Analyzing the Evolution of Nepal's Tourism in 2022: Insights and Future Perspectives

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Abstract

This paper focuses into Nepal's internal aviation and tourism industries, underlining the essentiality of strategic planning. It investigates how Nepal's tourism sector has adapted to the global repercussions of COVID-19 and identifies successful strategies to increase tourism revenue following the pandemic. Through the application of both descriptive and inferential statistics, this research analyses data and visually conveys its conclusions. It emphasizes the importance of tailor-made marketing and promotional approaches designed for particular market segments and to exploit local strengths. The document evaluates recovery tactics post-COVID-19, the role of domestic tourism, and the need for upgrades in infrastructure and policies to foster the sustainable development of tourism in Nepal. The necessity for a cohesive approach among federal, provincial, and local governments to facilitate the proper allocation of resources and the execution of tourism initiatives is strongly advocated. The expansion of tourism-related infrastructure, including hotels with high star ratings and improved transport systems, is highlighted as a fundamental factor in supporting the surge of tourists to Nepal. The paper postulates that reinforcing economic development through policies favorable to the tourism industry will have a beneficial impact on international tourism. It urges a policy shift towards the improvement of tourism infrastructure and the adoption of technological innovations in its management.

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the quickly expanding sectors that contributes significantly to economic growth, job creation, and revenue generation (Dwyer et al., 2009; Bazargani & Kiliç, 2021). The tourism industry in Nepal is a vital component of the country's economy. Several research studies find that there is a nexus between the tourism industry and economic growth (Badulescu et al., 2020; Dhungana, 2023; Songling et al., 2019). It has been demonstrated that countries with relatively abundant natural resources will prioritize tourism and have faster rates of economic expansion (Sequeira & Maçãs Nunes, 2008). Due to the fact that it offers a variety of natural, cultural, social, and experiential items for travel and business, tourism has emerged as a key component of sustainable development in both developed and developing nations (Jayawardena et al., 2008).

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the global tourism industry, leading to unprecedented declines in travel and hospitality demand. In 2020, global tourist international arrivals experienced a

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dramatic drop of 95-98 percent during the peak months, setting back the tourism industry by decades (WTO, 2019). This global trend mirrors the challenges faced by Nepal, where tourism is a key economic driver. Nepal's adaptation to these challenges can learn from the global response, where technological innovation and policy adaptations have played a crucial role in the transformation and sustainability of tourism (Li et al., 2022).

In 2022, this sector underwent a period of recovery and adjustment due to the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The year 2022 observed a concerted effort to revive and reshape the tourism sector. Studies highlighted the potential of rural tourism and homestays in places like Chitlang, offering a blend of natural beauty, cultural richness, and biodiversity, which attracted visitors seeking authentic experiences (Acharya, 2022). Despite challenges such as low foreign tourist numbers and coordination issues between government authorities and local promoters, the potential of rural destinations in Nepal was increasingly recognized.

Historical analysis of Nepalese tourism revealed a turbulent journey marked by events such as the decade-long Maoist insurgency and the 2015 earthquake, framing the recent pandemic as the latest in a series of disruptions (Bhandari, 2022). The pandemic presented an opportunity for a more sustainable tourism path, with Nepal grappling to reorient its tourism model away from budget travel towards higher-value services, similar to its neighbor Bhutan (Nepal, 2022).

Furthermore, the potential of domestic tourism was increasingly considered as a viable alternative to international travel. The absence of robust strategies and policies, alongside travel restrictions and lack of tourism infrastructure, were identified as key barriers to the development of domestic tourism (Silwal et al., 2022).

In 2022, Nepal's tourism faced challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. The sector aims to recover by emphasizing sustainable and domestic tourism, addressing infrastructural hurdles, and focusing on rural and cultural attractions. Addressing the same, the study reviews economic implications, employment opportunities, and government initiatives to guide informed decisions for a resilient post-pandemic tourism industry in Nepal.

To effectively strategize Nepal's tourism recovery, it is crucial to undertake a comparative analysis with other countries. For instance, the tourism sectors in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European countries have shown varied impacts based on the relative importance of tourism to their economies (Stanišić et al., 2022). Nepal can glean valuable insights from these countries' recovery strategies, especially in areas of policy adaptation and stakeholder involvement. Hence, this study investigates Nepal's post-pandemic tourism recovery by assessing the effectiveness of revenue-boosting strategies, exploring domestic tourism potential, and addressing infrastructure and policy gaps for sustainable growth.

