in data concerning tourists' expectations, happiness, and overall satisfaction (CINIC, 2019). This lack of data hinders efforts to attract higher-value tourists and achieve broader economic goals, such as extended tourist stays, poverty reduction, and improved quality of life for both locals and tourists. The recent surge in arrivals from China, coupled with the opening of the new Pokhara International Airport, underscores the need for a detailed examination of how these developments impact the Quality of Life (QoL) of Chinese tourists. A deeper understanding of their satisfaction levels, cultural perceptions, communication barriers, and expectations is critical. By addressing these factors, the tourism sector in Pokhara can enhance service quality, encourage longer stays, and increase spending among Chinese tourists.

Anticipating future growth, particularly from Chinese visitors, demands a thorough analysis of their needs and preferences. Such an analysis should inform a strategic shift in policy to enhance the overall quality of life for both residents and tourists and to sustainably grow the tourism sector. This study aims to dissect the factors contributing to both satisfaction and dissatisfaction among Chinese tourists in Pokhara. It seeks to uncover their expectations and areas where service could be improved, providing actionable insights that could help in refining the tourism experience, attracting high-value tourists, and fostering sustainable development within Pokhara's tourism industry.

Research Questions

This study seeks to refine our understanding of how Pokhara can better serve Chinese tourists by examining key aspects of their experiences. The research will explore the demographic profiles of these tourists and what draws them to Pokhara. It will evaluate their satisfaction with accommodations, attractions, and services, and identify the factors that most influence their overall satisfaction. Additionally, the study will assess how these experiences affect their perceived quality of life during their visit. Insights from this research are intended to help develop strategies that enhance the travel experience in Pokhara, benefiting both tourists and the local community.

Objectives of the Study

This research aims to enhance the tourism experience for Chinese visitors in Pokhara, Nepal, by aligning it with their specific preferences and expectations, thereby contributing to an improved quality of life during their visit. By systematically analyzing demographic characteristics, satisfaction levels, and the critical determinants influencing their experiences, the study seeks to identify strategic opportunities to enhance Pokhara's appeal to this key demographic. Such efforts are vital for promoting sustainable tourism development that simultaneously supports local communities and strengthens the region's tourism industry.

Specific Objectives:

- a. To profile the demographic characteristics of Chinese tourists, including variables such as age, gender, occupation, educational background, and travel motivations.
- b. To assess the levels of satisfaction experienced by Chinese tourists across various dimensions of their visit.
- c. To investigate the key factors influencing the satisfaction of Chinese tourists with their experiences in Pokhara.
- d. To evaluate the extent to which the travel experiences of Chinese tourists impact their perceived quality of life during their stay in Pokhara.

Significance of the Study

Despite extensive research on Chinese tourism in destinations like Pokhara, there remains a notable gap in understanding how travel experiences influence the Quality of Life (QoL) of Chinese tourists. Existing studies predominantly emphasize quantitative metrics such as tourist arrivals, length of stay, and expenditure, which fail to comprehensively capture the broader impacts of travel experiences on QoL. This research seeks to address this gap by exploring the ways in which travel experiences in Pokhara shape the QoL of Chinese tourists, with a particular focus on the cultural, socioeconomic, and demographic factors that inform their perceptions and behaviors.

China's position as a rapidly expanding source market for tourism in Nepal underscores the importance of this study, particularly in the context of significant investments directed towards the development of Pokhara's tourism infrastructure. These investments, however, have not yielded proportional improvements in key indicators such as the average length of stay or tourist spending, suggesting a misalignment between industry offerings and tourist expectations. Furthermore, contemporary trends in tourism development increasingly prioritize QoL for both tourists and local stakeholders, underscoring the need for a deeper understanding of these dynamics.

This research aims to provide actionable insights for stakeholders, policymakers, and industry practitioners, equipping them to design strategies that enhance the experiences and QoL of tourists while fostering sustainable growth in Pokhara's tourism sector. By bridging the identified research gap, this study contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism and its role in improving the QoL of both visitors and host communities.

Literature Review

Tourism plays a vital economic and social role, generating employment and income, particularly in resource-scarce regions, while also promoting cultural exchange and heritage conservation. It facilitates the participation of local communities in economic activities and aids in the preservation of cultural identities. For tourists, it offers opportunities for psychological rejuvenation, cultural immersion, and personal growth, whereas residents benefit from improved infrastructure and services financed by tourism revenues. However, effective tourism development necessitates careful management of its environmental and cultural impacts.

