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INTEGRATED TOURISM DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR POKHARA AND SURROUNDING AREAS

FINAL REPORT

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pokhara has unique assets for tourism development and a great diversity of products. Key attractions include its nature, trekking and adventure activities, religious and cultural sites. It has an established niche in international tourism, with tourist arrivals showing strong and stable growth. However, the market starts showing some worrying trends. Its traditional value segment of tourists has declined sharply, while its low-end volume segment of tourists has increased rapidly. There are signs of overcrowding and degradation of key assets. In the absence of recent Pokhara data, Nepal has experienced downward swings in tourist arrivals for two consecutive years since 2012, even before the earthquake shook the landlocked country in 2015.

International tourists come to Pokhara basically for its natural beauty. The first attraction is trekking. Annapurna Base Camp is one of the best places to do trekking in the world and it is widely recognized the world over. Soft adventure activities are gaining ground as well. The cultural sites, however, are basically points of interest for domestic tourists. They seem to fail in attracting international tourists as much.

Growing demands, thanks to the rising middle class in the neighbouring markets as well as Nepali domestic market, offer opportunities to the tourism of Greater Pokhara. Overall, however, Pokhara is underperforming its potential, due to its weak tourism competitiveness and enabling capacity. Broad systemic problems such as poor infrastructure, political instability, human resource constraints, poor investment environment and a weak government leadership continue to be limiting factors.

The overarching objective of Greater Pokhara, as specified by the latest National Tourism Strategic Plan 2015-2024, is “to reinforce the role of Pokhara as a cultural, natural and MICE destination in Nepal as well as a regional administration and service centre.” To be a destination, Pokhara must also be capable of fundamentally reconceiving itself, of regenerating its core strategies, and of reinventing its industry. In short, a destination must also be capable of getting different.

Pokhara has an established niche in international tourism. But there’s no such thing as sustained leadership; it must be reinvented again and again. Pokhara must offer new attractions in activities and experience and expand its visitor segments to rise to a higher level. Pokhara must aspire to become a true destination of its own by leveraging its unique landforms and position as a gateway.

Pokhara must achieve the following strategic objectives to turn its vision into reality:

- ① Its role as a destination will be to become the best holiday destination in South Asia for relaxation and soft adventure.
- ② Its role as a regional service center will be to become a more efficient gateway to various treks and western regions.
- ③ Pokhara will position itself as a paradise for active holidays in the international and domestic markets.
- ④ Its strategic concept will be to become a place of experiencing natural wonders in fun.

And for the strategic objectives to be achieved, four development goals must be accomplished: improved infrastructure, diversified activities & experiences, environmental conservation, and improved image. And they also must be aligned with each other well to be sustainable.

The Lakeside will continue to be an important tourist center of Pokhara. But the existing tourism products of Pokhara should be integrated with each other and new product additions and upgraded to the tune of signature experiences. And some additional tourist hubs or sub-hubs should be developed as well. Thus, six major destination development projects are proposed.

From these six major destination development projects and development goals, 55 key sub-projects are developed. And these sub-projects are screened and prioritized for the selection of the transformational investment projects. Two comprehensive criteria are used for this purpose: Importance to Concept and Ease of Implementation.

And they are grouped into four. The sub-projects in the Group 1 are easier in implementation and important for concept implementation. The following 9 transformation investment projects are developed from this Group 1:

- ① Lakeside Waterfront Development
- ② Ratna Mandir Garden
- ③ Fewa Lake Music Fountain
- ④ Fewa Lake Walking Trail
- ⑤ Iconic Structure at Sarangkot Hilltop
- ⑥ Seti Gorge Sky Walk
- ⑦ Upgrading of Annapurna Natural History Museum with Live Butterfly Exhibition Hall
- ⑧ Lights and Drama Extravaganza at Cliff
- ⑨ Ecological Circle Gallery for Observing Wildlife and Ecology in Begnas Lake

Of these transformational investment projects, Iconic Structure at Sarangkot Hilltop is recommended as a pilot project since there is a strong interest in the project from the private sector.

The proposed transformational projects are to be implemented in phases. But in the meantime, the destination development plan must be updated in a way that various demands for change are coordinated and controlled to keep in step with the development goals. A destination management organization should be established for a strong leadership toward concerted actions and accountability. And the business eco-system and enabling capacity of Pokhara should be enhanced for better investment environment and visitor experience.

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND UNDERSTANDING

2.1 TOURISM GEOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES OF GREATER POKHARA

(1) Tourism Geography of Pokhara

Pokhara valley, with the area of 123 km², is located in the central region of Nepal. Its elevation ranges from less than 600 meters (as the lowest) at Bhimad to 1,300 meters (as the highest) at Kharapani. The valley slopes from the northwest to the southeast. Consequently, all the water drains out through Seti River stream towards the southeast.

The tectonic depression has created the unique nature of Pokhara, exposing the impressive panoramic view of snow-covered mountains, lakes, gorges of Seti River, caves, green hills, and waterfalls.

The spectacular views of scenic Annapurna Himalaya range, the shortest distance of snow-capped mountains, the harmony of exotic mountains, eye catching lakes and the mystical form of Machhapuchhre mountain reflected into Fewa Lake, are the features of Pokhara that have made thousands of tourists, especially from abroad, fascinated.

Many hills and villages can be easily accessed and enjoyed while visiting and staying in Pokhara. The names of such famous peaks and spots are Sarangkot, Kaskikot, Naudanda, Dhikurpokhari, Kahun Hill, Kalikastha, Sundari Danda, Armala Kot, Hemja, Austrian Camp, Dhampus-Astham, Mattikhan Hill, Nirmal Pokhari, Bharat Pokhari, Kristi, etc.

A number of short trekking trails are also available in surrounding areas of Pokhara. Such short trekking trails includes Royal Trek (1720m), Ridgeline Trek (1114 m), Millennium Trek (1279m), Mardi Himal Trek (4100m), and Machhapuchhre Model Trek (3682m). Furthermore, there are a number of other major trekking routes like Annapurna Sanctuary (4200m), Jomsom-Muktinath (3800m), Ghorepani-Poonhill (3120m), Siklis (1989m), Upper Mustang (3950m), Nyagi (3210m), Manang area (3450m), Manaslu Circuit (5100m), Dhaulagiri Circuit (5710m), Dolpa (5115m) and Dhorpan (3940m) which require one to four weeks of more challenging trekking and the trekkers can stay in lodges, camps and/or homestays.

The Annapurna Conservation Area is offered with nearly 1,000 lodges, teashops and hundreds of other support services (homestays, cyber cafés, money changers, etc.), catering to the needs of thousands of trekkers and pilgrims. The rich biodiversity, protected ecosystem and diversified landscapes under the model of integrated community-based conservation and development program in 57 VDCs of five districts in 7,629 km² are key features to attract tourists to visit Annapurna Conservation Area.

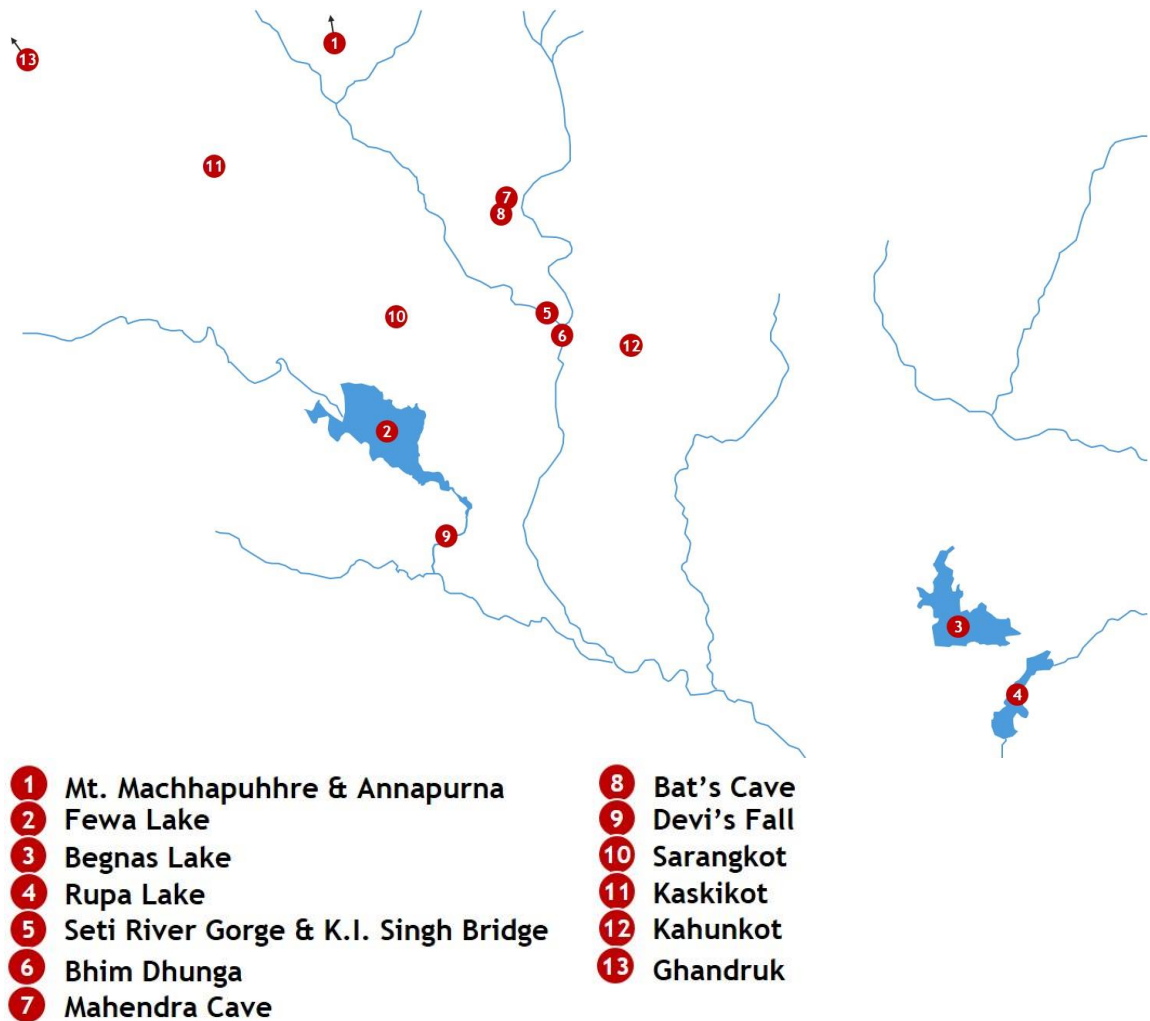
Pokhara is also the meeting point of migrating Mongoloids and Aryans from the Himalayan mountains and Terai regions of Nepal whose presence has made the Pokhara valley attractive from a cultural point of view.

This has made a huge socio-cultural diversity of the region another inevitable mysterious attraction of tourism in Pokhara. The overall population of Pokhara has started from numerous ethnic groups with a number of classes and creeds in a multi-

lingual background, who follow different cultures, celebrate distinct festivals, perform unique rites and rituals and ultimately form the collective traditional lifestyles.

(2) Natural Beauties of Greater Pokhara

Map 1. Natural Resources in Greater Pokhara



- ① **Mt. Machhapuhhre and Annapurna:** One can view Fish-Tail and Annapurna Mountains to the north-west from different spots of Pokhara. Annapurna Mountain (Himalaya) range stretches west-east and is divided into Annapurna (1) 8091, (2) 7937 (3) 7575 (4) 7535 meters. Machhapuchhre (Fish Tail Mountain) is in the middle of the range with the elevation 6998 meters from sea level (NTNC 2012). Machhapuchhre is a glorious natural heritage of Pokhara. Its local name is Machhapuchhre because its forked summit looks like the tail of a fish. One can view this fish-tail shape from Sarangkot, peace stupa and other points too. It is still a virgin Mountain.
- ② **Fewa Lake:** Fewa Lake is the biggest lake in Pokhara. The picturesque image of Machhapuchhre Himal and Annapurna range can be seen reflected in the Fewa

Lake, which is very unique. The surface area of the lake is about 4.43 km². The maximum depth is 12.30m and the average depth 11.71m (Lamichhane and Upadhyay 2006). The lake has about 51.9 million cubic meters of water in volume (Lamichhane 1998 as in Lamichhane and Upadhyay 2006, p 49). The shape of the lake is elongated northwest to southeast with irregular widths at different points. There is a tiny island in the middle of the lake where Barahi (the Hindu Goddess) temple is located. On the southern side, there is a luxurious green forest where one can reach by boat. Boats are available at the bank of Barahi Baidam. Similarly, on the northeastern side of the lake, there is Baidam Bazar, now called the Lakeside. It is a tourist market where tourists from different countries can buy souvenirs, including antiques.