As the world moves towards recovery, there is a significant opportunity for Nepal to redefine its tourism model. The pandemic has highlighted the need for innovative solutions that prioritize sustainability and resilience. Embracing digital technologies and immersive tourism experiences, such as augmented reality and virtual tours, can not only enhance tourist experiences but also pave the way for sustainable tourism practices (Marvin et al., 2022). These innovations can help Nepal to diversify its tourism offerings and attract a new demographic of travelers.

This analysis aims to provide a detailed understanding of Nepal's tourism sector in 2022, including recent research findings, to offer a comprehensive overview of the industry's behavior and trends.

The objectives of this research are outlined as follows: (i) to evaluate the post-pandemic recovery strategies in Nepal's tourism industry, (ii) to analyze the role and potential of domestic tourism in Nepal, and (iii) to identify infrastructure and policy needs for sustainable tourism development.

2. Research Methodology
2.1. Research Design

The research methodology is structured to methodically examine various aspects of Nepal's tourism sector. It encompasses three primary objectives, each focusing on a different dimension of the sector. The methodology integrates a blend of quantitative and qualitative analyses, employing various data sources and analytical tools. The information used in the analysis came from two secondary sources. The main source was the Nepal Tourism Statistics 2022, and additional data was gathered from the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal.

2.2. Data Analysis Approach
2.2.1. Assessment of Post-Pandemic Recovery in Nepal's Tourism Industry

The analysis of tourist arrival trends involved an in-depth examination of the statistics regarding tourist arrivals, with a specific focus on comparing data from before and after the pandemic. This comparison was crucial to evaluate the path of the industry's recovery post-pandemic. Alongside this, an economic impact assessment was conducted, analyzing tourism-related revenue and foreign exchange earnings from 2020-2022. This analysis aimed to gauge the extent of economic improvement in the tourism sector.

Tools and Techniques

A combination of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques was employed. The tools and techniques used in this process included the application of statistical software, like SPSS, for a comprehensive descriptive analysis. This software enabled an in-depth examination and interpretation of data. Furthermore, data visualization played a significant role in clarifying these data trends.

2.2.1. Exploring the Role and Potential of Domestic Tourism in Nepal

The analysis focused on understanding the domestic tourism overview within the period of 2022-2023. The main focus was on analyzing the extent of domestic tourism, achieved by conducting a detailed review of domestic flight data and the movement of passengers. To identify trends within this sector, there was a careful examination of domestic air travel patterns. Additionally, a route popularity analysis was conducted. This involved comparing passenger numbers across various airlines, aiming to determine the most preferred domestic travel routes.

Tools and Techniques

Descriptive statistics were calculated to ascertain the central tendencies in domestic air travel, providing insights into the average trends. Furthermore, the visualization of these trends was crucial. This was achieved through the development of line graphs and bar charts.

2.2.1. Identifying Infrastructure and Policy Needs for Sustainable Tourism

A comprehensive review of the current state of tourism infrastructure was conducted, which included an assessment of hotels, transportation facilities, and tourist services. This helped in understanding the existing capabilities and limitations of the tourism sector. Furthermore, the analysis included a

thorough policy review. This included a review of current policy documents related to the growth of tourism, especially those focusing on sustainable methods.

Tools and Techniques

The approach taken in this study involved a variety of methods and instruments. Document analysis played a key role, involving an in-depth review and content analysis of various policy documents and infrastructure reports. This allowed for a thorough understanding of the policies influencing tourism development. This methodology aims to provide a holistic understanding of Nepal's tourism sector, focusing on post-pandemic recovery, the significance of domestic tourism, and the infrastructure and policy framework necessary for sustainable growth.

3.   **Data Analysis and Interpretation**
3.1. **Tourist Arrival Dynamics in Nepal (2021-2022)**

In 2022, tourist arrivals by air increased to 592,631, a significant rise of 293.4 percent compared to 150,625 in 2021. Arrivals by land showed an even more dramatic increase, soaring from just 337 in 2021 to 22,238 in 2022, an astonishing growth of 6498.8 percent. Overall, total tourist arrivals increased from 150,962 in 2021 to 614,869 in 2022, marking a 307.3 percent increase.

Figure 1

*Line Graph Showing Tourist Arrival Dynamics in Nepal (2021-2022)*

The average length of stay for tourists decreased from 15.5 days in 2021 to 13.1 days in 2022, a reduction of 15.5 percent. In terms of gender, the number of male tourists increased from 105,410 in 2021 to 358,683 in 2022, while female tourist numbers rose from 45,552 to 256,012 (MoCTCA, 2023).