Travel has been shown to significantly enhance happiness and quality of life, with active travel modes such as walking and cycling contributing to both physical and mental health (Martin, Goryakin, & Suhrcke, 2014). Additionally, travel behavior, including satisfaction derived from travel experiences, has a direct impact on well-being. Psychological well-being, strongly associated with life satisfaction and optimism, is also linked to reduced mortality. Furthermore, travel experiences can strengthen family bonds and contribute positively to overall life satisfaction (Sirgy et al., 2011).

Chinese tourists are often drawn to destinations like Nepal due to its cultural richness, scenic landscapes, and affordability, as highlighted in studies on travel expectations (Li et al., 2011). Key motivations include stress reduction, cultural immersion, and personal growth (Chen & Wang, 2019; Wu & Liu, 2017). Emerging trends in tourism emphasize niche markets, sustainability, and digitalization (Nepal Tourism Board, 2020; China Internet Network Information Center, 2019).

Tourism has been shown to significantly enhance quality of life through leisure activities (Shu & Zhu, 2009), and strategies aimed at increasing tourist satisfaction are known to boost intentions to revisit (Guntoro & Hui, 2013). Sustainable tourism, in particular, promotes local well-being while ensuring environmental preservation (Liao et al., 2016; Becken et al., 2017). Moreover, digital platforms increasingly influence travel experiences and contribute to overall well-being (Xu & Zhang, 2022).

Tourism research highlights its economic, social, and psychological benefits while advocating for sustainable practices and cultural sensitivity. However, a significant research gap exists concerning the specific preferences and satisfaction levels of Chinese tourists in Nepal. This study aims to address this gap, providing insights critical for designing inclusive and satisfying tourism experiences that align with sustainable development objectives in Nepal.

Research Methodology

Research Design

A mixed-methods approach integrated quantitative and qualitative data collection. A survey of Chinese tourists who recently visited Pokhara collected quantitative data using a five-point Likert scale, while in-depth interviews provided

qualitative insights. Data were analyzed using statistical and qualitative methods to identify patterns and relationships between travel experiences and quality of life.

Quantitative Analysis: The survey evaluated the perceived impact of various travel aspects (scenery, activities, cultural experiences, social interaction) on quality of life dimensions (physical health, mental well-being, social connection). Statistical analysis identified significant relationships between these travel aspects and quality of life indicators.

Qualitative Analysis: In-depth interviews with 25 Chinese tourists explored trip aspects that significantly impacted their quality of life. Thematic analysis identified key themes and factors enhancing the quality of life for Chinese tourists in Pokhara.

Study Area

The study area is Pokhara Lakeside in the Kaski district of Gandaki province, Nepal, attracting approximately 35,000 to 40,000 Chinese tourists annually. Its natural beauty, proximity to Phewa Lake, and Chinese cuisine-specialized hotels and restaurants enhance the tourist experience, providing a context for examining the quality of life during visits.

Theoretical Models of the Study

Tourism research highlights the importance of overall satisfaction in gauging the quality of life (QoL) experienced by tourists. Uysal et al. (2016) emphasized the positive impact of tourism experiences on life satisfaction across various domains. Destination attributes, such as accommodations, safety, and cultural opportunities, significantly influence tourists' satisfaction and perceived QoL, with service quality being a key area for enhancing satisfaction.

Social interactions and psychological well-being during travel are integral to tourists' satisfaction and QoL. Positive interactions foster a sense of belonging and well-being, while negative experiences can diminish perceived QoL. Research methods to assess the relationship between satisfaction and QoL include quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Key theoretical models for evaluating tourist satisfaction include Kano's service quality measure model (1984), Tse and Wilton's Perceived Performance model (1988), and Parasuraman et al.'s SERVQUAL model (1988). Additionally, the expectancy disconfirmation model (Pizam & Milman, 1993), the Holiday Satisfaction model (Tribe & Snaith, 1998), and the Performance Quality model (Baker & Crompton, 2000) have advanced understanding of tourist satisfaction. Yoon and Uysal (2005) discussed four primary theoretical approaches: disconfirmation theory, equity theory, norm theory, and perceived-only performance theory, emphasizing the importance of gap analysis in understanding the congruence between anticipated and actual experiences.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Rooted in consumer satisfaction theories, notably the Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory, and Theories of Subjective Well-being, this model offers a comprehensive approach to understanding tourist satisfaction. It posits that tourists' overall well-being during their travels is intricately linked to their satisfaction across various travel experience domains. Each domain is individually weighted to reflect its significance to the tourist, with satisfaction and importance measured on a five-point Likert scale. This approach acknowledges the multidimensional nature of tourist experiences and emphasizes the role of personal relevance in shaping overall satisfaction.