- ③ **Begnas Lake:** This is the second largest lake in the Pokhara Valley. It is about 30 km east of Fewa Lake and about 15 km from Mahendrapool Bazaar. Unlike Fewa Lake, its shape is almost round. It is surrounded by hillocks and greenery, except for the south which is the entrance to the lake. Its area is 3.73 km² (Lamichhane et al. 2009). There are lodges, hotels and restaurants for the visitors and small local bazaar for local souvenirs and necessities. The spot is an idyllic place of peace and tranquility.
- ④ **Rupa Lake:** There is a long hillock ridge called Rupakot extending from south to northeast. On the northern side of the ridge, there is Begnas Lake and on the southern side of it, Rupa Lake. Standing on the ridge from a few spots, one can see both lakes at the same time. Rupa is extended from east to west with narrow width. Its total area is 1.15 km². It has a shape of a serpent. It is said that this lake looks like a lizard changing its color from red, blue and green to different colors. People say that there are many medicinal plants in the vicinity (Shakya 2012)
- ⑤ **Seti River Gorge and K.I. Singh Bridge:** Seti River is fed by snow of Muchhapuchhre and Annapurna Himal. Seti means white. The river is elusively strange. Somewhere it flows through unseen channels, somewhere open and somewhere creating very deep gorges. It gives exciting feeling to anyone when he/she looks down to the gorge from the top of the cliff. There are many deep gorges made by Seti River, such as the one below K.I. Singh Bridge, another below Mahendrapool, another below Chinese Bridge, still another below Chor Sangu near the airport. Among them, the one below K.I. Singh Bridge looks exciting and adventurous to watch. One can look down the turbulent river flowing very clearly while watching from the bridge about 300 feet below. On the left side, while crossing the new bridge towards Gurkha Memorial Museum, there is the old K. I. Singh Bridge made of cement concrete. It is the first concrete bridge constructed in Pokhara.
- ⑥ **Bhim Dhunga:** There is a huge black granite igneous rock like a big globe about eight meters high and with a circumference of 26 meters. The stone lies in P.N. Campus Complex in Pokhara. This rounded rock is called locally Bhim Dhunga. This is the biggest rock in Pokhara valley. Bhim is one of the brothers of Panchapandav mentioned in a Hindu legend dating about 1500 B.C. The local people

narrate a myth that the rock was thrown by physically mightiest Bhim. So it has its name as Bhim Dhunga. Dhunga in Nepali means rock or stone. Local people have established a deity called 'Kali' on the spot. So it is also called 'Bhim Kali'. Actually, the geographical legacy is that this huge rock had been carried down from the Vicinity Mountains during the glacial period by a moving glacier. Such igneous stones are also found in other places, such as Chiple Dhunga, lying on the road side of Mahendrapool Bazaar and other places, too. Mr. Krishna Prasad Poudel, a geographer, observes that the very Bhim Dhunga with rounded shape, near the P.N. Campus office at Pokhara also might have been rolled down by catastrophic outbursts (Paudel 1988).

- ⑦ **Mahendra Cave:** Before the visit of late King Mahendra in the year 1960 AD, this cave was just a bats' cave because the bats used to flutter around the cave. But after the visit of the king, local people named it as Mahendra Cave, thinking that the king would donate more money to develop the place. But it didn't turn into reality. This place is located in the north of Pokhara sub-metropolitan city which comes under the ward no 16. It is 6 km north of Mahendrapool Bazaar and can be accessed by the city bus service as well as a bicycle along the black-topped road. It is exciting to view the nature's creation. Apart from, Gupteswor Cave, there are many other small caves in several other places of Pokhara where some of the tourists visit. The caves are generally found in the limestone region, like Mahendra Cave. Before this cave was physically disturbed, one could enjoy the different shapes of limestone, some projecting downward from the ceilings and some upward from the ground. It gives a strange and exciting feeling while you watch it. But nowadays, it has been disturbed by people. After entering through the big mouth-like opening of the cave, then walking ahead about 50 feet to the left, a little hole appears from where the light can be seen just entering through it, which remains more exciting. Through the hole one can scroll out slowly. On the right, the tunnel of the cave continues ahead about 100 meters. Actually, the trip gives adventurous experience and enjoyment.
- ⑧ **Bat's Cave:** With its name as Chamero Gupha in Nepali, Bats' Cave is the popular name in English. This cave is in Batulechaur which is about a half kilometer walk from Mahendra Cave. It is still a popular and adventurous cave to get into. The natural phenomenon of this cave has attracted thousands of bats as they feel no disturbances inside. People with the sense of adventure usually enter inside with torchlight. The visitors must be cautious, since the cave is not yet equipped with electricity, and that path is also full of sharp stones. The water dripping from the ceiling makes the path damp and slippery. When one is very near to the mouth of the cave, he/she can hear haunted sound inside the cave. The area of the Bat's Cave is 10 meters deep and once inside the cave, it's about six meters high with a length of 135 meters. There is a small stream flowing deep under the rock. At the far end of the cave there is a small narrow hole. However, the cave at its center is amazingly spacious. There are large boulders cut out of a solid rock. Standing on the boulder you can look round the cave. In the middle of it you can see hundreds of bats hanging from the ceiling. Walking through the darkness, lighting a torch light and

finding the exit is indeed toughest but adventurous. If one is not courageous enough, they had better not enter the cave (Thapa 2010).

⑨ **Devi's Fall:** It is a nature-made hole in Chhorepatan, about 2 km away from the Fewa Lake and Lakeside area. Actually, the overflowed or excess water of Fewa Lake is drained out through this hole and water runs underground to a distance of about one km from Chhorepatan. Eventually, it mingles with the small rivulet called Phusrekola somewhere below. The hole is about 20 feet in diameter and 50 feet deep. A big flow of water speedily flowing down into the mouth of the cave exposes lovely rainbows flickering unsteady into the water vapor. Then the big mass of water flows invisibly and vanishes below the hole which provides extremely exciting and pleasant feelings. Its local name is Patale Chhango. The very name Patale Chhango in Nepali has become popular among the tourists and tour operators as Davis fall. The word "Patale" certainly derived from the Nepali word 'Patalo' means shallow or it might have been named after the religious word "Patal" meaning beneath the world. "Chango" is the Nepali word for a water fall. But after the miserable death of a tourist by slipping into the water fall, it has become popular as 'Devi's Fall'. The story of her death goes as follows: In 1961, a Swiss couple were having a bath just to the side above the waterfall with their dog. Around 2 pm, when the water gates of the Fewa Dam were opened as usual, the overflow of the rushing lake water approached them. It is believed that their dog saw the rushing flood from the distance and barked loudly. However, the couple couldn't pay any attention to the mere sound of the dog. In the twinkling of eyes the rushing water approached them and swept away the lady down into the hole. However, her husband survived (Shakya 2012).

⑩ **Sarangkot:** About the name of Sarangkot, there are two historical sources. "Sarang" is a traditional dance related to fighting and war. Men dance with swords in their hand by beating a drum. In Sarangkot (Sarangkot – fort), military guards lived during the period of Shaha Kings who had their palace in Kaskikot (Niraula 1986). Those militaries who stayed in Kaskikot used to visit Sarangkot everyday dancing 'Sarang' and returned to Kaskikot every morning (Subedi 2004). Thus the hilltop's name is Sarangkot. Another historical source of the name 'Sarang' means high station, according to the Kirat (Rai- Limbu) language. Kirats are the indigenous people of Nepal and speak Tibeto-Burman language till this date. Thus the place became Sarangkot (Bista 1983, pp 12-14). Sarangkot is a very interesting and beautiful spot. It's very windy place which provides cool and exciting experience. From the hilltop at Sarangkot, one can watch the panoramic view of Machhapuhhre, Annapurna, Dhaulagiri and Ganesh Himals along with other tourist spots like Panchase, Swargadwari and even the historical palace called Shreenagar of Palpa. Since the hilltop lies on the northwest direction of Fewa Lake, from where the lake starts, one can have the full view of the whole lake and almost all the valley of Pokhara. From Sarangkot one can make a trekking trip to Kaskikot and then to Naudanda and back to Pokhara by bus. It is a lovely place to watch sunrise and enjoy the early sun shine on Himal turning into a golden color. Nowadays, it has

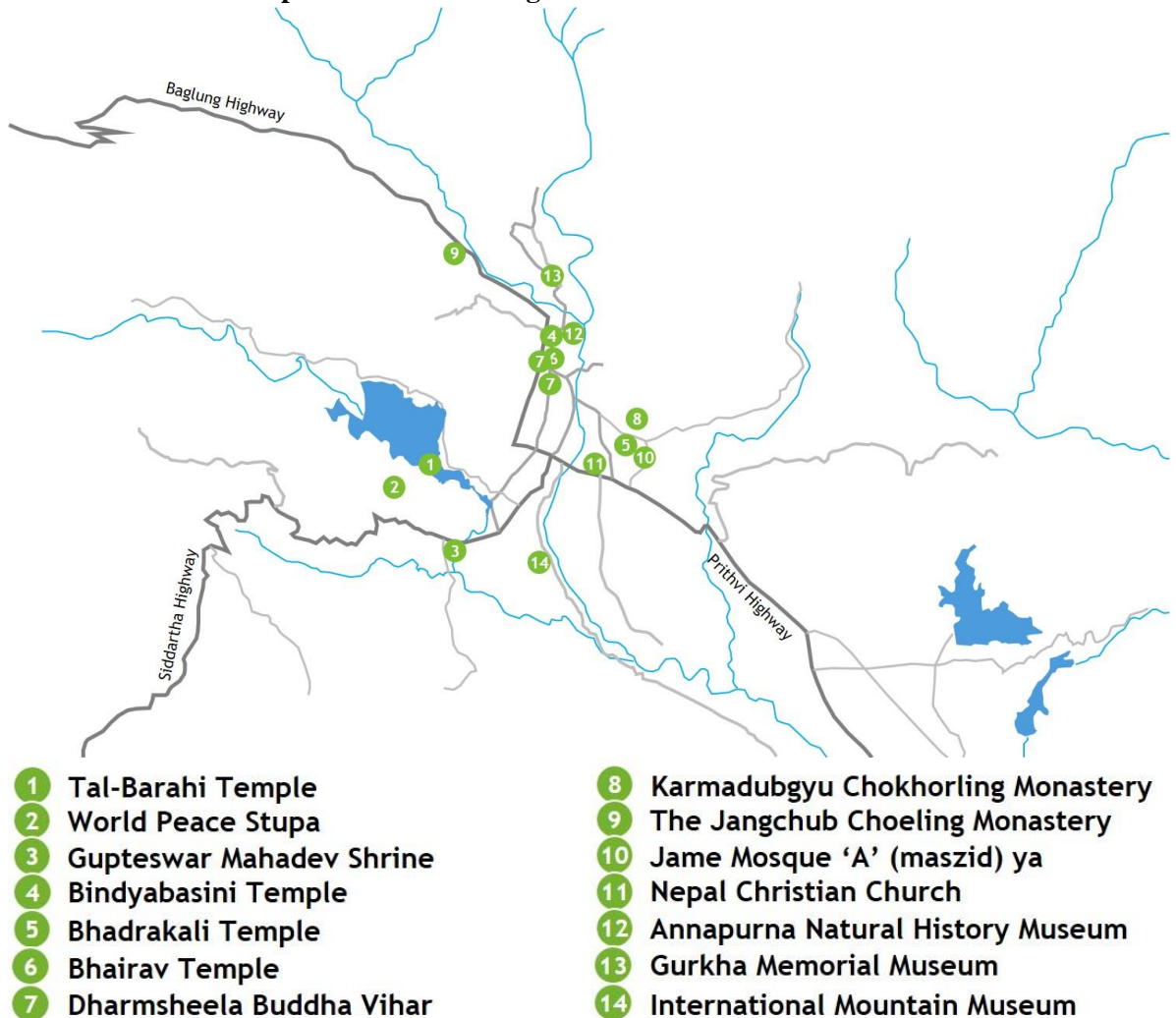
become very popular as a paragliding center with the 5000 feet elevation. It has been an international para-port.