Additionally, a marginal number of tourists (174) was recorded under 'others' in 2022. Age-wise, the data shows an increase across all groups, with the most significant rise in the 31-45 years category (from 64,164 in 2021 to 208,299 in 2022).
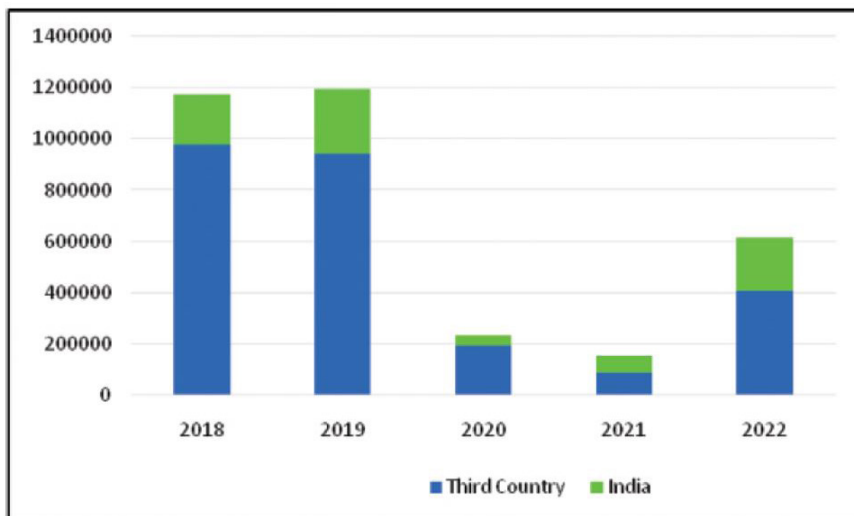
Figure 2

Tourist Arrivals by Age Group (2018-2022)
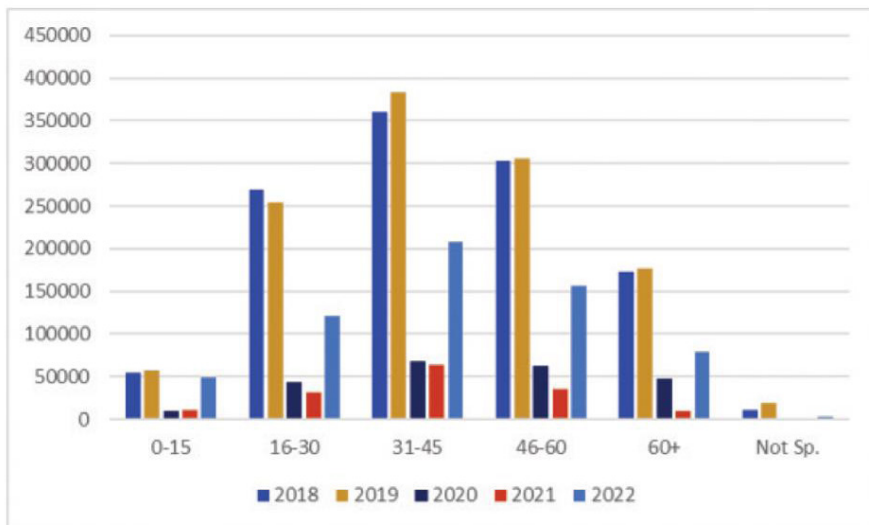
The top five countries of nationality in 2022 were India, USA, UK, Australia, and Bangladesh, with India remaining the top source country for two consecutive years.

Figure 3

Tourist Arrivals by Country,2018-2022

Infrastructure and Revenue Generation in Tourism (2021-2022)

In 2022, the number of starred hotels increased from 162 to 173, and non-starred hotels from 1183 to 1228. The total number of beds available for tourists rose by 9.4 percent from 48,412 to 53,365. The number of travel agencies increased by 25.6 percent, from 3801 to 4773, and trekking agencies by 11.2 percent, from 2821 to 3136. Similarly, the number of tourist guides and trekking guides increased to 4975 and 25483, respectively. Mountaineering expeditions saw a significant rise, with the total number of teams increasing from 762 to 1952 and the total number of persons from 3446 to 8459. The royalty revenue to the government also increased from Rs. 635,249,000 to Rs. 703,429,000. Tourism revenue showed a substantial increase, with total earnings rising from US$ 112,509,000 in 2021 to US$ 326,282,000 in 2022. However, the average expenses per visitor per day decreased from US$ 48 to US$ 40.5 (MoCTCA, 2023).

