

Tourism Research in Nepal: A Review of Scientific Publications Published in NepJOL

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Abstract

Literature review assists as a resilient catalyst for tourism research in the academic setting as tourism studies still needs a more robust conceptual underpinning. This paper presents the results of a review of the literature on tourism from 2013 to 2024. We applied review method to maintain academic rigor. By using inclusion and exclusion criteria, the literature search included 122 research articles published in 20 different journals listed in Nepal online journal (NepJOL). The literatures were reviewed and classified into 39 micro-lines variables/themes. The content of the strategy micro-lines variables/themes was analyzed in greater depth for synthesizing findings from existing studies. This paper distinguishes three categories of approaches to the review process. First of these includes overview of the journal publishers which is followed by themes of the publications and methodology used in the studies.

The study found that tourism research in Nepal has been publishing by interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary journals. The distribution of the publications themes like effect of COVID-19 Pandemic, pilgrimage tourism, cultural tourism and ecotourism having a significant share of the total publications. A significant number of studies used qualitative method, focused on urban areas and considered broader provincial or national contexts. The data sources predominantly combine primary and secondary data, reflecting a balanced approach to gathering information. However, most of the study used descriptive analysis method without ensuring reliability and validity. There is a noticeable lack of attention to advanced multivariate statistical tools and economic modeling such as growth modeling, fiscal policy modeling and tourist flow modeling.

This review paper thus provides fundamentals confirming the pertinence of the review for research on tourism in Nepalese context. It also helped academics to explore the contemporary research issues and methodological gaps. We hope that the findings of

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the study will be acknowledged in this line and essence and also help to upgrade quality of tourism research and journal publishers.

Keywords: tourism, tourism research, review, theme, methodology

Introduction

Both developed and developing countries employ tourism as a common economic growth strategy. Tourism sector accounts 9.1% (nearly 10 trillion US\$) to the global GDP and created 330 million direct and indirect jobs in 2023 (WTO, 2024). In Nepal, tourism has existed for a very long time. Historical evidence suggests that Nepal's tourism is based on trade and religion (e.g. Banaras, Patna, Lhasa and Tibet). Tourism has fully developed since the Rana dictatorship was overthrown and democracy was established in the 1950s. The year 2019 saw the most foreign visitors to Nepal ever, at about 1.2 million (MoCTCA, 2020). With 40.5 US dollars per day average expenditure (MoF, 2023), tourism generated Rs327.9 billion (\$2.5 billion) in revenue and supported 1.19 million jobs directly and indirectly (The Kathmandu Post, 2024).

Nepal is prominently displayed on the tourism map of the world as a chosen natural, cultural, and adventurous destination. As a result, research into Nepali tourism has opened up new avenues for study in a number of disciplines, including management, psychology, finance, planning, and marketing. Besides, tourism research in Nepal is also becoming an interdisciplinary topic that links social science and natural biodiversity (Shrestha & Balayar, 2023). According to Cooper et al. (2001), the fragmentation of the industry and lack of well-established structures are reflected in academic research in this area, which highlights the need for a more solid conceptual foundation for tourism as a field of study. Donaire, Silva and Gaspar (2009) also suggested to study from strategic network viewpoint that link interdependent actors and activities (Barbosa & Zamot, 2004).

A literature review therefore acts as a powerful stimulant for tourism research in the academic setting. Researchers have been seeking to develop a more solid foundation for analyzing literature as they are responsible for making significant advancements in creating new information and disseminating to audiences around the world (Irugalbandara (2021). In order for the study's conclusions to have an effect on the industry, tourism researchers are also evaluating the study's applicability to practice and examining the practitioners' information sources (Vong, 2017). Tourism has become a critically significant agent of change and bringing socioeconomic prosperity to many economies around the world (Ranasinghe et al, 2021). Therefore, tourism industry needs in-depth research and analysis, even in Nepal. Such research supports the formulation of fact-based investments, plans, and marketing for the tourism industry.

No doubt, all the research studies conducted in Nepal are predominantly of the strategic dimension. The focus of the studies are not only limited in economic dimension but also in social, cultural and environmental dimensions. Dhungana (2024) reviewed and 27 research papers by using the PRISMA framework. His review found increased emphasis on sustainability paradigm in tourism research. Beyond sustainability dimension, review of tourism research need to emphasize on profile of journal publishers, research issues and methodological reflections.