- ⑪ **Kaskikot:** There are many hilltops from where enchanting and romantic views of Pokhara valley, green forest, gorgeous and skyscraper snow clad mountains and beautiful lakes can be seen. The Kaskikot hilltop is one of them. Kaski is the name of the place and 'kot' means 'fort' in the Nepali language. About the derivation of the name 'Kaski' there are two versions. According to one version, 'Kaski' is the name of a costume which is worn by Tamu (Gurung) indigenous people, from the waist to the knee, now known as 'kacchad' by distortion. It is associated with a petty king or chieftain who belonged to Tamu aborigine at the start of the settlement in Kaski. This gives the historical fact or source of the name Kaski. Another version is from a Hindu legend or fiction. According to the fiction, a sage called Kashyap had meditated in that place. So the name Kaski is given to this hilltop (Subedi 2004, p 27). There is a saying 'Ghale Mari Shahi Rajaya' still in the tongue of the local people, which means killing Ghale (We) chose Shahi (Shaha). This is the political and historical information about the Kaskikot hilltop (ibid). By the name of Kaskikot, the whole place is named with the word Kaski (Niraula 1986). Kaski is the ancestral state of the Shaha kings of Nepal whose capital was Kaskikot about 1650 years ago. There is a black-topped road up to Sarankot and fair weather road from Sarankot to Kaski hilltop (Kaskikot). On the other side, via Hyanja to Naudanda, there is another pitch-road and then fair-weather road to reach Kaski hilltop. From Bindavasini Archal Bot via Sarankot, it is a good trekking to reach Kaski hilltop. It can be done in one day. There are hotels and restaurants to rest at the Kaskikot hilltop. From the Kaski hilltop, the visitors can enjoy the panoramic views of Machhapuchhre, Annapurna and Dhawalagiri Himals as well as Pokhara Valley, far and wide. It is most beautiful to watch especially in a clear full moon night. At the time of the rising sun in the morning the entire Himalayan range looks bright in the golden color. The visitors realize the direct existence of divinity while watching the beauty of nature.
- ⑫ **Kahunkot:** It is not a fort (kot) for military purpose or station. It was a fort for animal sacrifice in festivals like Chaite Dashain and Bada Dashain. A sacrifice of male animals like buffalo, sheep, goat and also the birds like pigeon, duck, rooster, to goddess Durga Bhagwati is supposed to be a way to make her pleased. From the tourism perspective, Kahunkot is a joyful spot to have a panoramic view of the snow-capped mountains, hills and evergreen natural forests. One can see the forked summit of Machhapuchhre and other Himals from the peak. It is very near to Mahendrapool Bazaar. From Kahunkot most part of southwestern valley and almost all part of northern valley of Pokhara can be seen. From the peak, Mahendrapool Bazaar area and its vicinity look very close. In Kahunkot there is a tower constructed to have a good view of the surrounding areas. It is also a spot for short trekking. Also the tower and its summit can be viewed clearly from Mahendrapool Bazaar.
- ⑬ **Ghandruk:** The Ghandruk hilltop is about 6500 feet above sea level, and it is the last boundary of Pokhara Valley in the northwestern direction. One special thing about this hilltop is that one can see the other side or back side of Machhapuchhre

Mountain very closely. Another thing is that the tourists can have a hospitable and homely enjoyment at home stays in Ghandruk. Down the hilltop one can view the terraced landscape with greeneries and foot hills. The visitor can also enjoy the sight of the beautiful, gorgeous flow of Mordi River. If one has never seen a mountain stage of a river, then it would be an ever-lasting memory in his life.

(3) Cultural Heritage of Greater Pokhara

Map 2. Cultural Heritage Resources in Greater Pokhara



- ① **Tal-Barahi Temple:** 'Tal' means lake and 'Barahi' is one of the names of an imaginary goddess name which is named after the Hindu god 'Baraha'. It is located on the tiny island of about 1.5 ropanis (763km²) in the middle of the Fewa Lake. It is 3 km from the Mahendrapool city and lies to the southern end of Pokhara Valley. There is a fantastic story about the origin of the lake and Barahi goddess. One evening, an old woman came to the settlement to pass the night. She went on begging for shelter, but nobody gave her shelter, instead the wicked people of the

settlement let their dogs chase the woman away. At last she came to the end of the settlement, where a poor and old couple lived in a thatched hut. The couple gave her a shelter to pass the night and also offered half of their millet bread (a kind of pancake) which was cooked for their evening meal. Early in the morning just before daybreak, the guest woke up the couple and asked to go away from the settlement, saying that the settlement will change into a big lake. She gave them a parcel which looked like a bundle and also asked them to leave their hut immediately. Following her advice, the couple walked away to the hill to the south of the settlement. When they reached the top of the hill, it was quite a bright day. From the top, as the couple looked to their settlement, it was already changed into a big lake and there was only their hut remaining on the lake. There is a similar type of fantastic story, but told in a little different way. Shakya (1995, p 73) has said that goddess Barahi in an old woman's form visited the village begging alms from door to door. People who gave her alms were told by her that a few days later, a flood would sweep away the village and that the place would turn into a huge lake. People who took her prediction seriously, moved to another place for safety. Certainly, the situation turned into as she had said. It rained heavily for over a week and the village was swept away by the flood. At the same time a part of a hill, where at present the Fish-Tail Lodge is located, slipped down and blocked the river. Thus the Lake Fewa came into being. Whatever may be the fantastic story, the geographical reality was that there was a very big and deep depression on the ground which was filled gradually by rain, flood, and spring water and in the course of time this changed into a lake especially around Barahi Temple and its north side where the rivulets like Harpan Khola (river) and Andheri Khola (river) in the north deposited water in the lake. These two rivulets drained all the water in Fewa Lake which was brought by seasonal streams like Beran Khola during rainy season. Later, Pokhara started to be an attractive place for tourists from abroad and other parts of Nepal because of the development of fast-growing means of transportation and communication. People of Pokhara constructed pagoda style temple on the spot of old Barahi Shrine. As a cultural heritage, Tal-Barahi is very auspicious and important shrine for Hindus and unique for foreigners too, especially in observing the people who gather and worship the goddess. Unique for the tourists is the sacrifice of animals and birds in the shrine of the goddess. People make lots of sacrifices during the festivals like Chaitya Dasain and Bada Dasain. On other days also people come to worship and sacrifice animals and birds to please the goddess. They believe that the deity fulfills their wishes. There occurs a great fair in the full moon day just after the Bada Dasain festival.

- ② **World Peace Stupa:** Peace Stupa is situated on the plain land of 21.5 ropanies, on the apex of the Anadu hilltop, just above Fewa Lake on the southern side of it. Its height is 1100 m from the sea level. Before the construction of Peace Stupa, the land was covered with the forest and greenery. The history of Peace Stupa starts from Japan, the country that suffered the atom-bomb blast during the Second World War. The preacher of Buddhism and peace, Nichidatsu Fuji, the chairman of Nipponazam Myhaji of Japan, began constructing World Peace Stupa in the year 2030 B.S. (1973 A.D.) But the government authorities of Kaski District demolished it using the

military in 2031 B.S. (1975 A.D.). However, after the successful people's revolution in the year 2046 B.S. (1989 A.D.), which was against the despotic Panchayat (party less) system, the reconstruction of the stupa was considered. The new government of multi-party system gave permission to rebuild it in the year 2046 B.S. (1990 A.D.). Accordingly, Peace Stupa was erected having a height of 115 feet and a circumference of 344 feet. Hidico Moriyaka Sony of Nipponzan Myohoji has contributed from the beginning till the completion of the stupa. The stupa is painted white to symbolize peace and tranquility. The existence of this symbolic peace on this beautiful place of Pokhara spreads fragrance of perpetual peace, pronounced by Gautam Buddha. This is the first ever Vishwa Shanti stupa (World Peace Stupa) made in Nepal of such kind. The prayer hall is named after Nipponzan Myohoji. According to the brochure published by The World Peace Pagoda Committee in Pokhara, there is a two storied guesthouse and vihar to provide rest to the Bhikshhus and pilgrims. This is a holy and pious place for Buddhists as well as all peace loving people. Four majestic statues of Buddha are placed at four directions. The eastern and front side of the stupa is occupied by majestic, splendid statue of Buddha's, wheel of Dhamma from Japan. In the western side the meditative statue of Buddha is erected from Sri-Lanka; the northern side has 6 feet tall grand statue made of metal from Thailand, and in the southern side has the metal statue reflecting the birth of Siddhartha Gautam Buddha. There is a golden pinnacle of 20 feet high with 13 segments and at the apex a crystal stone from Sri Lanka is placed. Sitting at the lap of the World Peace Stupa and viewing scenes of mindblowing mountains, Dhawalagiri, Machhapuchchre, Annapurna, etc, seem so close as if the mountains are personally whispering some words to us. At the same time, thinking of the images of Buddha, one can realize peace and tranquility in his mind. On Buddha's birthday, many people come to the stupa to worship Buddha and enjoy the scenic mountains, forest, and Fewa Lake. So Peace Stupa has presented itself as both natural and cultural Heritage of Pokhara.

- ③ **Gupteswar Mahadev Shrine:** Gupteswar Mahadev Shrine lies just below and underneath the Patale Chhango (Devi's Fall) in Chorepatan. Actually it is a huge, round shaped cave, perhaps made by the waterfall. The water vanishes in the cave, perhaps made by the waterfall, Devi's Fall. The water vanishes in the cave through a natural tunnel and merges in a rivulet called Phushre Khola about a kilometer away from the site. The huge cave inside is made of enormous blocks of rocks only. The visitors can see the awe-inspiring Devi's Fall falling down into the cave with a roaring sound. The cave is dark even in the day time and slippery too. So the Managing Committee of Gupteshwar Mahadev has managed to have installed railings, flights of stairs and light for the convenience and safety of the visitors. During monsoon from July to September, because of heavy rainfall, the cave or Gupteswar Shrine is unsafe to visit. In the year 2049 B.S. (1952 A.D.), some courageous local young people dared to enter into the cave and uprooted the wild bushes of its entrance. While going into the virgin cave, they found rocks shaped like Shivaling, a symbol of God Shiva. Later they placed Shiva's statues in the cave. Since then the name Gupteswar Mahadev or Shiva became very popular. In the very

festivals like Shiva Ratri, Ganesh pooja, Balachaturdasi, people rush to the cave to worship the deity.

- ④ **Bindyabasini Temple:** This temple is in Moharia Tol, the Old Bazaar side of Pokhara. Perhaps, it is the most popular temple in Pokhara after Barahi Temple of Fewa Lake. It is situated on a flat ground of about 5 ropani areas on top of the mound. There is a grove of big trees which provides quite sacred environment of spiritual feeling while having rest over there. This temple has a Shikhar-style architecture which is traditionally and locally popular in Pokhara. Bindhyabasini goddess has eight arms holding different weapons in each hand. She is regarded as Hindu goddess Bhagawati. Every year in Chaite Dashain and Bada Dashain there is a crowd of people who come to worship by sacrificing innocent animals and birds on the name of a holy work. Besides Dashain, on other occasions also people come to worship for sacrificing animals and birds. The devotees put Tika (red mark) of blood of the sacrificed animals on their forehead and pray to fulfill their inner wishes. They believe that the goddess fulfills their wishes. Besides, people also come to celebrate wedding, especially in wedding seasons. So visitors can enjoy the scenes of wedding ceremony and worshipping rituals. Nobody knows when the goddess was established on the top of the mound and by whom. People think that there lived some type of indigenous people. In their social development stage, they believed in some supernatural power and worshipped it which continued. Later Kulamandan Shaha (Jagati Khan) ruled in Kaski as a state, defeating the aborigine Ghale (Gurung) Chieftain. "Ghale Mari Shaha Rajayo" ("killing Ghale Shaha reigned"), a local saying, gives the sources (Subedi 2004, pp 25-77). Since then the Shaha Kings ruled in Pokhara Valley till the Last King of Kaski state Siddhinarayan Shaha, the 9th generation of Kulamandan Shaha was conquered by the politically and geographically unified Nepal during the regencies of Rajendra Laxmi (the Regent) of her child King, Rana Bahadur Shaha, the 13 generation of Kulmandan Shaha (see Annex 2.1) in 1842 B.S. (1786 A.D.). However, the story of Bindhyabasini Statue of today is related to the last king of Kaski Siddhinarayan Shaha. The story goes as follows: According to the legend, King Siddhinarayan dreamt that a female deity of Bindhyachal Parbat (mountain) in India, asked him to take her and place it on a fine, raised rock somewhere in his state, from where a snow-capped mountain could be seen. Believing his dream, he went with his attendants to fetch the deity. So he brought the present statue made of fine rock. The attendants and porters who carried the statue had a rest on the place where Bindhyabasini temple lies now. After the short rest, they tried to carry the image, but they could not lift it even an inch. According to another source, King Siddhinarayan asked some masons to make the statue (Subedi 2004, p 30). Thus, the statue was made over there and worshipped by many religious people, especially Hindus coming from India as well. It is locally said that the statue was brought from Bindhyachal Parbat (Mountain), because of which the name is Bindhyabasini. Besides Bindhyabasini, there are other images of Hindu deities which give a complete religious environment.