Popular Destinations and Airline Movements in Nepal (2021-2022)

The visits to national parks and wildlife reserves rose from 11,847 in 2021 to 75,608 in 2022. The Pashupati area saw an increase in visitors from 3,190 to 55,204, and Lumbini from 1,197 to 23,942. Trekking routes like Manaslu, Mustang, and Humla also experienced considerable growth. The international airlines' arrival and departure movements doubled in 2022, with arrivals increasing from 5,882 to 12,158 and departures from 5,878 to 12,154, indicating a significant boost in air travel connectivity to and from Nepal (CAAN,2022).

The detailed examination of the data vividly highlights a strong rebound and notable expansion in Nepal's tourism industry in 2022, succeeding the difficult times brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The main conclusions are summarized below:

Dramatic Increase in Tourist Arrivals: The most striking trend is the exponential increase in tourist arrivals. The year 2022 witnessed a 307.3 percent growth in overall tourist numbers, underpinned by a 293.4 percent increase in air arrivals and a staggering 6498.8 percent rise in land arrivals. This recovery can be attributed to the easing of travel restrictions and a global resurgence in travel interest post-pandemic.

Shift in Tourist Demographics and Behaviors: Despite the total increase in visitors, the average length of stay decreased by 15.5 percent, indicating a change in tourist behaviors, possibly due to lingering travel concerns or changing preferences for shorter trips. There was a notable rise in the number of male tourists, and significant increases were observed across all age groups, with the 31-45 age bracket showing the most significant growth.

Dominance of Certain Nationalities: India, the USA, and the UK consistently remained the top source countries, indicating enduring preferences and travel patterns. The emergence of Australia in the top five nationalities in 2022 suggests a diversification in Nepal's tourist demographic.

Expansion of Tourism Infrastructure: The growth in the number of hotels, beds, travel agencies, and trekking agencies indicates an expanding and adapting tourism infrastructure, ready to accommodate increasing numbers and diverse needs of tourists.

Financial Upsurge in Tourism Sector: The sector's financial health showed marked improvement, with substantial increases in revenue from tourism and royalty to the government from mountaineering. This financial boost reflects the sector's significant contribution to Nepal's economy.

Diversified Tourist Interests: Increased visits to national parks, wildlife reserves, and cultural sites,

along with popular trekking routes, reveal a diversified interest among tourists, extending beyond traditional sightseeing to include adventure and cultural tourism.

Enhanced Air Connectivity: The doubling of international airline movements signifies enhanced global connectivity and accessibility, crucial for the sustained growth of tourism. The data from 2021 to 2022 underscores a resilient and vibrant recovery of Nepal's tourism sector, marked by significant growth in tourist arrivals, infrastructural development, and financial gains. The trends suggest a positive outlook for Nepal's tourism, with a broadening of tourist demographics and interests, and enhanced global connectivity. This recovery not only highlights the sector's ability to bounce back from global crises but also points to its potential for future growth and diversification.

Pre-COVID (2018-2019): The flight movements were relatively stable, with a slight decrease from 95,567 in 2018 to 94,640 in 2019. Passenger movements were on the rise, with an increase from approximately 2.8 million in 2018 to over 3.3 million in 2019, indicating a healthy growth in domestic travel before the pandemic.

Table 1 :*Domestic Flights and Passenger Movements*

Year	Flight Movements (Total)	Passenger Movements (Total)
2018	95,567	2,847,786
2019	94,640	3,307,000
2020	38,598	1,405,777
2021	81,172	3,576,942
2022	108198	4,466,077
2023	96989	4,150,326

Source: ATSRO, ATS/SAR Division, 2023.

COVID-19 Impact (2020): The pandemic led to a dramatic reduction in flight movements, which plummeted to 38,598, and passenger movements, which fell to around 1.4 million. These numbers reflect the severe restrictions on travel imposed during the global health crisis.

Post-COVID Recovery (2021-2022): A significant recovery was observed in 2021, with flight movements nearly doubling to 81,172 and passenger numbers increasing to approximately 3.6 million. The year 2022 saw an even more pronounced recovery, with 108198 flight movements and passenger movements increased to 44,66,077. This suggests not only a rebound to pre-pandemic levels but also a potential for new growth.