Thus, the objectives of this study were to review scientific research studies conducted in the field of tourism and to synthesize of the characteristics and findings of the reviewed studies. Following Hanley and Cutts (2013) and Higgins and Green (2008), this paper has been divided into five sections including this introduction. The second section explains the methodology adopted for the systematic review. The third section presents triple concerns of review works. Fourth sections presents reflections of the study and fifth section concludes this study. The intent of this research was to provide a process by which to better understand content of the tourism related research published in Nepal Journals Online (NepJOL).

Study Methods

A literature search for tourism research which has been conducted in Nepal for the years 2013-2024. Through an iterative screening process, the literature search included 122 peer-reviewed research articles published in 20 tourism and multidisciplinary journals. The articles were collected from search engine Nepal Journals Online (There are 470 journals listed on NepJOL until December 2024 and 44,563 articles are available in full text [PDF]) by using inclusion and exclusion criteria. After that this study applied manual systematic review method which is regarded as well-planned literature review that analyses the findings from existing studies (Kang, 2015; Uman, 2011) and synthesize findings qualitatively or quantitatively (Armstrong et al., 2011).

According to Dempster (2011, p. 15), a systematic review is "a comprehensive review of the literature that differs from a traditional literature review in that it is conducted in a methodical (or systematic) manner, according to a pre-specified protocol to minimize bias, with the aim of synthesizing the retrieved information. Professor Archie Cochrane is credited with being the "architect" of systematic reviews; in 1979, he proposed that medical professionals publish critical summaries of research trials (Bower, 2010, p. 2). The systematic reviews are often applied in health sector (Ader et al., 2008) but this method is applicable to the public health and environmental interventions (Bilotta et al., 2014) as well as social interventions, methodological reviews, policy reviews, and economic evaluations (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Although Bower (2010) contends that this methodology (or approach) may have some limitations and that a literature

review may not be sufficiently rigorous. Besides, we also understood literature review as independent studies which must guiding academic practices (Kraus et al., 2022). Therefore, this study tried to maintain academic rigor including ethical considerations such as explicit methodological gaps in tourism research, tourism literature review and limitations of the study.

Review Results

The results of the review works are presented in three ways. The first includes reviewing overview of journal publishers, second highlights reviewing themes of the publications and last includes reviewing methodologies of the studies.

Reviewing Profile of Journal Publishers

This section highlights a diverse range of journals published by different institutions, predominantly in the fields of tourism, hospitality, sociology, anthropology, and development studies. The journals listed are affiliated with universities, research centers, and professional associations in Nepal. The number of articles varies significantly across the tourism journals and multidisciplinary journals. (Table 1). This distribution reflects the varying research outputs and scholarly contributions of each institution, shedding light on the academic landscape of Nepal in the areas of tourism.

Table1. *Overview of Journal Publisher and Publication Details (2013-2024)*

SN*	Name	Publisher	Number of articles	Percent
1	Academia Research Journal	Mahendra Multiple Campus	3	2.45
2	Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology	Dhawalagiri Multiple Campus	2	1.63
3	Journal of Forest and natural resource management	Tribhuvan University, Institute of Forestry, Pokhara Campus, Nepal	3	2.45
4	Journal of management and Development Studies	Nepal Administrative Staff College	1	0.81
5	Journal of Tourism & Adventure	Janapriya Multiple Campus Pokhara, Tribhuvan University, Nepal	17	13.93

SN*	Name	Publisher	Number of articles	Percent
6	Journal of Tourism and Himalayan Adventures	Nepal Mountain Academy (Affiliated to Tribhuvan University)	8	6.55
7	Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Education	AITM School of Hotel Management, Knowledge Village, Khumaltar, Lalitpur, Nepal	3	2.45
8	Journal of Business and Social Sciences	Research Department, Hetauda School of Management and Social Sciences.	1	0.81
9	Nepal Journal of Multidisciplinary Research	Nepal Philosophical Research Centre, Kathmandu, Nepal	2	1.63
10	Nepal Tourism and Development Review	School of Arts Kathmandu University	10	8.19
11	Nepalese Culture	Central Department of Nepalese History, Culture and Archaeology Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur	1	0.81
12	Nepalese Journal of Development and Rural Studies	Central Department of Rural Development	5	4.9
13	Nepalese Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management	15	12.29
14	NUTA Journal	Nepal University Teachers' Association	3	2.45
15	Patan Pragya	Tribhuvan University, Teacher Association, Patan Multiple Campus	1	0.81
16	Quest Journal of Management and Social Sciences	the Quest Research Management Cell of the Quest International College, Gwarko, Lalitpur	2	1.63