- ⑤ **Bhadrakali Temple:** This temple is situated on the top of a very small hillock. This hillock was also formed by a natural power at the same age when Tal-Barahi Island and Bidhyabasini hillock were formed. The temple is constructed at the height of about 250 feet. There are flights of stairs to reach the temple. It's a fine visit through a thick forest. Bhadrakali is also the goddess Bhagawati. So people sacrifice animals and birds to please the goddess Bhadrakali and expect that the goddess will fulfill their wishes. There is Ganesh Temple as well. So these two deities are worshipped by the Hindus. Many people come to this place for a wedding ceremony as well. They believe that the blessings of Ganesh and Bhadrakali bring happy and long conjugal life.
- ⑥ **Bhairav Temple:** The shrine where the 12 masks of twelve deities are kept and worshipped is in the Bhairav Tol (locality), a part of Old Bazaar of Pokhara Sub-metropolitan city. It is called temple, but does not look like a temple; rather it is a house. The identity of this temple is that twelve male persons wear different traditional dresses and put 12 different kinds of mask on their faces and dance with beating of Mridanga (a traditional musical instrument which looks like giant Madal). In the Newari language, it is called 'Khin'. The shrine and deities have historical value. It is related to the indigenous people, Newars of Kathmandu Valley, especially Bhaktapur District. Some Newars from Bhaktapur came to Pokhara more than 200 years ago as traders. They settled in Pokhara permanently and continued to worship the 12 deities regularly as their ancestral deities from Bhaktapur. They perform the dance, popularly known as Bhairav Dance. The dance is performed with Newari ritual songs played by Mridanga. The dancers do not feel tense or exhausted, even if they dance for a long time. The Bhairav Dance used to be publicly performed once in every twelve years. Now, it is performed every six years. This dance is publicly performed at the beginning of the winter season usually in the month of December or January and continues for four months. The specialty of the performance is that it commences in the evening, lasts whole night and ends next morning. People enjoy watching and worshipping the deities dancing, item by item and moving in a procession along the road while going to the inviting house and back from the house to its own shrine in Bhairav Tol. It is a very pleasant moment to watch the dance and procession, as it is the heritage of the Newari Culture.
- ⑦ **Dharmsheela Buddha Vihar:** This Vihar lies in the center of Pokhara Sub-metropolitan city. From Mahendrapool Bazaar, it takes 15 minutes to walk in the northwest direction. The vihar is the first Buddhist institution ever established in Pokhara. Actually, the vihar and its ritual and cultural environment are simple, based on real life with humanitarian philosophy. Actually, Mahayana and Bajrayana Buddhist sects are familiar over here than Theravada Buddhism which is based on reality and humanity. The vihar's name is after the name of Anagarika Dharma Sheela who struggled for the freedom and equality against the totalitarian rule of former Hindu governments who ruled this nation according to the caste system and cultural discrimination. It seems that the vihar was established around 1996 B.S. (1939 A.D.) in an area of about 1.5 ropanis. The vihar is enriched with very fine metallic images and also terracotta images of Gautam Buddha. There is a gorgeous

statue of Buddha given by Thailand, which is really appealing. Now the vihar is attracting many visitors and tourists day by day and earning popularity among the populace of Pokhara.

- ⑧ **Karmadubgyu Chokhorling Monastery:** It is situated on a hillock called Jaykot Danda (hill) in Kahunkot Village Development Committee, east of Mahendrapool Bazaar. It is five kilometers far from the city. Visitors can drive to the monastery or walk from the bottom of the hillock through the winding and fair-weather road to the monastery or reach by climbing the stairs passing through the green trees. The construction was started from 1954 and completed in 1961. The area is about 10 ropanis. The walls of the monastery are painted with Buddha's symbols in the Tibetan art. A huge statue of Buddha in a meditating posture flanked by Guru (teacher) Rimpoche and Karmapa is really an awesome sight. About a hundred students and Lama Guru reside there for learning and teaching Lamaism, the Mahayana Buddhism (Subedi 2004).
- ⑨ **The Jangchub Choeling Monastery:** After the occupation of Tibet by China in 1951, thousands of Tibetans fled from Tibet following their religious leader, Dalai Lama, the leader of Tibet. Many of them took shelter in Nepal as refugees. A group of them settled in Hyanja, the northern end of Pokhara Valley. It is about 12 km from Mahendrapool on the Highway to Baglung (Pokhara- Baglung Highway). They established this monastery to perform Tibetan Buddhist rituals, ceremonies and spiritual rites. Dalai Lama, their holy leader who is still residing with his followers in India named the monastery as "Jangchub Choeling". It is another eye-catching spot for the visitors and an auspicious icon for Tibetan refugees to watch and pray the seven-feet tall metal statue plated by gold. Hundreds of other small statues of Buddha are placed on either side of the big statues. Similarly, the walls are decorated with paintings related to Buddhist ceremonies, rituals and culture. It is very attractive, fascinating and heart-moving scene which creates the peaceful environment around the Monastery as it is surrounded with the natural forest with the enchanting views of Machhapuchhre and Annapurna Himalaya. Here, one can learn the Tibetan Buddhism and its culture as well as Tibetan lifestyle without visiting Tibet. Besides this monastery (gumba), there is another Tibetan refugee monastery in Chhore-Patan, Called "Tashilling Monastery."
- ⑩ **Jame Mosque 'A' (masjid) ya:** According to a gentleman, Abdul Kuran of Miyan-Patan, who claims to have studied Kuran and heard about Muslims in Nepal and the settlement of Muslims in Pokhara, this Mosque is the oldest in Pokhara. But he does not know the date of establishment of the mosque. He says, what he heard from his forefathers and elderly people is there was a thatched house at first representing a mosque at the place where a two-storied pakka building (Mosque) has been constructed now. Muslims of Miyan-Patan used to pray (recite) Namaj in the thatched house. Later, they built stone and mud house as mosque in place of the thatched house. Now, in the modern time, they erected the fine, colorful two-storied Mosque. Nowadays, there are two other prominent mosques in Chipledhunga and Nayan Bazaar, which are very near, about ½ km from Mahendrapool Bazaar. The biggest and holiest performance in Mohammadaism is reciting Namaj (pray) which

is held every day, five times, between 12.30 – 1.30 P.M. On Friday it is done with more participants. This Jame Mosque reflects the Muslim life and culture. An Imam is the highest authority of the Mosque. No Muslim can do anything without the permission of Imam. Muslims of Miyan- Patan used to play Hidas (a performance) in a procession of gathering, holding swords and Lathis (long and thick stick and other weapons) from the Jame Mosque which ends in Ramghat. This no longer exists in practice for some decades. So far I studied in history of Gorkhali King, Prithvi Narayan Shaha, at the start of his campaign for unifying Nepal politically and geographically into one state, he had brought 3 Muslims from Banaras to manufacture weapons and to train the soldiers. The 3 Muslims were Shokha Jabar, Bekha Sing and Mohammad Taqui (KC 1992). My logic is that the Muslims of Miyan- Patan are from the generation of those 3 Muslims brought by Prithivi Narayan Shaha. The base of this logic is the Muslims of Miyan-Patan are called "Churauta" derived from the Nepali word "Chura" which means wrist bangle. From my very childhood I had seen both male and female Muslims selling and putting Chura on women's wrists as their traditional profession. The name chureta didn't apply to other Muslims whose ancestors were the Kasmiri Muslims who entered Nepal for the first time for trade in 13th century. Hence the Churauta is the particular name in western Nepal given to the Muslims of Miyan-Patan. Another base of the logic is that Gorkha was much nearer from Pokhara than Kathmandu on foot. Pokhara's climate is not as cold as Kathmandu. It is rather more pleasing than Kathmandu. So the Muslims of Gorkha were more attracted to Pokhara than Kathmandu. According to Mr. Abdul Karim, their forefathers had got land as Birta (land given by the government as Contribution) in Kundahar and Ramghat. The Birta was called Karbala in Muslim language. All these bases logically show that the Muslims of Miyan- Patan have their ancestor in Gorkhali Muslims.

- ⑪ **Nepal Christian Church:** The seed of Christianity was sown in Pokhara in 1952 with the opening of the Missionary Hospital in a vast open ground, called Miruwa (Bagar) Tundikhel. Now it lies in Pokhara Sub-metropolitan city, ward no. 1. This hospital was locally popular as 'Shining Hospital'. Nepal Christian Church at Ramghat is the oldest church established in 1969 B.S. (1913 A.D.) very near Western Regional Hospital of Pokhara. It has already celebrated its Diamond Jubilee. There are two other main Churches. They are Nayan Gaun Nadipur Church and Lamachaur Church. In addition to these, several Churches have come into existence in almost all wards of the Sub-metropolitan city and other places of Pokhara. After the popular movement of 2062-63 B.S. (2006-2007 A.D.), Nepal has been declared a secular country. Since then Nepal has not been a Hindu Kingdom or Hindu Nation. Because of the declaration of Hindu Nation in the 2047 B.S. (1991 A.D.) constitution or before the popular people's movement the Hindu religion had suppressed other religions. Even the Buddhist religion which had already spread before the introduction of Hindu religion in Nepal and is believed to be in religious tolerance with Hinduism was dominated and discouraged by the Hindu conservative society and the government. So we can guess what might have happened to Mohammadaism and Christianity. But after the declaration of secularism, all the religions in Nepal got emancipation from the rule of suppression and oppression of

Hindu religion. Thus, Christians also enjoyed freedom of religion as the other religions. One encouraging example for Christianity is that, even the Nepal government has accepted to give equal rights and even donation to all Christians in Nepal. The point number 4 of the historical agreement signed between the Federation of National Christian, Nepal and Nepal Government on 2068/1/18 (May 1, 2011) specifies a similar status to be given to the Christians as other religious communities (Parajuli 2012). So the number or population of Nepali Christians is growing in leaps and bounds. The attraction of Christian religion is that it does not believe in social discrimination such as the caste system, untouchability and gender inequality, which are the fundamentals of the Hindu religion. Praying in front of the God's son, Jesus Christ is the most important culture of Christianity.

- ⑫ **Annapurna Natural History Museum:** This Museum is the first ever established museum in Pokhara. It was established by a lady, an American Peace Corp volunteer named late Dorothy Mierow in 1965 A.D. It is in Prithivi Narayan Campus Complex. Mierow's long stay in Pokhara helped this Museum grow continuously. She had an interest in promoting wildlife like insects, plants, birds and butterflies found in Nepal to provide learning opportunity to the visitors. She was also encouraged by the collection of large varieties of butterflies collected and presented by a British Entomologist named Colin Smith. A collection of almost all of Nepal's 640 species of butterflies is demonstrated in the Nepal collection. Besides butterflies, there are collections of interesting dragonflies and varieties of plants, birds, animals and information of culture of the people of the western region, especially hill and mountain region. A total of about 70 plants and 150 birds of the regions are stuck on plywood strips and charts on the wall. According to the Annapurna Natural History Museum, there are the skins of 56 birds for the students of ornithology to study, which were donated by Dr. Bab Fleming, Sr. Some of the rarest birds like vulture, Kande Bhyakur (Indigenous bird of Nepal), etc. are kept here. Butterflies as well as moths which are found around the Annapurna ranges are collected. However, the collection of butterflies of different kinds such as banded afol, sesabita, Medobya, etc. are dominating in the exhibition. So, the Museum is also named by the visitors as Butterfly Museum. About 90 animals' life-sized pictures on plywood and cement reliefs are depicted. Since 1988 A.D. (Thapa 2010) Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) has handled and monitored the Museum. There is very good Western Regional Library next door to it. There is a room allocated to ACAP in which the tectonic block theory of moving continent and rising mountains like Mahabharat including Himals and formation of valleys like Pokhara are explained to the visitors. In this room, there are many samples of different rocks and fossils like 'Saligram,' a kind of igneous rock, and many other minerals. Some of these are donated by the Geology Department of Colorado College. The museum is worthwhile to visit and learn about Nature's creation. This Museum lies in the locality 'Bagar, in Prithvi Narayan Campus compound, 3 km from the Mahendrapool. There are 10 eye-catching, beautiful painted pillars which represent men and women from the mountain or Himalayan regions, Tarai region, and Newar farmers from Kathmandu Valley (Hill region), Brahmins of hills and Tibetans at the entrance of

the Museum building. Such images welcome you with their fashionable cultural costumes, when you step up to the entrance of the Museum building.