Nepal's domestic aviation sector quickly bounced back after a significant downturn in 2020 due to COVID-19, showing resilience and surpassing pre-pandemic levels by 2022. This recovery reflects increased domestic travel confidence, effective pandemic control, and the travel industry's adaptability to demand surges. Factors contributing to this resurgence include relaxed travel restrictions, accelerated vaccination efforts, and pent-up travel demand, demonstrating the aviation industry's resilience and strategic adaptability.

The sector's positive course suggests continued growth, reinforced by recovering passenger confidence and the vital role of domestic flights in Nepal's economic development and tourism. Given Nepal's challenging geography, domestic flights are essential for connecting remote areas, and encouraging tourism, and economic activities, which in turn support overall economic growth.

Sustainable growth will require the aviation and tourism sectors to closely monitor travel patterns and ensure infrastructure, safety, and service quality can meet rising demands. Investments in airport facilities, staff training, and technology will enhance efficiency and the passenger experience. Additionally, the environmental impact of increased flights calls for exploring sustainable practices, such as fuel-efficient aircraft and carbon offset programs.

Nepal's economic recovery post-pandemic relies on domestic aviation trends, which serve as important indicators for the health of both the economy and the travel industry.

The positive data spanning from 2018 to 2022 highlights a hopeful trajectory of recovery and expansion, demonstrating the sector's successful navigation through challenges brought about by the pandemic.

Trends in Domestic Air Travel

Table 2 provides a month-wise breakdown of domestic flight and passenger movements during the year 2023. The table includes data on flight departures (DEP) and arrivals (ARR) as well as passenger movements both outbound (OUT) and inbound (IN). The total figures for flight movements and passenger movements are also presented.

Table 2

Month- wise Domestic Flight and Passenger Movement in 2023

| S.N.	MONTH	Flight movement			Passenger Movement		
		DEP	ARR	TOTAL	OUT	IN	TOTAL
1	JAN	3207	3204	6411	131083	128093	259976
2	FEB	3300	3292	6592	141949	138024	279973
3	MAR	4344	4348	8692	172430	174783	347213
4	APR	4552	4540	9092	179130	180654	359784
5	MAY	4772	4778	9550	186743	179303	366046
6	JUN	3702	3691	7393	169667	171725	341392
7	JUL	3218	3225	6443	155242	170496	325738
8	AUG	3131	3131	6262	155817	155239	311056
9	SEP	4134	4133	8267	171958	165121	337079
10	OCT	4984	4977	9961	212256	185774	398030
11	NOV	5128	5132	10260	203081	223193	426274
12	DEC	4038	4028	8066	185606	194144	379750
TOTAL		48510	48479	96989	2064962	2085364	4150326

Source: ATSRO, ATS/SAR Division, 2023.

The analysis of domestic air travel trends in Nepal for 2023 reveals distinct seasonal variations. Notably, the months of November, October, and March stand out with the highest levels of flight and passenger activity, suggesting a connection to holiday seasons and potentially business cycles.

Surprisingly, despite the summer break, June and July witness a significant dip in travel, particularly in the number of flights, possibly indicating unique travel trends in certain regions or specific airline strategies.

Figure 4

Flight and Passenger Movement (monthly) in 2023
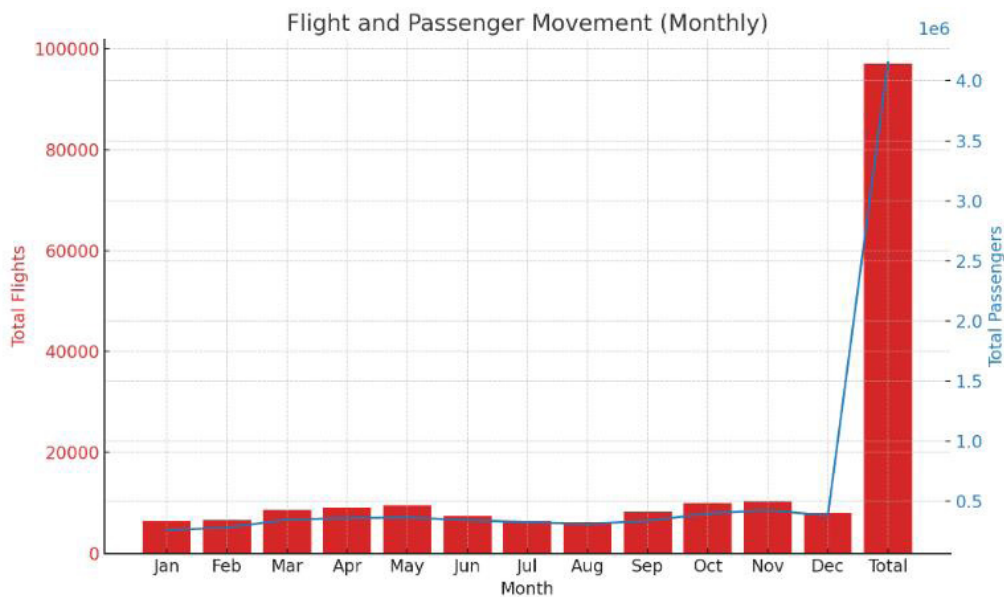
Airlines demonstrate efficient capacity management, maintaining a consistent passenger-to-flight ratio throughout the year. November sees a notable increase in both flights and passengers, likely due to holiday travel. Activity starts moderately in January and February, gradually escalating, possibly influenced by weather, economics, and holidays. Analysis of 2022 data from Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority identifies popular domestic routes based on passenger numbers.