SN*	Name	Publisher	Number of articles	Percent
17	Research Nepal Journal of Development Studies	Research Nepal	13	10.65
18	A Research Journal of Culture and Society	Research Development Centre Nepal	1	0.81
19	The Gaze: Journal of Tourism and Hospitality	International School of Tourism and Hotel Management	29	23.77
20	Tribhuvan University Journal	Centre for Research, Tribhuvan University	2	1.63
Total			122	100.00

The table provides information on journal publications associated with 20 academic institutions or publishers listed in NepJOL. *The Gaze: Journal of Tourism and Hospitality* is the dominant publication, contributing a substantial 23.77% of the total articles (29 out of 122). This journal has a clear lead in terms of publication volume, indicating a strong focus on tourism and hospitality studies. Likewise, *Journal of Tourism & Adventure* follows with 17 articles (13.93%), also reflecting a significant focus on tourism-related research. *Nepalese Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* contributes 15 articles (12.29%), reinforcing the prominence of tourism and hospitality research in Nepal. *Research Nepal Journal of Development Studies* also stands out with 13 articles (10.65%), highlighting a strong emphasis on development studies. However, most of the journals contribute a relatively smaller number of articles. For instance, journals like *Academia Research Journal* (3 articles, 2.45%) and *Journal of Forest and Natural Resource Management* (3 articles, 2.45%) contribute fewer articles, suggesting that these are more niche or specialized journals within their respective fields. This shows that a significant number of journals are focused on social sciences, development studies, and tourism management, which aligns with the academic and research priorities of the institutions involved. The data indicates a robust academic publishing landscape in Nepal, particularly in the fields of tourism and hospitality.

Reviewing Themes of the Publications

The section presents various themes of the publications such as adventure tourism, agrotourism, climate change impact, community participation, and many more. These themes reflect the diverse research interests and emerging trends in the tourism sector, with a particular focus on Nepal's tourism industry (Table 2). These themes offers valuable insights into the key areas of research within tourism studies for shaping academic

contributions.

Table 2. *The Themes of the Publication*

SN	Micro-lines variable/theme	Number	Percent
1	Adventure tourism	1	0.81
2	Agrotourism	1	0.81
3	Autobiographic information	1	0.81
4	Brand product (souvenirs	2	1.63
5	Circular economy and tourism	1	0.81
6	Climate change impact	2	1.63
7	Community participation	4	3.27
8	COVID-19 Pandemic	16	13.11
9	Cultural heritage tourism	4	3.27
10	Cultural tourism	8	6.55
11	Domestic tourism	3	2.45
12	Ecotourism	6	4.91
13	Education in tourism development	3	2.45
14	Employee job satisfaction	5	4.9
15	Employer branding for employee retention	2	1.63
16	Employment and local economy	4	3.27
17	Festival tourism	2	1.63
18	Homestay tourism	3	2.45
19	Human resource management	3	2.45
20	International tourists' revisit intention	1	0.81
21	Managerial communication and marketing	2	1.63
22	Medical tourism	1	0.81
23	Mountain tourism	6	4.91
24	Nature tourism	2	1.63
25	Opportunities and challenges of tourism industry	3	2.45
26	Pilgrimage tourism	10	8.19
27	Postmodern tourism	2	1.63
28	Protected area management	1	0.81
29	Responsible tourism and code of ethic	1	0.81
30	Rural community tourism	1	0.81
31	Social tourism	1	0.81

32	Special interest or dark tourism	3	2.45
33	Tourism and development	3	2.45
34	Tourism and economic growth	2	1.63
35	Tourism and security	1	0.81
36	Tourism entrepreneurship	2	1.63
37	Tourism infrastructure	4	3.27
38	Wetland management	2	1.63
39	Women in tourism and hospitality	3	2.45
Total		122	100.00

The table depicts information on diverse themes in tourism research, focusing on various subfields and their respective contributions to the total number of articles. With 16 articles (13.11%), the COVID-19 pandemic theme emerges as the most prominent area of focus. This reflects the significant impact of the pandemic on the global tourism industry including Nepal, with multiple authors addressing its implications for tourism, travel behavior, and the industry's recovery. The theme of pilgrimage tourism also stands out, with 10 articles (8.19%), indicating the importance of religious and cultural tourism within the Nepali context, possibly due to Nepal's rich heritage in religious sites. With 8 articles (6.55%), cultural tourism is another major area of interest, highlighting the focus on heritage, local traditions, and tourism's role in preserving cultural identity. The distribution of articles shows varied interest across topics, with some themes like *COVID-19 Pandemic* (13.11%), *Pilgrimage Tourism* (8.19%), and *Cultural Tourism* (6.55%) having a significant share of the total publications, while others, such as *Adventure Tourism* and *Agrotourism*, contribute smaller but still notable portions. The themes of the publications focus on both traditional tourism aspects (like pilgrimage and cultural tourism) and contemporary issues (such as the impact of COVID-19, ecotourism, and community participation). It highlights the growing interest in sustainable tourism practices, economic and employment impacts, and the evolving role of tourism in development.