⑬ **Gurkha Memorial Museum:** "Gurkha" is the term for Gurkhali warriors since the start of political and geographical unification of Nepal, which was launched in the year 1801 B.S.(1745 A.D.) by Prithvi Narayan Shah. Internationally the word 'Gurkha' becomes popular for the first time, for the bravery, courage and undying spirit of war and dedication to their duty during Anglo-Nepalese War from 1814 to 1816 A.D. Later, the British Government started recruiting the Nepalese youth with the name of 'Gurkha' and sent them to fight in the First and Second World Wars. Since then, Gurkha became popular in every nook and corner of the world for their bravery, courage and sense of responsibility. Gurkha Memorial Museum represents glimpses in detail in different medium to the satisfaction of the visitors. Its short history starts from Lainchaur, in Kathmandu. Gurkha Memorial Trust decided to establish Gurkha Memorial Museum. So, the Working Committee decided to manage the Museum in 1996 A.D. in Lainchaur under the Chairmanship of Capt. Eknarayan Gurung. Latter in the year 2001 A.D., the Museum was shifted to Pardi, Pokhara, in the complex of the Hotel Nature Land hiring a house there. The motive to move the Museum to Pokhara must be that the largest numbers of Gurkhas belong to Pokhara and its vicinity. On 9th July 2005, this Museum again moved to its own building in Deep, Pokhara Sub-metropolitan City ward no. 16, in the north of K.I. Singh bridge, in the complex of British Camp. The Museum lies in one hour's walking distance from Mahendrapool city center and about 10 km from the Lakeside. There is a regular city bus service from the Lakeside to Gurkha Memorial Museum. From its vicinity one can enjoy watching the deep gorge of turbulent Seti River about 300 feet below the new bridge. There is old K.I. Singh Bridge on the left when you are crossing the new bridge towards the Museum. The Museum's doors are open for 7 days from 8 am to 4:30 pm. The aim of the Museum is to maintain the everlasting history and memories of Gurkha with their bravery medals such as Victoria Cross (VC), the highest award for exceptional bravery in the battle field. Thirteen Gurkhas have received this glorious medal. There are five galleries which contain the displays of the following;

- Historical Gallery in Ground Floor: It contains the photo-display of the history of the Gorkhas from Anglo-Nepalese War in the year 1814-1916 AD to present days. Together with it, there are the displays of different war and fighting sounds, managed in different color of light. It is very interesting to watch and hear them.
- Gorkha Infantry Regiments Galley in First Floor: It has the display of historical photos of the old and new British Gorkha Regiments, platoons divided after the independence of India and formations of the infantries since then.
- Gorkha Specialist Corp Unit Gallery in Second Floor: It has the displays of the history of platoons working in British Singapore and the detailed information of warning times and normal situation till today. It also contains the communication devices used in military as well as the sounds of military march pass.

- VC Room in the Second Floor: There is a 29-inch television screen on which the documentaries about Gurkhas are shown. This show is managed only for those visitors who come in group.
- Other displays and Library in the Second Floor: There is a library in the second floor. Different models of Khukuries (traditional Nepali knife) which the Gorkha had used are displayed together with the souvenir items along with the names of the contributors and photographs who helped and donated money to establish the Museum.

To summarize the display, there are displays with realistic sound in the background, military uniforms with medals, hundreds of photographs of individual Gurkha regimental history, souvenir shop, genuine Gorkha Khukuries, Nepali ornaments and books on Gurkhas. There a documentary film is shown on T.V. which is especially designed for a large number of school children. Beautiful mountain top views from the top of the floor of the building, a unique venue of seminar etc. can be interesting, informative and enjoyable for the visitors.

⑭ **International Mountain Museum:** The International Mountain Museum (IMM) is the largest and most sophisticated modern type of Museum. It is unique of its type in the world. It was initiated in 1996 A.D. by Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) (Khatiwada and Kshetry 2004). The beautiful architecture in the huge complex exhibits the perfect landscape. There is a grand Museum Hall. The total area of the IMM is six hectors. Actually, the idea to establish IMM in Pokhara was the inspiration of all those mountains of Pokhara that attract the people of the world. These are the motivations to open the IMM where the visitors can get information about all these objects and know how to visit those spots, where to visit and when to visit the areas in Pokhara. From the Museum premises one can view the panoramic mountain peaks of Dhaulagiri, Manaslu and Annapurna. Thus the aim of International Mountain Museum is to provide enjoyment along with the knowledge of wonderful natural heritage and cradle of cultural heritage of Nepal, especially the Western Region. There are exhibitions of mountaineering history and its methods as well as entertainment and knowledge of mountain geography, ecology and culture of people living in the regions. They are displayed in splendid photos, pictures and charts. The management committee has also managed a documentary show for the visitors. So the IMM in Pokhara is a special tribute to mountains and people living in mountain and hilly regions. It also provides knowledge to the visitors who wish to go for adventurous trekking in those areas, who want to study and explore something about mountains (ibid 2004). The main Museum has the following halls where things are displayed artistically and beautifully so that the visitors can enjoy both researchable knowledge and information.

- The Hall of the Himalaya: The geography of Himalayas, their peaks, flora and fauna, indigenous ethnic diversity and lifestyle has been displayed in this Hall.
- The Hall of International Mountains: This Hall is allotted to display the planning of the knowledge and information about the mountains and the peaks of the world.

- The Hall of Expedition: There are the displays of the history of mountaineering expedition together with the equipment and development of mountaineering techniques that are used.
- The Hall of Fame: This Hall exhibits the tributes to famous Mountaineers who performed record breaking events with courage, energy and will power. There are also the displays of famous discoveries, researches and explorations.

(4) Ethnic Communities of Greater Pokhara

At first, Pokhara was inhabited by Mongol aborigines like Gurung (Tamu), Magar, etc who spoke Tibeto-Burman languages. They settled in hills like Kaskikot, Sarangkot, Pangdurkot, Arghaunkot, etc. around the vicinity of Pokhara Valley. They had their own culture and tradition, and language and history. But they were either lost or modified because of Hinduisation during the Hindu rule of 22 and 24 petty state rulers in western Nepal. The Chhetri Kings and their followers (Brahmins), who were Hindus, had come to Nepal seeking shelter during the Mugal rule in India. There are proofs of the existence of the aborigines, Ghale (Gurung) Chieftains, as they were dignified in their social development. These aborigines followed Buddhism together with their nature worshipping religion since Buddhism was the first religion to enter throughout the country. The history says Gautam Buddha with his disciples had come to Nepal to introduce Buddhism. After the political and geographical unification of Nepal by the then Shah Kings of Hindu origin of Gorkha state, Newars from Kathmandu valley came to Pokhara to trade and settle down especially in the plain area of the bazaar of Pokhara valley. Since then, Newari culture and traditions mingled with those of Hindus and spread in Pokhara. By that time, the Muslims whose ancestors were brought from Banaras (India) by the King Prithvi Narayan Shaha had also settled in Pokhara, especially in a small area known as Miyan- Patan. Since then, Muslim culture and tradition also came into existence in Pokhara simultaneously. In 1952 a hospital was run by Christian Missionary in old Tundikhel, now Pokhara Sub- Metropolitan city, ward No.1. Consequently, Christians also started to settle in Pokhara. So, Pokhara has been a cradle of the four religious people and their culture at present. Parajuli (2004, p27) authenticates the mixture of the ethnic groups in Pokhara as ‘the population of Pokhara is made up of numerous ethnic and caste groups, a number of classes and creeds as well as linguistic heterogeneity.’ Yet the important and remarkable point is that there was no confrontation in the name of religion so far. General people of Pokhara, irrespective of their religions, are more social in their social life. Although their culture, such as festivals, ceremonies and rituals are different, they willingly take part in each other's ceremonies and functions, except by those who are very conservative. Such conservatives are very few in number. People think their social life is very important and more valuable than their religious traditions.

- ① **Gurung(Tamu):** Gurungs migrated from surrounding hills into Pokhara valley in earlier period. Now there are a lot of Gurung settlements in Pokhara bazaar. By birth they are Buddhists. They have their own Pachchu (Lama priest) (who is a Buddhist). But because of both pressure and attraction of Hinduism, many of them follow

Hindu religious festivals and traditions like Dashain, Teej and married women use vermilion powder on forehead. They also celebrate Buddhist rituals as well as their own festivals like Lhosar (New Year) and T'hoten. Gurungs are popular as brave soldiers by the name of 'Gurkhas' in British and Indian armies. Many of them still join Gurkha army in the foreign countries.

- ② **Brahmin and Chhetry:** Brahmins and Chhetris are originally Aryan and Hindus who entered Nepal from India. They left India because of the Muslim Mugal's invasion in India. Pokhara is inhabited by large number of Brahmins and Chhetris who have their own cultural festivals.
- ③ **Magars:** Gurungs, Magars, Sherpas, Rai-Limbu, Newars, etc are indigenous ethnic groups originated from Mangolian ancestors who speak Tibeto- Burman language in one or other way. Magars, although originally Buddhist, follow Hindu tradition after coming in contact with Hindus. Along with Buddhist and Hindu tradition, they have their own culture and tradition, developed in course of their social shaping.
- ④ **Newars:** Newars migrated to Pokhara valley from Kathmandu valley as traders after the political and geographical unification of Nepal. Some of them are Hindus and some Buddhists. Accordingly, they follow the culture of Hinduism and Buddhism. By profession, they are traders. Earlier Pokhara city was mostly populated by Newars. In other words, Newars established the Pokhara city. They also established their own ethnic culture and tradition, which were brought from Kathmandu valley with them. Among various cultural ceremonies, Tayamacha dance, Bhairav dance Gaijatra, Bagjatra, etc. are colorful and enchanting when performed.
- ⑤ **Thakalis:** Thakalis came down to Pokhara from Thakkhola, the northern mountain region, especially from Kaligandaki River base. At first they were seasonal traders, because of which some of them settled down in Pokhara bazaar. Now there are lots of Thakalis who have good houses and buildings in Pokhara bazaar. Their profession is mostly trading. They are Buddhist by birth and follow Buddhist tradition and rituals with their own tradition like Toronlho, Festival of archery, etc.
- ⑥ **Rai-Limbus(Khambus):** Although in history, there is mention of Rai- Limbus in Pokhara in earliest period, dating back to political and geographical unification of Nepal, they were not pre-known in Pokhara as settlers. But now, after the construction of the Highways, Rai- Limbus also came to Pokhara in search of jobs. Some of them have settled permanently in Pokhara valley. Although they follow their Mundhum religion and traditions, they are very close to Buddhism. Now days, Pokhara valley has become a melting pot of other ethnic groups and people from Tarai region, and even from India who have come to do jobs.
- ⑦ **Gaine (Gayak) Community:** Gaine means one who sings in Nepali terminology. Now days, they like to be called as Gayak. Either Gainses or Gayaks are the traditional professional singers. Their native locality is in Pokhara 16, Batulechaur, next to the Maternity Child Community Friendship Polyclinic (Pokhara-Komegane), on the way to Mahendra cave. They entertain the travelers, singing songs about the history, social events and incidents which reveal the story of joys and sorrows of the people. They play music on the local musical instrument called Sarangi which

produces heart moving melodious music. Very often, the visitors can encounter them with smile and singing songs along with the Sarangi in tourists' places like Lakeside, Sarangkot hill top, Airport, and Mahendrapool Bazaar.