Table 3

Domestic Flight to Passenger Movement Ratio for the Top Five Airports

Rank	Airport Name	Aircraft Movements (Total)	Passenger Movements (Total)	Flight to Passenger Movement Ratio
1	Pokhara	35,140	902,210	0.0389
2	Nepalgunj	16,330	566,700	0.0288
3	Biratnagar	13,613	764,208	0.0178
4	Gautam Buddha	12,640	687,070	0.0184
5	Chandragadhi	8,064	390,074	0.0207

Source: ATSRO, ATS/SAR Division, 2023.

Table 3 provides a comparative view of the top five airports, considering both aircraft and passenger movements. Pokhara shows a moderate ratio, indicating a balanced number of flights in relation to its high passenger volume. Nepalgunj and Chandragaddhi have slightly higher ratios, suggesting a good number of flights for their passenger counts. Gautam Buddha and Biratnagar have the lowest ratios, indicating that despite their high passenger traffic, they have relatively fewer flights, possibly pointing towards larger aircraft or higher passenger capacity per flight.

The analysis of Nepalese airports under Table 4 uncovers trends in flight and passenger movements, focusing on the flight-to-passenger ratio to gauge operational dynamics. Tenjing-Hilari Airport exhibits the highest ratio (0.271) with 53,009 flights to 195,479 passengers, suggesting a high flight frequency against passenger numbers possibly due to cargo flights or touristic significance. Simikot Airport follows with a ratio of 0.264, indicating its service to regional flights. Phaplu and Taplejung airports show moderate ratios of 0.174 and 0.171, respectively, serving remote areas with frequent but less crowded flights. Ramechhap Airport, with a ratio of 0.148, caters to regional connectivity and tourism. From the finding it can observed that Tenjing-Hilari and Simikot airports demonstrate high flight frequencies relative to passenger volumes, reflecting their regional and touristic importance.

Table 4

The Top Five Airports with Highest Flights to Passenger (F/P) Ratio.

| Rank	Airport Name	Flight Movements (Total)	Passenger Movements (Total)	Flight to Passenger Movement Ratio
1	Tenjing-Hilari	53,009	195,479	0.271
2	Simikot	7,528	28,516	0.264
3	Phaplu	1,809	10,377	0.174
4	Taplejung	504	2,945	0.171
5	Ramechap	2,350	15,852	0.148

Source: Nepal Tourism Statistics, 2022.

Additionally, 2022 data highlights Pokhara, Biratnagar, and Gautam Buddha as top domestic destinations due to tourism and commercial significance, with Buddha Air Pvt. Ltd leading in passenger numbers. This analysis offers insights into Nepal's domestic aviation, emphasizing the importance of strategic planning in the aviation and tourism sectors.

Analysis of tourism infrastructure (hotels, transportation facilities, and tourist services).

The tourism infrastructure in Nepal has experienced significant growth and diversification from 2018 to 2022, as illustrated by the Department of Tourism's data. During this period, there was a notable increase in the availability of both star and tourist standard hotels, travel agencies, trekking agencies, and bed capacities (see Figure 5).

From 2018/19 (2075/76 B.S.) to 2021/22 (2078/79 B.S.), the number of hotels increased from 3,824 to 4,773. Travel agencies rose from 2,637 to 3,136, and trekking agencies from 2,376 to 3,136. Correspondingly, the total bed capacity surged from 13,831 to 25,483. This growth trajectory emphasizes the expanding accommodation and service capabilities in Nepal's tourism sector, aiming to cater to a growing demographic of both local and international tourists.