Overall tourist satisfaction is defined as the cumulative measure of the quality of life derived from all aspects of their travel experience. The model assesses the impact of 14 distinct travel domains (Figure 1) on a tourist's quality of life, providing a holistic view of their overall satisfaction. By synthesizing subjective evaluations across these domains, the model offers a detailed perspective on tourists' perceived well-being during their travels. This comprehensive evaluation gauges the success of the travel experience in meeting or exceeding tourist expectations and identifies areas for improvement. Ultimately, the model guides understanding of the factors contributing to tourist well-being, aiding strategic planning in tourism.

Sample Size

According to Nepal Tourism Statistics (2022), 930,754 Chinese tourists visited Nepal in the past decade, averaging 93,075 annually. The National Tourism Strategy Plan (2016-2025) states that 38 percent visited Pokhara, translating

to about 35,368 tourists annually. Using Yamane's (1967) formula with a 5 percent margin of error, the sample size was calculated as 396 and increased by 7 percent to 428 to ensure accuracy. Data collection took place from August 15 to September 15, 2023. The study used convenience and systematic sampling, identifying 16 top-rated Chinese restaurants, securing permissions, and scheduling surveys based on tourists' preferences, resulting in 400 valid responses.

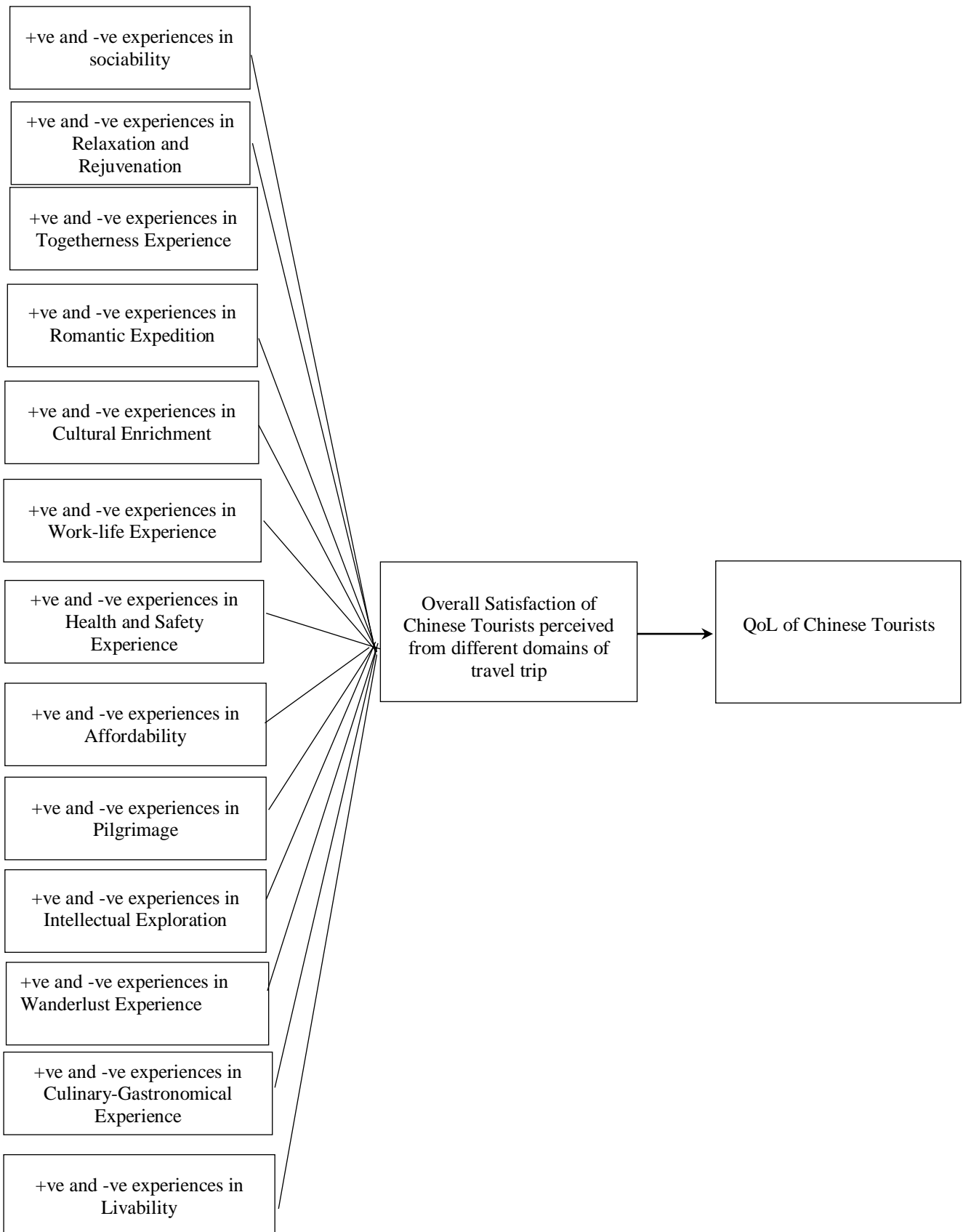


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework: Original Constructs of the Study

Model Specifications

The multiple regression model was designed to examine the impact of various explanatory variables on the overall satisfaction of tourists, covering a broad spectrum of travel-related domains.

$$\text{Overall Satisfaction (OAS)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{SOC} + \beta_2\text{RR} + \beta_3\text{ToE} + \beta_4\text{RE} + \beta_5\text{CE} + \beta_6\text{WE} + \beta_7\text{HS} + \beta_8\text{Af} \\ + \beta_9\text{Pl} + \beta_{10}\text{IE} + \beta_{11}\text{TE} + \beta_{12}\text{WE}_1 + \beta_{13}\text{CE}_1 + \beta_{14}\text{LIV} + \varepsilon \text{ (Error term)}$$