(5) Events and Festivals

| Events & Festivals | Organizers | Approximate Dates | Reference |
|---|---|--------------------------|---|
| Manakamana Darsan Pokhara Cup Football | Football Association Kaski | | |
| Pokhara Marathon | Ex. Sportmanship Forum Kaski | March | |
| National Industrial Trade Festival | Pokhara Chamber of Commerce and Industries | December | |
| Lakenath Festival | Lekhnath Chamber of Commerce and Industries | February | |
| Pokhara Festival | United Club Pokhara | January | Trade fair with entertainment |
| Fewa Food & Nepali New Year Festival | Western Hotel Association Nepal, Kaski | April | Festival of food and culture |
| Dashain Food Festival | City Restaurant & Bar Association | October | |
| Navadurga Festival | Bindabasini Dharmic Chhetra Bikash Samiti | October | |
| Paddy Planting (Ashare Ropain) Festival | Pokhara Tourism Council | June/July | Agro-tourism-based event with a slogan of Pokhara for all seasons |
| Paragliding Competition | Nepal Air Sports Association | January/February | Participation of 130~170 paragliders from 25 countries on average |
| Asha RaRa Football Tournament | Sahara Club Pokhara | January/February | |
| Pokhara Street Festival | Restaurant & Bar Association (REBAN) | December/January | Organized for over 10 years on the eve of English New Year |
| Teej Festival | Local Community | September | Batulechaur, |

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | | Rambazar & Lakeside |
| Gaijatra Festival | Newar Community | August/September | Cultural dance on the streets |

2.2 EARLY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF GREATER POKHARA

(1) A Transit Point for Mountaineers in the 50’s and 60’s

Mt. Annapurna I (8,091m) was climbed on June 3, 1950 by a French national Maurice Herzog and a team of mountaineers, exposing Pokhara as a mountainous tourist destination in the world. A barrage of media coverage ensued.

The first commercial trekking tourism operation was started by British Colonel Jimmy Roberts in association with a global package tourism pioneer, Thomas Cook (United Kingdom) in 1966.

And the Siddhartha Highway was completed in 1968.

(2) A Favorite Destination for Western Hippies during the 60’s and 70’s

The Western Hippies were the adventure seekers who were the first explorers and to some extent risk takers to visit around the new places of Annapurna region in the 60’s. Their contribution is still remembered in the sense that they popularized those places through photography.

The physical development plan of Pokhara was formulated in 1974. And the Prithvi Highway was constructed to connect Pokhara with Kathmandu in 1976. The professional tourism development in Pokhara was started at the end of the 1970’s.

(3) The Gateway to Various Popular Treks & Western Regions in the 80’s and Beyond

Pokhara became popular as for the gateway to Royal Trek starting from Kalikasthan ridge in Begnas Lake area. Prince Charles of Wales was the pioneer to popularize it.

The name and fame of Pokhara has risen as the gateway for various other popular treks like round Annapurna Circuit trek, Annapurna Sanctuary trek, Ghandruk-Ghorepani, Mardi Himal trek, Jomsom-Muktinath, Nar- Phoo, Dhaulagiri round and Dolpa treks.

The popularity of Pokhara was upscaled with the opening of the restricted area of upper Mustang trek. And Annapurna Conservation Area Project was started in the areas north of Pokhara under the integrated conservation and development program and the position of Pokhara as an entry and exist point was strengthened.

Pokhara has evolved as a destination not only to view but also to get involved in a number of annual scheduled events/activities like rice planting festival, New Year Festival, Street festival, international paragliding championship, winter trekking camp, triathlon championship, etc.

2.3 PAST TOURISM PLANNING OF POKHARA

Pokhara has passed through a number of interventions for its development from the perspective of tourism since Nepal's first and the only tourism master plan in 1972 which had mentioned the importance of tourism, highlighted about the traditional designs, materials and height limits of buildings in Pokhara and recommended about its strategic position with the regional concept.

(1) Tourism Master Plan of 1972

The Tourism Master Plan of 1972 was the first and only one of this kind and also was the result of joint efforts of the then Government of Nepal and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. Over a period of ten months, the master plan study team collected and analyzed data and information in the relevant fields in order to formulate the plan with long-term perspective, and to set a detailed action-oriented programs for the period up to 1980 with a phase-wise development concept (HMG 1972).

The Tourism Master Plan had come up with various propositions; regional concept of tourism, tourism facility plans, institutional development programs and marketing programs. In connection with tourism in Pokhara, the Master Plan anticipated:

- a. A decentralized pattern of tourism development in the future. While in the initial phase, facilities in the Kathmandu area would expand and priority would gradually be given to developing Pokhara,
- b. That Pokhara will develop into a major resort center once its recreational potential and the accessibility of the Himalayas are improved.

Pokhara and surroundings hold many natural attractions and recreational resources suited for resort development owing to its lakes and proximity to the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri mountains. The Plan duly recognized the potential and proposed various interventions. Machhapuchhre, "the fishtail" peak with the bold pyramidal shape, one of the most beautiful peaks in the world, stands close to the town. Similarly, to preserve the local architectures of Pokhara, the government was advised to design buildings that could set an example of the use of traditional design, materials and height limit, particularly around the lake. The Master Plan had recommended Pokhara as the most suitable place for resort development and suggested setting the lake area (Fewa Lake) aside for the purpose and to direct urban expansion of Pokhara towards the south. The hotels in future might be better to be developed along the north shores as the southern shore are especially attractive as they provide a good view of the Annapurna massif. Basic infrastructural investments are necessary to open up in the resort area and to encourage private investment. To succeed, the most important current tasks are: to prepare a development plan for the area, to design the buildings using local materials, and to build the low rise buildings on the pattern of the existing lodges. The Master Plan further recommended for landscaping of the lake area and conducting bio-chemical analysis of the lake and its suitability for swimming and other activities. Recreational facilities would include possibilities for boating, fishing and swimming. Sports facilities would include a small golf course and two tennis courts. Excursion to scenic spots in the valley and its surroundings was to be promoted. The local supply

would be distinctively different from that of Kathmandu, featuring a more rural setting of facilities, open air activities and amenities for nature lovers (HMG 1972).

The Master Plan has also suggested an outline for resort development in Pokhara. A development plan was to be prepared for the entire area to include urban expansion of Pokhara Bazaar. The plan should consider an initial land of 20 hectares area along the northern, eastern and southern shores of the lake. The first stage of development would include an estimated public expenditure of NPR 3 millions for site development, land acquisition, provision and extension of power and water supply lines, construction of approach roads, as well as landscaping. Reforestation is recommended at the upper Phurse Khola to avoid further siltation of the lake. Public funds should be considered for the development of recreational amenities such as golf courses and tennis courts. For the second stage of resort development expenditures a budget totaling NPR 2 millions was estimated to include extension of the site, public utilities and roads as well as land acquisition and landscaping. In terms of accessibility, this has been highly emphasized for the development of tourism in Pokhara. The Master Plan has recommended that the construction costs for Pokhara Airport would greatly increase requiring additional expenditures allocation of NPR 20 millions on top of whatever amount had been already earmarked. With its lakes and nearness to the proposed National Park (Annapurna Conservation Area), Pokhara possesses developable recreational resources. However, the cultural attractions are very few in comparison to Kathmandu or other areas of Nepal. Yet the magnificent scenery compensates more than the lack of other sightseeing opportunities. The potential demand includes, in the sequence of importance, the following three types:

- sightseeing visitors along the proposed tour routing
- vacation tourism from India
- trekking tourism

Although many of the recommendations put forth by the Master Plan are yet to be implemented, the Plan is deemed to set a perspective in terms of long-term tourism development in the country. However, so far as the land use for the planning in Pokhara is concerned, the propositions outlined in the Tourism Master Plan of 1972 had been superseded by the subsequent comprehensive Physical Development Plan of Pokhara developed by the Department of Housing and Physical Planning. As a consequence, the southern shores of Fewa Lake which were recommended in the Tourism Master Plan for the main tourism development activity sites have now been zoned for lakeside preservation. Further, an area of the valley, between Pardi and the Seti River and the immediate south of the existing Pokhara airport was zoned instead for tourism development. This is a major change from the situation described in the Tourism Master Plan and one which negates a number of its recommendations regarding Pokhara.

(2) Pacific Area Travel Association (PATA) Development Authority, 1975

The Pacific Area Travel Association Development Authority was asked by the Department of Tourism of Nepal to study the Pokhara Valley and to advise how the

development of this area could be best handled so as to fulfill the potential outlined in the Tourism Master Plan of 1972. As the tourism development in Pokhara since 1972 had not produced the desired results, the Department of Tourism sought to determine whether the development could indeed help to:

- a. Extend the stay of tourists in Nepal from three to five days,
- b. Take some of the tourist pressure off Kathmandu,
- c. Improve the ability of the area to fill the gap of economic growth between itself and that of the Kathmandu Valley or the more favored parts of the Terai (PATA 1975).

In this context, the study of PATA was conducted exclusively for Pokhara. In 1975 PATA published the report "Pokhara- Nepal, Development of a Secondary Destination," presenting a series of observations and recommendations for tourism development. It had forwarded its findings and recommendations as follows;

- a. Pokhara has tremendous amount of possibilities to evolve as a secondary tourist destination after Kathmandu.
- b. The reasons for tourists coming to Pokhara (motivation to travel) were the Himalayas and trekking, so the marketing of Pokhara should be primarily for Himalayas not for the Lakes. Once they are in Pokhara, the reasons and motivations for staying longer in Pokhara are the people, the town, the rural scene, the lakes and the climate.
- c. Gorkha Museum and Mountaineering Museum should be established, a walkers' guide for Pokhara should be developed and the tourism development should be towards bazaar area and the slopes of Sarangkot above the Bindhabasini Temple.
- d. The Tourism Master Plan of 1972 and PATA's findings differed in the following aspects:
 - The lakes: The Tourism Master Plan emphasized the lakes but the evaluation of PATA study team reduced their significance as a tourist attraction. It was because of the lakeside preservation zoning decision and also because they do not share with Annapurna the uniqueness that would bring tourists from far afield to Pokhara. They were basically the sorts of attractions that could keep tourists happy once they arrived.
 - Town: The appeal of Pokhara was that it could offer the attractive urban and village architecture in a very pleasant setting that was different from and yet complementary to the temples of Kathmandu. The attractiveness of the town was a significant asset and it maintained that future tourism development would benefit from proximity to the Bazaar as opposed to being located in the Pardi area.
 - Recreation: Pokhara is the first and the foremost sightseeing area and should develop this potential before it started to become the resort area recommended in the Tourism Master Plan. In such an isolated location, there was inevitably a question about the success of the resort approach; in any case, it should not be

considered until Pokhara became a more mature destination with well-developed facilities for sightseeing and shopping and larger visitor base.

- e. For further development, the packages of Nepal can be combined with the beach packages of Sri Lanka. Since most European tourists want to include beach holidays in their package, Nepal should work towards creating triangular flights, for instance; Frankfurt-Kathmandu-Colombo-Frankfurt. This would increase the inflow of tourists to Nepal and eventually to Pokhara as the fares would be more competitive and the package would be more diverse.
- f. Additionally, the area should be promoted as a greater Pokhara giving more options to the tourists.
- g. The Indian honeymoon travel segment mostly concentrates in the July-August period when Pokhara faces the shoulder season due to the monsoon rain. Similarly the Indian tourists prefer hill stations and religious sites to beach resorts and historical cities during their vacation.
- h. Since Pokhara receives a lot of rainfall, some indoor activities such as indoor games, theater to watch movies and opera should be developed to make them stay longer during monsoon. French, Italian, Spanish and Dutch travelers were found visiting Pokhara during the monsoon.
- i. The Department of Tourism should keep a daily record of the hours when the mountains are visible and of the hours when it is raining.
- j. Diversifying the sightseeing options; for example, including Begnas and Rupa Lake or developing hiking trails along the ridge that divides the two lakes.
- k. Activities like walking, riding, swimming, fishing and evening entertainment (military parade by ex-Gorkhas, changing of guards, etc.) are highly recommended for Pokhara.

There are several other recommendations for the development of tourism in Pokhara. Some of the recommendations have been implemented (e.g. Mountain Museum, Gorkha Museum, etc.). Some have become obsolete now and some are still valid but seem increasingly difficult to execute.

(3) 'Pokhara 1988' by PATA

At the request of the Department of Tourism and of the PATA Nepal Chapter, a team of four members including three from the original task force of 1975 went again to Pokhara at the end of January 1988 to assess what had happened since 1975. The team of PATA prepared a report titled "Pokhara 1988" that included several references to the conservation of Pokhara and the Pokhara valley and presented a number of recommendations. Some points having major significance for future tourism development in Pokhara are outlined as follows (PATA 1988):

- a. Many of the findings of the 1975 PATA report on Pokhara had not yet been implemented. The 1988 PATA team found, however, that in by far the majority of cases, they were still valid.