Figure 5: *Growth of Tourism Infrastructure in Nepal (2018-2022)*
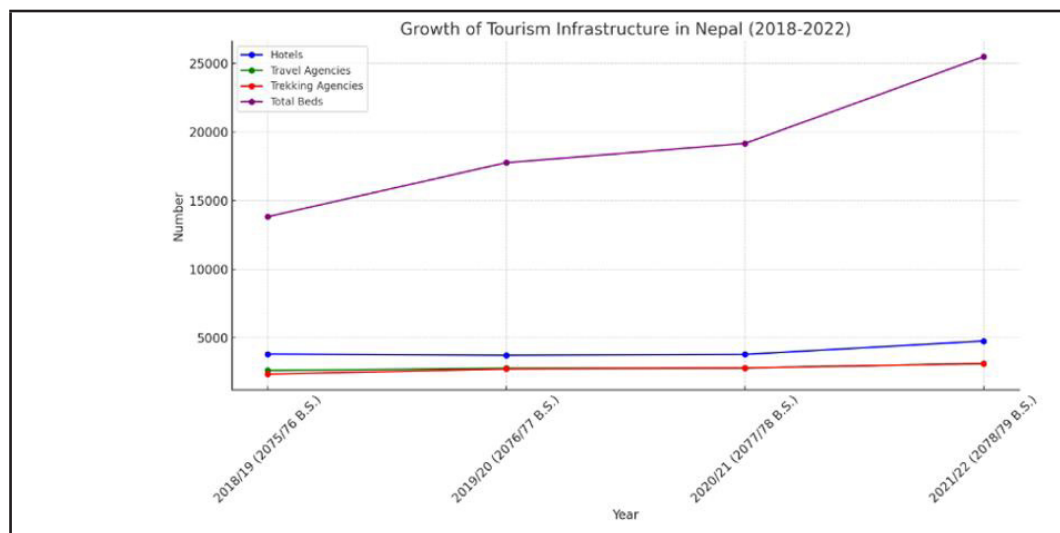
The year 2022 marked a remarkable escalation in the hospitality sector. The combined number of star hotels and tourist standard hotels reached 1,401, with a total bed capacity of 53,365. Specifically, the number of star hotels increased to 173 with 16,335 beds, while tourist standard hotels grew to 1,228 with 37,030 beds. This expansion reflects a strengthened infrastructure to support the influx of tourists.

Nepal's tourism infrastructure is strategically distributed, with mountain regions like Annapurna and Everest for trekking, hilly areas like Kathmandu Valley for culture, and Terai region, featuring Chitwan National Park, for safaris. Homestays play a crucial role, offering a green way to experience culture and nature, benefiting local economies and preserving traditions (Ministry of Tourism, 2018).

The National Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM) has significantly contributed to the development of human resources in this sector. Their enrollment statistics for recent years are impressive: 364 students in the Master of Hospitality Management, 2,460 in the Bachelor of Hotel Management, and 1,612 in the Bachelor of Travel and Tourism Management. These figures highlight NATHM's crucial role in preparing a skilled workforce to support and sustain the growth of Nepal's tourism industry (MoCTCA, 2023).

This systematic growth and distribution of tourism infrastructure underscore Nepal's commitment to enhancing its tourism sector, focusing on sustainable development and diversification to accommodate various tourist interests.

Review and Analysis of Policy Documents

Major Policy Shifts: Examining Key Pillars of Nepal's Tourism Decade (2023-2032)

Nepal's Ministry of Tourism has embarked on a transformative journey with the ambitious "Nepal Tourism Decade (2023-2032)" strategic action plan (Government of Nepal, 2023). This initiative marks a significant shift in policy focus, prioritizing revitalization, diversification, sustainability, and inclusivity for the nation's tourism sector.

Ambitious Tourist Target and Diversification: The plan sets a bold goal of attracting 3.5 million foreign tourists by 2032, exceeding pre-pandemic levels by a vast margin (Government of Nepal, 2023). This ambition underscores the government's commitment to tourism as a key driver of economic growth and development. Furthermore, the plan emphasizes broadening Nepal's appeal beyond its renowned trekking routes. Province-level and thematic campaigns like the "cultural heritage of Bagmati Province" in 2024 (Government of Nepal, 2023) aim to showcase hidden gems and diverse experiences across the country, ensuring wider regional participation in the tourism boom.