Where,

β_0 represents the baseline level of overall satisfaction when all explanatory variables are at their reference levels,

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_{14}$ are coefficient of explanatory variables (domains of travel trip).

ε (Error Term) is included to account for the variation in overall satisfaction not explained by the model's explanatory variables.

Measurement of quality of Life of Tourists

The model is operationalized through the following equation;

$$QoL = \frac{\sum_{n=1}^{14} (S_n \times I_n)}{\text{Maximum Possible Score}} \times 100\%$$

Where,

S_n = Satisfaction rating in the n^{th} domain.

I_n = Importance rating in the n^{th} domain.

Maximum Possible Score- The sum of the highest possible satisfaction ratings (5) multiplied by the importance ratings across all domains.

Where the maximum Possible Score was calculated as $= \sum_{n=1}^{14} (5 \times I_n)$

The instruments of data collection used were a combination of surveys and in-depth interviews.

Data Analysis Tools and Methods

For each respondent and domain, the importance score (I_{ij}) was multiplied by the satisfaction score (S_{ij}) to get the product score (P_{ij}): $P_{ij} = I_{ij} \times S_{ij}$. These product scores were then summed across all domains to get the total score for each respondent: $\text{Total Score}_i = \sum P_{ij}$. This total score was normalized to a scale of 0-100 using the formula: $QoLi = (\text{Total Score}_i / 350) \times 100$, allowing comparison across respondents.

The product scores for each domain were aggregated across all respondents to get the domain aggregate score: $\text{Domain Agg}_j = \sum P_{ij}$. This was divided by the number of respondents to get the average domain score: $\text{Avg Domain Score}_j = \text{Domain Agg}_j / n$. The average domain score was then normalized to a 0-100 scale using: $\text{Normalized Domain Score}_j = (\text{Avg Domain Score}_j / 25) \times 100$, ensuring comparability between domains.