- b. In order to turn this situation around and to move Pokhara forward towards its tourism potential, a strong commitment on the part of the government and an enthusiastic involvement on the part of the private sector were required.
- c. In the report of 1975, PATA recommended that Pokhara hotels would have to 'concentrate on providing the tourists with the primary items, cleanliness, safe food and drinking water and a comfortable bed in a well-ventilated room with an efficiently functioning shower and toilet.' Whereas the investment in the accommodation facilities apparently exceeded the demand, yet meeting even the basic facilities, for instance, water supply, was full of challenges. That the hotels and lodges situated in the Baidam area still pumped water from the Fewa Lake was a clear evidence of the pathetic situation of water supply in the area.
- d. The report also mentioned that there had been an extensive development of the small hotel and guest house properties located in the Baidam area. The then estimate was of 600 to 700 rooms as the dominant element in Pokhara accommodation. The proliferation of these properties led to deep price cutting with the result that room rates could be uneconomic and as low as 10/15 NPR per night.
- e. Trekking had grown to a great degree since 1975. The impact of this on tourist operations in the Pokhara valley did not appear to have been as great as expected.
- f. The modern construction in some of the rural parts of Pokhara deteriorated their charms. It had tended to make Fewa Lake a more important element in Pokhara visitors' experience than it was considered to be by the 1975 Task Force. After reviewing the 1988 situation, the placement of a greater emphasis on the Lake area for tourism development was recommended.

After various observations, the team recommended the establishment of the basis for further growth by addressing the following key problem areas and adopting an action plan:

- A. Improvement of road access and air services: The question of a new airport was also one that would have to be addressed. The construction of such facilities normally took 5 to 10 years. If tourism remained an important element in national planning, a new airport was essential in Pokhara. Not only would the development of a new airport enable the introduction of medium jet service to open up new quality markets overseas, it would also provide an important alternative to the airport in Kathmandu should weather conditions necessitate diversions. The Pokhara airport could develop as a hub for air services into West Nepal and could siphon off some of the operational congestion which might otherwise begin to develop in Kathmandu. Interestingly, some of the Indian tour operators indicated that there could be considerable amount of demand for Delhi-Pokhara-Kathmandu-Delhi service and special interest chartered flights to Pokhara.
- B. Quality Control: Pokhara suffered because the supply exceeded demand leading to an unhealthy competition in price and negligence in the quality of services to the tourists. Pokhara could develop into a quality oriented destination rather than a price-oriented one.

- C. **Conservations:** The team found that the initial charm observed in 1975 had been deteriorating and that this important asset was being used up, but neither preserved nor revived.
- D. The following actions were recommended by the ‘Pokhara 1988’ team of PATA:
- a. The licensing of hotels, guesthouses, trekking agencies and trekking lodges should be regulated in such a way that the number and standard of individual units are subject to control.
 - b. A self-regulating body within the industry or perhaps supported by government, for example; a hotel association, a trekking association or a Pokhara tourism association would establish certain standards and grant its stamp of approval only to those enterprises that met the standards.
 - c. The planning capability was found to be in place but the implementing commitment was missing and the planned activities were not translated into action.
 - d. Part of the regulations that could be introduced would be a height limit on construction, particularly around the lake, in Pokhara town and in the more attractive villages. As recommended in the 1975 report, it would be helpful if future government buildings could set an example of the use of traditional design and materials.
 - e. It was strongly recommended that the northern shore of Fewa Lake should be kept open for public access. The standard often used in lakeside planning was for all private structures to be set back at least 200 feet from the lakeshore and no private ownership was encouraged to extend all the way down to the water. It would be possible to construct a path around the lakeshore to facilitate public access for walking and perhaps cycling.
 - f. As recommended in 1975, it was still important to maintain a consistently accurate statistics of the visitors to Pokhara. For planning purpose, it would be equally important to keep records each day, from the meteorological station, of the hours of mountains’ visibility and the incidence of rainfall.
 - g. The report ‘Pokhara, 1988’ included several references to the conservation of tourism resources in Pokhara valley. One specific recommendation was on the need to conserve the historic building located on the Ram Krishan Tole, a historically important by the trodden way of the salt route to Tibet. This study prepared an inventory of 310 buildings in Ram Krishna Tole, Ganesh Tole, Bhimsen Tole, Bhairav Tole and Moharia Tole after an extensive survey. All the buildings were photographed, encoded, categorized, evaluated for their tourism and cultural potential and recommendations were outlined for conservation of these resources. The summary conclusion of the report was that the long row of buildings on Ram Krishna Tole that related to the salt trade traffic was a marvelous string of important traditional buildings. The buildings were intact, though baldly neglected. They could be restored to become wonderful

community and tourism assets. This could be a lively shopping street again (PATA 1988).

- (4) 'Pokhara: Historic Resources Study and Proposal for a Conservation District Pokhara, Nepal' by PATA, 1990

As PATA took initiatives and came out with a report titled 'Pokhara Historic Resources Study and Proposal for a Conservation District Pokhara', which was published in 1990. The report sets out criteria on which judgments can be made regarding a building's relative importance in natural settings of Pokhara. The report also makes recommendations regarding the implementation of a conservation program for the continued preservation of buildings in Pokhara. Besides, policies are also proposed to designate and protect those buildings which are deemed significant in the evaluation process.

- (5) 'Tourism Business in Pokhara-Problems, Challenges and Outcomes 2057-A Special Study' by Nepal Rastra Bank, Pokhara Branch, 2000

Banking Development and Research Unit, Pokhara Branch of Nepal Rastra Bank, conducted a special study in 2057 B.S. (2000 AD) to assess the economic importance of tourism in Pokhara and its contribution to the overall tourism economy of Nepal. It also scrutinized the challenges Pokhara was facing and it might face in the future regarding tourism development. The major findings of the report were as follows (NRB 2001):

- a. In average, each hotel employed 32 persons. A star hotel employed 85 and a non-star 13. The travel and trekking agency in average employed 9 persons. The occupancy rate of the hotels was 30 percent, and 58.49 percent hotels used domestic production for tourism consumption.
- b. The average length of stay in Pokhara was 2.25 but average including trekking in the surrounding region was 8 days. Some 21 percent of the visitors to Nepal went to Pokhara and 50 percent of them were trekkers.
- c. Some 32 percent tourists to Pokhara were repeat visitors, 18.87 percent tourists thought Pokhara was cheaply priced and 75.47 thought it a moderately priced.
- d. The majority of the tourism entrepreneurs thought that efforts to promote Pokhara were not enough; the business culture was yet to be developed, quality of tourist services needed upgrade so that the tourists would be encouraged to spend rather than save.
- e. The conflicting provisions in the Tourism Act and Transportation Act in defining tourists created confusion, which resulted in increasing harassment of the domestic tourists traveling to Pokhara by tourist buses.
- f. Majority of the entrepreneurs in Pokhara and visitors to Pokhara perceived people in Pokhara as helpful and friendly but not well-educated. Further, they thought there was lack of tourism infrastructure and international/regional airport for convenient air passage.

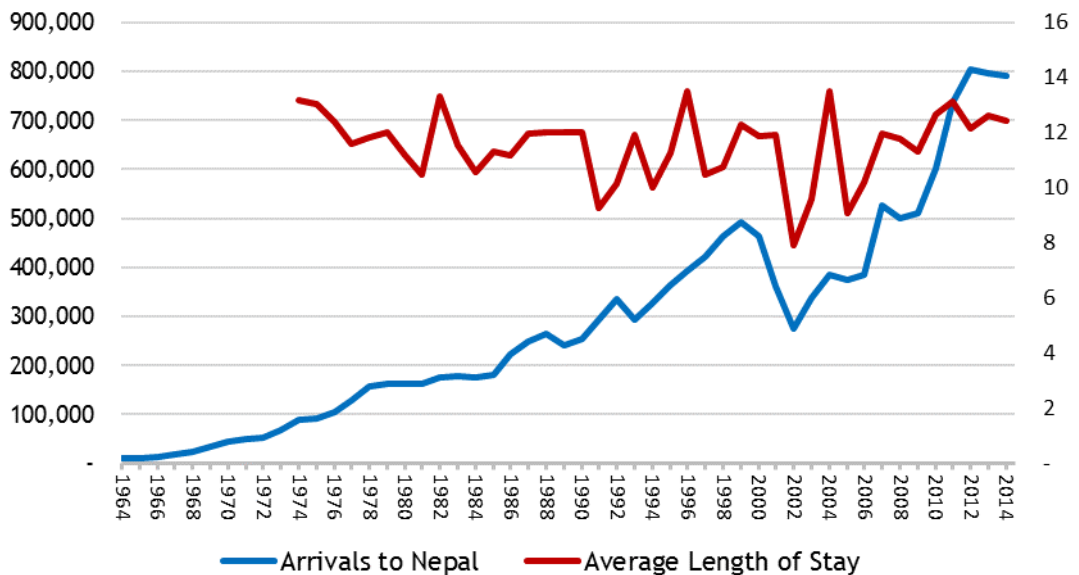
- g. The survey revealed that the purposes of visit to Pokhara included: 64 percent for trekking, 24 percent for recreation and 12 percent for others,
- h. The source of information involved: 41 percent recommended by friends and relatives, 26 percent by their own sources, 23 percent by group traveling and 10 percent-others,
- i. Majority of the residents of Pokhara felt proud that they were living in Pokhara and they had highly positive attitude towards tourists and tourism.
- j. Some of the hotels in Lakeside area had been found using lake water or water from Seti canal which was not hygienic and it did not give positive impression to the visitors.

3. SITUATION ANALYSIS

3.1 TOURIST GROWTH OF GREATER POKHARA

(1) Tourist Growth of Nepal

Chart 1. International Arrivals and Average Length of Stay in Nepal



Source: Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Civil Aviation, Government of Nepal

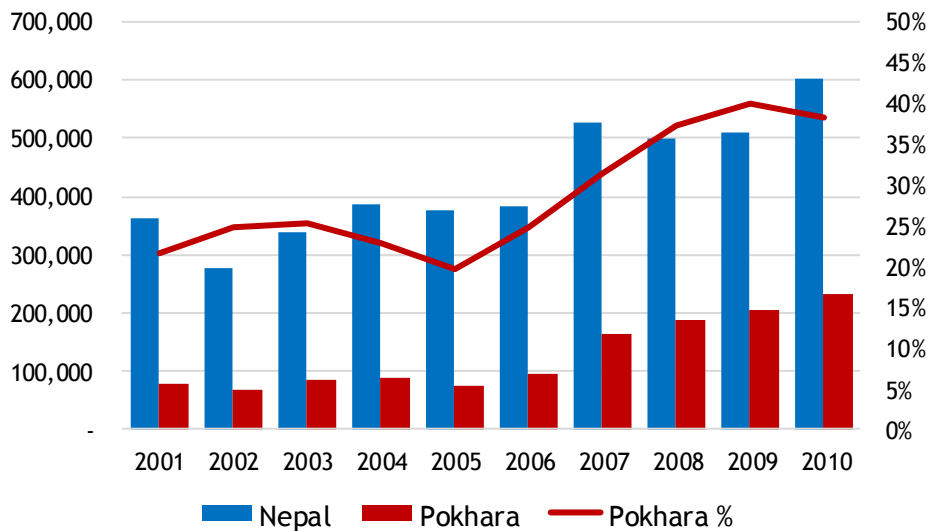
The number of tourists visiting Nepal has grown steadily, except for the period of a decade-long civil war between the security forces and Maoists in its modern history. The number of tourists has risen at the compound annual growth rate of 9.2% since 1964 to reach at 790,118 in 2014.

However, Nepal has experienced downward swings for two consecutive years since 2012, even before the earthquake shook the landlocked country in 2015. And the average duration of stay of the visitors has remained more or less the same, even though there have been some fluctuations along the way.

(2) Tourist Growth of Greater Pokhara

From 2001 to 2010, more and more tourists visiting Nepal have come to Pokhara to visit. The number of tourist arrivals in Pokhara has grown at the compound annual growth rate of 12.8% during this period, while that of Nepal at the rate of 5.9%. In 2001, 21.6% of the tourists visiting Nepal came to Pokhara. But this ratio rose to 38.3% in 2010.