Prioritizing Eco-Tourism and Responsible Practices: Recognizing the growing global demand for sustainable travel and the need to protect Nepal's fragile ecosystems, the plan promotes eco-tourism and responsible tourism practices (Kaul, 2023). This shift entails focusing on minimizing environmental impact, fostering community engagement, and preserving cultural heritage. Investments in eco-friendly infrastructure and responsible tourism initiatives will be crucial in attracting environmentally conscious tourists and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Infrastructure Development and Accessibility: Recognizing the vital role of infrastructure in supporting tourism growth, the plan prioritizes developing tourism infrastructure. Upgrading existing facilities and connecting lesser-known destinations with improved road and air connectivity will enhance accessibility and attract tourists seeking unique experiences. The recent launches of Pokhara Regional International Airport and Gautam Buddha International Airport exemplify this commitment to improving air travel options (Kaul, 2023).

Targeted Marketing and Promotions: Moving beyond generic campaigns, the plan emphasizes targeted marketing and promotions tailored to specific audiences and regional strengths. Province-level campaigns like "Buddhist tourism" in 2027 in Lumbini Province (Government of Nepal, 2023) showcase this shift towards strategic branding and catering to niche markets. This approach ensures efficient budget allocation and maximizes campaign effectiveness.

Collaborative Implementation and Governance: Recognizing the challenges of implementing such a comprehensive plan, the government emphasizes smooth coordination between federal, provincial, and local bodies (Government of Nepal, 2023). This collaborative approach fosters shared responsibility and accountability, ensuring effective resource allocation and project execution across diverse geographical regions.

Challenges and Potential Opportunities: While the "Nepal Tourism Decade" presents immense potential for revitalizing the tourism sector, significant challenges lie ahead. Implementing such a comprehensive plan across a decade will require substantial financial resources, skilled personnel, and efficient governance (Kaul, 2023). Balancing infrastructure development with environmental sustainability will be crucial, particularly in sensitive ecological areas. Furthermore, ensuring equitable distribution of benefits from tourism across all regions and communities will require thoughtful policy interventions and inclusive development strategies.

Despite these challenges, the "Nepal Tourism Decade" marks a bold and necessary step towards positioning Nepal as a leading sustainable and responsible tourism destination. By capitalizing on its diverse offerings, fostering responsible practices, and prioritizing inclusivity, Nepal can achieve its ambitious tourism goals and create a thriving and sustainable industry for generations to come.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

Nepal's tourism sector experienced a robust recovery in 2022, with a 307.3 percent increase in tourist arrivals, indicating effective revival strategies and evolving global travel interests. The demographic shift with more tourists aged 31-45 years and a diversity in nationalities reflects changing travel preferences. A noticeable shift towards adventure and cultural tourism was evident, with increased visits to national parks and popular trekking destinations, moving away from traditional tourism.

Domestic tourism displayed significant resilience, surpassing pre-pandemic levels, highlighting its potential as a sustainable segment and its importance in Nepal's diverse geography. The tourism infrastructure expanded to meet the growing demand, leading to substantial financial growth in terms of tourism revenue and government royalties.

Effective crisis management in tourism necessitates the active participation of key stakeholders, including government bodies, tourism operators, and local communities. Policies should focus on safety, risk mitigation, and financial support to rebuild tourist confidence and promote sustainable tourism development (Ratha, 2023). The collaboration between these stakeholders will be pivotal in steering Nepal's tourism sector towards a resilient future.

The "Nepal Tourism Decade (2023-2032)" marks a strategic policy shift towards sustainable, eco-friendly tourism, aiming to attract 3.5 million foreign tourists by 2032 and promoting regional attractions. However, challenges in balancing sustainable development, equitable benefit distribution, and effective policy implementation remain. Addressing these issues is vital for the sector's sustainable growth. Overall, Nepal's tourism in 2022 shows a promising recovery and a readiness for future growth, contingent on strategic policy implementation and overcoming emerging challenges. To boost economic growth, which would therefore favourably impact foreign tourism, the government should support measures that are conducive to the tourism industry. Thus, policy attention can be focused on improving tourism infrastructure, including the management and integration of technology.

5. Limitations of the Study

The study is limited by data availability and reliability issues, particularly due to the recentness of the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting the comprehensiveness of Nepal's tourism sector data. Its focus on Nepal limits the universal applicability of its findings to countries with differing tourism contexts. The study focuses on the year 2022, so it might not show trends in tourism that last for a long time or happen in the future. Also, the parts of the study that are based on opinions and feelings could have biases because these methods depend a lot on personal views.

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