Data Analysis and Results

Demographics and Visit Profile

Table 1 summarizes a comprehensive analysis of Chinese tourists' demographics, economic and travel behavior, preferences, and perceptions during their visits to Pokhara, a prominent tourist destination known for its natural beauty and cultural heritage. The data was gathered through a survey aimed at understanding the characteristics and preferences of this specific tourist segment to enhance service delivery and tailor marketing strategies more effectively.

The survey analyzed the demographics, economic behavior, preferences, and perceptions of Chinese tourists in Pokhara. Most tourists were male (58.3%) and had high educational levels, with many holding Bachelor's or Master's degrees. The income range was broad, predominantly between Rs. 25-50 thousand, and visit frequency showed a mix of first-time and repeat visitors. Main reasons for visiting were business and vacation, with stays typically lasting 1-2 weeks. Most tourists traveled by airplane and got information from social media, showing the influence of digital platforms.

Satisfaction levels were high, with 66.3 percent feeling satisfied or very satisfied, and memorable aspects included the culinary experiences and natural landscapes. The intention to revisit and recommend Pokhara was notably high, with 44.8 percent intending to revisit and 99.8 percent willing to recommend. The survey used convenience and systematic sampling, starting from identifying Chinese restaurants to connect with tourists. After excluding invalid responses, 400 valid responses were collected. The insights from the data highlight the importance of targeted marketing and service enhancements to cater to Chinese tourists.

Table 1: Demographics & Visit Profile of Chinese Tourists in Pokhara

Demographic Variable	
Gender	Male: 58.3%, Female: 41.8%
Age Distribution	18-24: 18.5%, 25-34: 27.8%, 35-44: 25.3%, >55: 28.5%
Employment Status	Student: 8.5%, Employed: 37.8%, Self-Employed: 25.3%, Retired: 28.5%
Education Level	School:5.3%, Bachelor: 41.0% Masters:36.5%, PhD: 10.0%, >PhD: 7.3%
Economic & Travel Behavior	
Income Range	(Rs. '000) <10: 15.3%, 10-25: 27.8%, 25-50: 39.8%, 50-75: 10.0%, >75: 7.3%
Visit Frequency	First Time: 27.5%, 1-2: 25.5%, 3-5: 36.5%, 6-7: 3.3%, >7: 7.3%
Purpose of Visit	Vacation: 15.3%, Business:37.8%, Education:15.3%, Spiritual: 24.5%, Others: 7.3%
Length of Stay	<1 Week: 27.5%, 1-2 Weeks: 36.8%, 2-4 Weeks: 25.3%, 1-2 Months: 3.3%, >2 Months: 7.3%
Preferences & Perceptions	
Transportation	Airplane: 48.8%, Bus: 25.5%, Car: 25.8%
Travel Companion	Alone: 15.5%, Friends: 24.3%, Family: 31.5%, Group: 21.3%, Others: 7.5%
Information Source	Online: 5.3%, Social Media: 47.8%, Agency: 22.5% , Recommendations from others: 21.3%, Print: 3.3%
Visit Satisfaction	Dissatisfied: 18.5%, Neutral: 15.3%, Satisfied: 42.8%, Very Satisfied: 23.5%
Memorable Aspects	Nature: 27.5%, Cleanliness: 15.5%, Friendly People: 25.3%, Hospitality: 3.3%, Culinary: 28.5%
Revisit Intentions	Disagree to revisit: 8.8%, Neutral: 24.0%, Agree: 44.8%, Strongly Agree: 22.5%
Recommendations	Yes: 99.8%, No: 0.2%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Model Analysis

The final model, with an R-squared value of 0.904, explained 90.4% of the variance in 'OAS'. Despite high explanatory power, residual normality issues necessitated ongoing evaluation. Post-transformation diagnostics showed improved residual normality, with a slightly adjusted R-squared value of 0.903 and the F-statistic confirming the model's statistical significance, demonstrating reliability and accuracy in explaining 'OAS' variability.