Reviewing Methodologies of the Studies

This section provides an overview of the research methodologies, data sources, study areas, reliability measures, and data analysis techniques used in the studies. It categorizes the articles based on their methods, such as quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, and review-based approaches, and shows the distribution of these methods (Table 3). This section also highlights the tools and software used for data analysis, with a strong emphasis on descriptive or thematic statistical tools. This breakdown gives insight into the dominant research practices and techniques within the field of tourism studies.

Table3: Methodology, Method and Publication Details

Measures	Category	Article Number	Percent
Methods	Quantitative	25	20.49
	Qualitative	32	26.22
	Mix method in terms of data	17	13.93
	Review	48	39.34
Sources of Data	Primary and secondary	87	71.31
	Secondary	35	28.68
Study area or site	Urban area	35	28.68
	Rural area	20	16.39
	Protected area	14	11.47
	Heritage sites	7	5.73
	Provincial and National context	46	37.70
Reliability/validity	Cronbach's alpha	5	4.90
	Content validity	0	0
Using data analysis software	Quantitative software	11	9.01
	Qualitative software	1	0.81
Statistical tools	Descriptive/thematic	112	91.80
	Bivariate/Multivariate	10	8.19
Total			100.00

The table provides a detailed information about research methods, data sources, study areas, reliability measures, and data analysis techniques used in the studies. A slightly higher number of articles (32) used qualitative methods which is followed by (25 articles) used quantitative methods and (17 articles) used mixed-methods. The vast majority of studies (87 articles) used a combination of both primary and secondary data sources. A significant number of studies (35) focused on urban areas, which are often hubs for tourism-related activities such as infrastructure, services, and attractions.

This aligns with global tourism trends, where urban destinations often receive the most attention in research. A smaller proportion (20 articles) focused on rural areas, highlighting an interest in examining tourism outside urban centers. This is important for understanding the socio-economic impacts of tourism in more remote or less developed regions. A large proportion of the studies (46) considered broader provincial or national contexts. This is likely due to the need for understanding tourism's impact at larger scales, examining trends, policies, and regional differences. Likewise, the high number of review articles and the prevalence of descriptive and thematic analysis point to a focus on synthesizing existing knowledge and exploring qualitative aspects of tourism. The use of mixed methods shows a growing trend towards integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The data sources predominantly combine primary and secondary data, reflecting a balanced approach to gathering information. The study areas suggest a strong interest in urban contexts, with growing attention to rural areas, protected areas, and national contexts. The relatively low emphasis on reliability measures like Cronbach's alpha and the use of data analysis software suggests that many studies are more focused on qualitative analysis or rely on existing secondary data.

Review Reflections

While this study involved 122 vary studies of tourism, which in all probability were quite representative of the range of attempts to describe the diversified nature (natural, cultural, social, religious) of Nepalese tourism. There is a clear indication that tourism is a central area of academic inquiry, with increasing focus on sustainable practices, tourism management, and the socio-economic impacts of tourism. The inclusion of articles in journals related to development, culture, and business also reflects the recognition that tourism is not only an economic activity but has wide-reaching social and cultural implications. However, there is potential for further expansion in areas like cultural heritage, sustainable tourism, and the intersections of tourism with other sectors. The concentration of articles in certain prominent journals also suggests a need for more diverse academic outlets to cater to emerging research themes. Overall, this landscape reflects a dynamic, evolving research field that continues to contribute to the development of Nepal's tourism industry.

Regarding the themes of the study, the reflections of the authors highlight how tourism research in Nepal is evolving to address both contemporary challenges, such as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and long-standing issues like cultural preservation, community involvement, and sustainability. The contributions cover a wide range of themes, each shedding light on different aspects of tourism, from its socio-economic impact to its environmental sustainability. The diversity of research in this area illustrates the dynamic nature of tourism studies and the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing tourism's role in society.

In general, the findings of this research reveal quite a bit of variability between the content of the study, as evident through a closer scrutiny of the 39 micro-lines variables/themes thematized for the analysis. The studies are using multidisciplinary approach to tourism research, where qualitative methods, review articles, and primary-secondary data combinations dominate. The growing use of mixed methods shows an emerging trend toward integrating various research approaches, allowing for more comprehensive insights.