Table 2: Regression Output

Variables	Coefficient (Estimate)	Std. Error	t-value	P-value	95% Confidence Interval
Intercept (const)	-4.1877	0.121	-34.544	<0.001	(-4.426, -3.949)
Soc (Social factors)	0.0385	0.003	12.272	<0.001	(0.032, 0.045)
RR (Recreational activities)	0.0357	0.003	12.612	<0.001	(0.030, 0.041)
ToE (Tourism experiences)	0.0368	0.003	11.791	<0.001	(0.031, 0.043)
RE (Recreational environment)	0.0354	0.003	12.204	<0.001	(0.030, 0.041)
CE (Cultural environment)	0.0440	0.003	12.994	<0.001	(0.037, 0.051)
WE (Work environment)	0.0370	0.003	11.078	<0.001	(0.030, 0.044)
HS (Health and safety)	0.0471	0.003	14.713	<0.001	(0.041, 0.053)
AFF (Affordability)	0.0375	0.003	13.198	<0.001	(0.032, 0.043)
PIL (Peacefulness & quiet life)	0.0397	0.003	11.708	<0.001	(0.033, 0.046)
IP (Infrastructure and planning)	0.0337	0.003	11.164	<0.001	(0.028, 0.040)
TrE (Transportation efficiency)	0.0382	0.003	12.339	<0.001	(0.032, 0.044)
CE.1 (Cultural engagement)	0.0370	0.003	12.651	<0.001	(0.031, 0.043)
WE.1 (Weather conditions)	0.0382	0.003	12.210	<0.001	(0.032, 0.044)
LE (Livability)	0.0376	0.003	12.685	<0.001	(0.032, 0.043)

The model fit, with an R-squared value of 0.903, indicated that the model explained a large portion of the variance in the transformed dependent variable. The Box-Cox transformation parameter was approximately 1.205, suggesting a transformation close to the natural logarithm. The histogram of transformed residuals appeared more normally

distributed, indicating improved normality. The QQ plot showed that the transformed residuals followed the 45-degree line more closely, further suggesting improved normality. The plot of residuals versus fitted values did not show any clear patterns or heteroscedasticity, confirming a good model fit.

The regression summary showed that the coefficients remained positive and significant, and the overall model retained its statistical significance. Model diagnostics indicated that the transformation improved the normality of the residuals, a key assumption of linear regression. The estimated regression equation for fourteen variables is:

Overall Satisfaction (OAS)

$$OAS = -4.1877 + 0.0385(\text{Soc}) + 0.0357(\text{RR}) + 0.0368(\text{ToE}) + 0.0354(\text{RE}) + 0.0440(\text{CE}) + 0.0370(\text{WE}) + 0.0471(\text{HS}) + 0.0375(\text{AFF}) + 0.0397(\text{PIL}) + 0.0337(\text{IP}) + 0.0382(\text{TrE}) + 0.0370(\text{CE}_1) + 0.0382(\text{WE}_1) + 0.0376(\text{LE}) + \varepsilon$$

The final regression equation, including coefficients and test statistics, models the overall satisfaction (OAS) of Chinese tourists based on socio-economic, environmental, and lifestyle factors. Each coefficient indicates the expected change in OAS for a one-unit change in the corresponding variable, holding others constant. High t-values and low p-values suggest each factor is a significant predictor of OAS. Confidence intervals show the precision of these estimates. The regression output offers a detailed analysis of how various travel domains impact tourists' overall satisfaction.

Each domain, including social factors, recreational activities, and tourism experiences, significantly influenced tourist satisfaction. Positive coefficients indicated that improvements in these areas lead to higher satisfaction levels. The model's R-squared value of 0.903 demonstrated its effectiveness in explaining tourist satisfaction variance. Low p-values (<0.001) confirmed the statistical significance of all variables, proving these factors are crucial determinants of overall satisfaction. Health and safety, with the highest coefficient (0.0471), emerged as the most impactful domain. The residuals plot showed no patterns or heteroscedasticity, confirming the model's assumptions were met.

The analysis emphasized the need for a multifaceted approach to enhance tourist experiences. The model's robustness, shown by its high R-squared value and significant variables, highlighted the importance of these domains. Stakeholders should prioritize health and safety, cultural engagement, and affordability to improve tourist satisfaction.

Factors Influencing the Satisfaction of Chinese Tourists: Ranked by Impact

The Descending Order of Impact presents a hierarchy of domains based on their influence, from highest to lowest. This ranking system highlights the relative importance of various factors that affect overall well-being and quality of life.

- HS (Health and safety)	0.0471
- CE (Cultural environment)	0.0440
- PIL (Peacefulness and quiet life)	0.0397
- Soc (Social factors)	0.0385
- TrE (Transportation efficiency)	0.0382
- WE.1 (Weather conditions)	0.0382
- LE (Livability)	0.0376
- AFF (Affordability)	0.0375
- WE (Work environment)	0.0370
- CE.1 (Cultural engagement)	0.0370
- ToE (Tourism experiences)	0.0368
- RR (Recreational activities)	0.0357
- RE (Recreational environment)	0.0354
- IP (Infrastructure and planning)	0.0337

The investigation into the satisfaction of Chinese tourists visiting Pokhara revealed that health and safety, cultural environment, and peacefulness are the most influential factors. Health and safety emerged as the most significant factor, followed by cultural experiences and the serene environment of Pokhara. Affordability, infrastructure, and transportation efficiency were also found to be crucial for positive tourist experiences, while social factors, recreational activities, and tourism experiences had a lesser but still significant impact.

The hierarchical ranking based on impact showed that health and safety had the highest coefficient, indicating its paramount importance. Cultural environment and peacefulness were also highly influential, emphasizing the need for

a safe, culturally rich, and tranquil environment to enhance tourist satisfaction. Other factors such as affordability, infrastructure, and transportation efficiency play vital roles, with lower coefficients for social factors, recreational activities, and tourism experiences.

To enhance satisfaction among Chinese tourists, a comprehensive development strategy is essential. Prioritizing health and safety measures, promoting and integrating local culture, and improving infrastructure and affordability are key steps. Investments in efficient transport systems, affordable accommodations, and tourist-friendly amenities will further elevate the overall travel experience, ensuring a high level of tourist satisfaction.

Key Insights from the Analysis of Tourist Satisfaction

The Quality of Life (QoL) of Chinese tourists, as defined through the score categorization details, is a comprehensive measure derived from evaluating fourteen critical domains of their travel experience. These domains cover essential aspects like accommodation, transportation, and activities. The QoL score for each domain is calculated by multiplying two key metrics: The Importance Ranking and the Satisfaction Ranking, each on a 1 to 5 Likert scale. The Importance Ranking reflects the weight or significance a traveler places on each domain, while the Satisfaction Ranking indicates the level of satisfaction the traveler experiences in those domains. The product of these rankings for each domain provides a detailed view of the traveler's valuation and enjoyment of various aspects of their trip.

Table 3: Quality of Life (QoL) Scores of Chinese Tourists Across Categories

QoL Score Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low Score (14-55)	0	0.00%
Medium Score (56-125)	33	8.25%
High Score (126-223)	357	89.25%
Very High Score (224-250)	10	2.50%
Grand Total	400	100 %

The table presents a frequency distribution of Quality of Life (QoL) scores received by Chinese tourists, categorized into four distinct ranges. This distribution helps in understanding the perceived quality of life among tourists within the given score brackets. Here's an analysis of the table:

Recommendations for Enhancing the Tourism Experience

The concept of Quality of Life (QoL) in the context of tourism refers to the subjective well-being experienced by individuals as a result of their travel experiences. QoL is influenced by a variety of factors, including social relationships, recreational opportunities, cultural engagement, and personal fulfillment. Understanding the domain-wise QoL scores of Chinese tourists provides insights into the different aspects of their travel experiences and their overall satisfaction.

Table 4 presents the domain-specific quality of life insights for chinese tourists across 14 categories, including social relationships (Soc), recreation and relaxation (RR), cultural engagement (CE), health and satisfaction (HS), and leisure engagement (LE). The overall QoL score, average domain scores, and normalized percentages highlight variations in well-being, revealing the priorities and satisfaction levels of Chinese visitors. Analyzing these scores can help stakeholders identify areas for improvement to better meet the needs and expectations of this key tourist demographic.