Most of the qualitative studies have applied interview and groups' discussions techniques to generate information which were analyzed through description and holistic analysis method (Yazan, 2015). For instance, Pasa (2021) thematized education into informal, non-formal, and formal education as well outcomes of tourism development into caste or Varna system, cultural and social capital, tourism infrastructures, family self-sufficiency, use of forest resources, and tourism entrepreneurship. Simple descriptive statistical tools, such as frequency tabulation, percentage, bar diagrams, pie charts, and central tendencies, were used to assess the majority of the quantitative data. Only six studies used the inferential statistical techniques such correlation, mean different test, multiple regression, ANOVA including trend analysis of tourist-arrivals in Nepal (Khatri et al., 2024). Hence, the academics need to conduct more causal research by leveraging on correlational or experimental designs. There is a noticeable lack of attention to advanced multivariate statistical tools and economic modeling such as growth modeling, fiscal policy modeling and tourist flow modeling (Elsevier, 2011; Ruiz Estrada, 2011). The modeling also can be developed based on monetary modeling approach, national level modeling approach, dynamic and macro level modeling approach. Besides, Bartkus and McDonald (2016) also highlighted two potential issues in determining the relative value of attributes in travel and tourism studies: (1) the tendency of Likert scale to induce upward bias, and (2) the extent to which researchers infer mean differences without performing the necessary statistical analyses.

Even, the reliability and validity have not ensured by most of the studies applied quantitative (25) and mix method (17) study except five studies (Baniya et al., 2017; Rai & Rai, 2021; Dulal, 2022; Pasa, 2019). For example, Dulal (2022) also applied reliable tools in which values of Cronbach's Alpha were 0.797 for compensate and reward; 0.718 for working environment; 0.814 for career development; 0.829 for job security; 0.765 for co-workers and 0.832 for employee job satisfaction (Cohen et al., 2018). And Pasa (2019) applied highly reliable tools with 0.891 Cronbach alpha value with item total statistics 0.883 for relevancy, 0.850 for efficiency, 0.864 for effectiveness, 0.879 for impact, and 0.844 sustainability (Taber, 2017). Even, quantitative and qualitative data analysis software are not used by majority of the researchers. However, the researchers are interested in both macro and micro levels of tourism, with a clear emphasis on ur-

ban and rural areas including Karnali (Bishwakarma, 2024) and Sudurpachhim (Shrestha & Balayar, 2023) and broader national contexts (Khatri et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This study examined how the content of research studies have been thematized, analyzed, and reported in tourism research publication. The study thus appear to have an important academic and research implications. The limitation of the study (Lee & Greenley, 2009) is reviewed 122 Nepalese tourism related articles published in 20 different journals. The journals contain both hospitality and multidisciplinary scopes of publication. Tourism research in Nepal is dominated by a few key journals, such as *The Journal of Tourism & Adventure* and *The Gaze: Journal of Tourism and Hospitality*, which focus on hospitality and adventure tourism. These journals highlight the significant academic interest in tourism and underscore their importance as platforms for disseminating research. The themes of the studies are categorized into 39 micro-variables which help other researchers to explore conceptual and methodological gaps in tourism research. The publications of the journal highlights a growing interest in specialized tourism topics, including ecotourism, cultural heritage, and regional tourism. While these areas are gaining attention, their relatively smaller share of publications indicates that there is potential for deeper exploration in these underrepresented fields, particularly concerning sustainable tourism and community engagement.

It is also important to note that most of the articles reviewed in this study primarily relies on qualitative and review methodologies, reflecting an exploratory approach to understanding tourism's impacts. Mixed methods and quantitative studies complement this focus, but the dominance of descriptive and thematic analysis shows that most studies aim to uncover patterns and trends rather than initial rankings (e.g., factor analysis), measurement of associations and economic modeling. The limited use of advanced statistical tools suggests an opportunity for more rigorous and diversified methodological approaches to enhance the depth and scope of tourism research. Hence, it is not appropriate to generalize findings of reviewed studies to the overall quality of the research. At the same time, it is not applicable to simplify the results of this study to other disciplines. The purpose of the current study is to assess content and methodology of tourism research conducted in Nepal rather than to personally criticize the research issue and methodology. Finally, conducting research in contemporary issues, improvement in techniques (e.g. digital, photography, observation) and tools (e.g. field data collection apps, virtual meets) and scientific reporting with multivariate analysis and economic modeling are a natural part of the transformative research process in tourism. Thus, the core intent of this study was merely to make a contribution towards upgrading the quality of tourism research publishing by journals listed in NepJOL. We hope that the results of the study will be accepted in this line and spirit and also help to

upgrade quality of tourism research and journal publishers.

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