Table 4: Domain-Specific Quality of Life Insights for Chinese Tourists

	Soc	RR	ToE	RE	CE	WE	HS	AFF	PIL	IP	TrE	CE ₁	WE ₁	LE
Overall QoL Score	5091	5139	4826	4949	4445	4690	4557	5458	4497	5027	4841	5132	4843	5052
Average domain score	12.72	12.84	12.06	12.37	11.11	11.72	11.39	13.64	11.24	12.56	12.10	12.83	12.10	12.63
Normalized domain score in %	50.91	51.39	48.26	49.49	44.45	46.9	45.57	54.58	44.97	50.27	48.41	51.32	48.43	50.52

To enhance travel satisfaction, travel companies should adopt a comprehensive approach that considers the economic, cultural, social, and logistical needs of Chinese tourists. Strategies such as creating cost-effective experiences through strategic pricing and added services, enhancing cultural engagements, and promoting opportunities for meaningful social interactions can significantly improve travel experiences. By offering immersive, authentic cultural activities and facilitating social connection opportunities, stakeholders can address the diverse factors influencing QoL and satisfaction. Focusing on affordability, cultural engagement, and the overall travel environment can thus enhance the quality of life for Chinese visitors, as indicated by the analysis of their domain-wise QoL scores.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that travel significantly enhances the Quality of Life (QoL) for Chinese tourists visiting Pokhara, positively influencing mental health, family relationships, and general happiness. These results align with Gong, Ji, and Rong (2021), who found that tourism contributes to improved mental well-being and family dynamics, and extend the findings of Liang and Hui (2016) by demonstrating that tourism development has multiple dimensions of impact on QoL.

The study highlights the critical role of service quality, consistent with the findings of Chen, Fu, and Lehto (2016), while also emphasizing the importance of cultural understanding and environmental sustainability as key determinants of tourist satisfaction. This study's novel methodological approach provides deeper insights into the relationship between travel experiences and QoL, offering a more detailed understanding of these dynamics. The findings underscore that strategic actions focusing on service quality, cultural sensitivity, and sustainable tourism practices are essential for enhancing Chinese tourists' QoL and overall satisfaction. Additionally, these factors address the economic, social, and cultural dimensions influencing the travel experience.

While the findings are robust, limitations such as the study's sample size and contextual variations in travel preferences should be considered when interpreting the results. These factors may limit the generalizability of the findings across other regions or populations.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Chinese tourists' QoL is significantly improved by their travel experiences in Pokhara, particularly through enhancements in mental health, family relationships, and happiness. Service quality, cultural sensitivity, and sustainable tourism practices were identified as the main drivers contributing to these QoL improvements. These findings emphasize the need for stakeholders to adopt integrated strategies that prioritize service quality, cultural understanding, and environmental responsibility to foster higher levels of satisfaction among Chinese visitors.

The findings offer practical and theoretical insights into the mechanisms through which tourism improves QoL, contributing to both the academic understanding of travel experiences and the strategic planning of tourism initiatives in Pokhara.

Recommendation

To enhance the quality of life (QoL) of Chinese tourists in Pokhara, it is crucial to improve service quality through comprehensive training for tourism operators. Services should prioritize cultural sensitivity, strengthen health and safety measures, and adopt sustainable tourism practices to ensure a secure, memorable, and enjoyable experience. Investments in improved transportation, accommodation, and recreational facilities will further elevate their overall visit. Additionally, establishing efficient feedback mechanisms will allow service providers to monitor satisfaction and adapt services accordingly. Digital platforms should be leveraged through targeted strategies, such as utilizing popular Chinese social media platforms like WeChat, to strengthen engagement and collect real-time feedback.

Immediate actions such as implementing real-time health monitoring systems in key tourist areas, collaborating with local communities to design authentic cultural tours tailored to Chinese preferences, and enhancing digital outreach through platforms like WeChat are vital. In the long term, strategies should focus on promoting sustainable tourism through eco-friendly accommodations and renewable energy initiatives and addressing communication gaps by developing multilingual support services. These combined efforts aim to ensure a sustainable, inclusive, and enjoyable tourism experience for Chinese visitors while benefiting the local community.

Areas for Future Research

While this study offers valuable insights into the QoL of Chinese tourists in Pokhara, further research is needed to explore additional dimensions. Future studies should investigate the long-term effects of repeat visits on QoL, compare QoL across different tourist destinations, and examine the role of digital platforms and online engagement in shaping satisfaction. Additionally, understanding how sustainable tourism practices impact mental well-being and analyzing the effects of varied travel experiences—such as group tours versus independent exploration—will provide a comprehensive understanding of factors influencing QoL. Addressing these gaps will support the development of effective tourism strategies and policies.

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