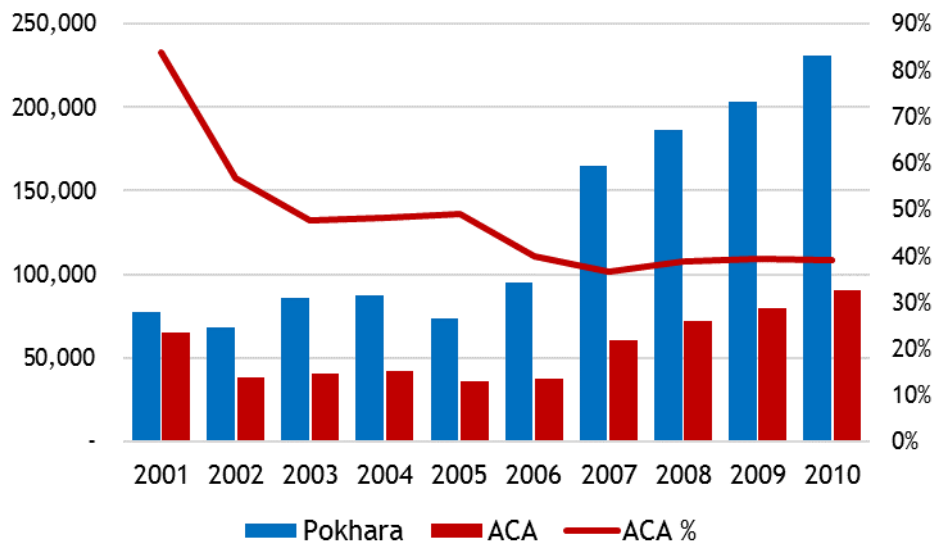
Chart 2. International Arrivals in Nepal vs. Pokhara



Source: ACAP (2012), PTO (2011)

(3) International Tourist Arrivals in Pokhara and Annapurna Conservation Area(ACA)

Chart 3. International Arrivals in Pokhara and ACA



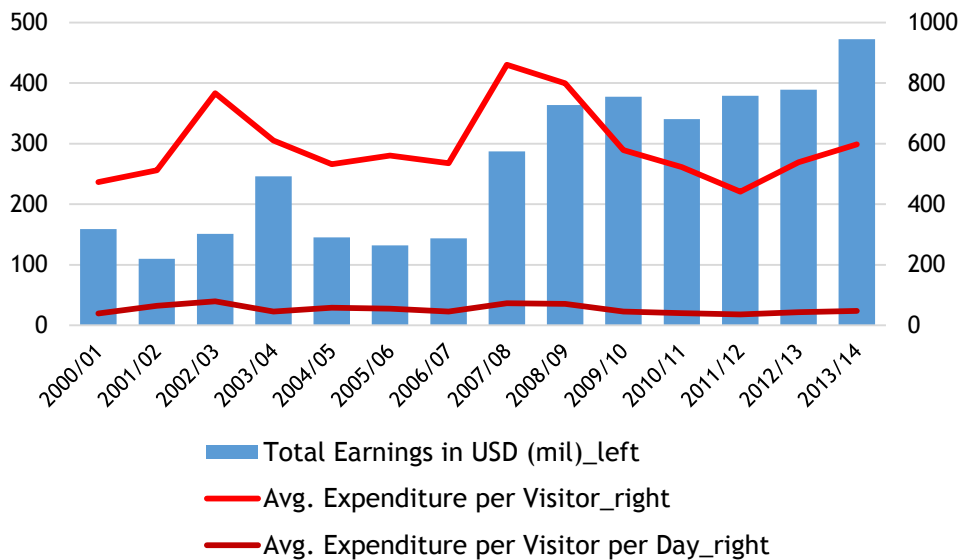
Source: ACAP (2012), PTO (2011)

From 2001 to 2010, the international tourist arrivals in Pokhara for reasons other than trekking in ACA has risen rapidly. The number of tourist arrivals in Pokhara for reasons other than trekking in ACA has grown at the compound annual growth rate of 30.8%, while the growth of that of ACA stood at the meager rate of 3.6% during this period, bringing the growth rate of the total tourist arrivals in Pokhara down to 12.8%.

As a result, the ratio of the international tourists who go on trekking in ACA after arriving in Pokhara dropped from 83.9% in 2001 to 39.1% in 2010.

(4) Growth of Tourist Spending

Chart 4. Foreign Exchange Earnings from Tourism



Source: Nepal Rastra Bank

From 2000/01 to 2013/14, the total tourism earnings have risen at the compound annual growth rate of 8.7%. And the growth of the average expenditure per visitor and the average expenditure per visitor per day stood only at 1.8% and 1.5%, respectively, during this period.

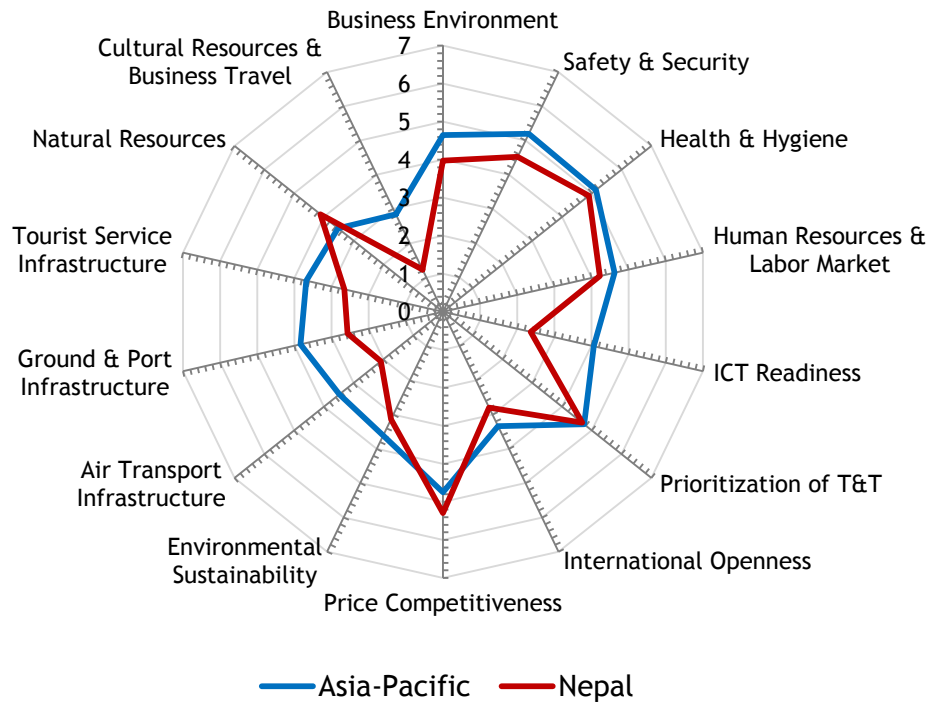
3.2 TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS OF GREATER POKHARA

(1) Attractions

There are many things that attract tourists in Pokhara. While talking about attractions, we can say the nature itself is the main attraction of Pokhara. As shown in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2015 below, the natural resources of Nepal show an index level higher than the average of Asia-Pacific. But its cultural resources and business travel are far below the average of Asia-Pacific in competitiveness.

The tourist can see unique environment full of lakes, river, waterfalls, caves, mountains. The view of mountains on the water of lakes and the views of Pokhara from hills attract visitors. And so does the sunset view from the hilltops of Pokhara. For instance, Sarangkot is famous for the sunset view. International tourists come to Pokhara basically for these unique landforms and scenes.

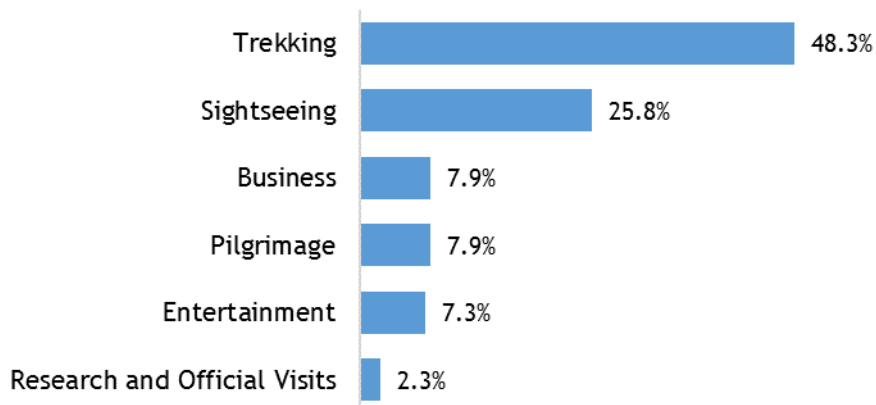
Chart 5. The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index



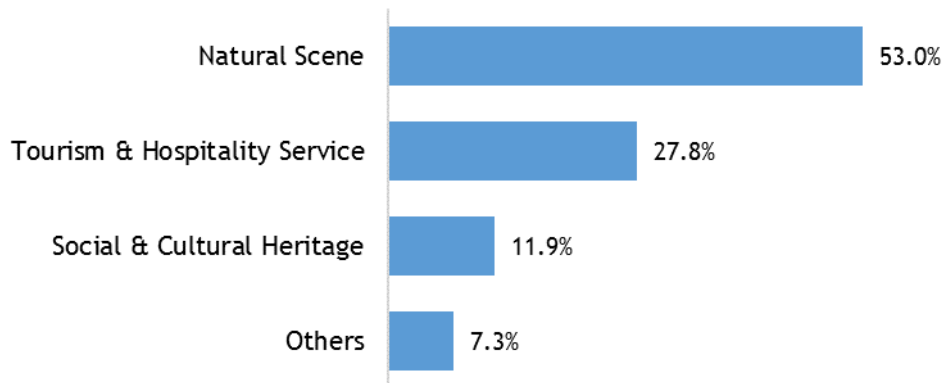
Source: *The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2015, the World Economic Forum*

The first attraction is trekking. Still many people visit Pokhara for trekking. Annapurna Base Camp is one of the best places to do trekking in the world and it is widely recognized the world over. Soft adventure activities are gaining ground as well. Tourists can participate in such activities as paragliding and ultra-light flight, experiencing an aerial view of the Pokhara city from the sky. There are also many other activities like rafting and kayaking in the Seti River, zip-lining and bungee jumping.

Chart 6. Purposes of Visiting Pokhara



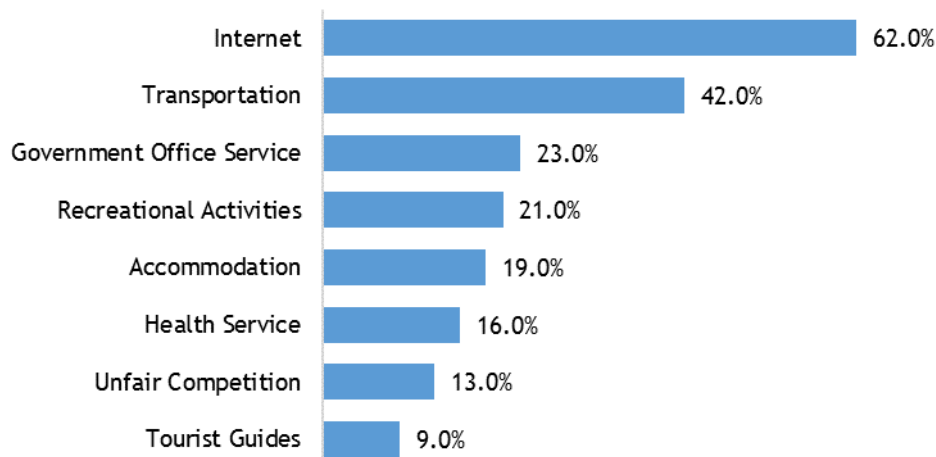
Source: *the field survey for 'Impact of "Nepal Tourism Year 2011" on tourist arrival in Pokhara,' Himalayan Journal of Sociology & Anthropology-Vol. VI (2014)*

Chart 7. Mostly Likely Tourism Heritage Surveyed

Source: the field survey for 'Impact of "Nepal Tourism Year 2011" on tourist arrival in Pokhara,' *Himalayan Journal of Sociology & Anthropology-Vol. VI (2014)*

Pokhara is full of historic and cultural heritage assets. The tourist can visit different museums. And there are various temples, gumbas, monasteries, stupas that attract the tourists, along with different occasions and festivals which reflect the culture and tradition of local peoples and their lifestyles. These cultural aspects, however, are basically points of interest for domestic tourists. They seem to fail in attracting international tourists as much.

(2) Access

Chart 8. Improvements Needed

Source: the field survey for 'Impact of "Nepal Tourism Year 2011" on tourist arrival in Pokhara,' *Himalayan Journal of Sociology & Anthropology-Vol. VI (2014)*

Pokhara is well connected to the rest of the country through permanent road and air links. The main mode of transportation is public buses and there are two main hubs for

buses plying the whole country, *Old Bus Park* on Prithvi Highway and *Pokhara Baglung Bus Park* on Pokhara-Baglung Highway.

Pokhara has extensive privately operated public transportation system running throughout the city, adjoining townships and nearby villages. The public transport mainly consists of local and city buses, micro-buses and metered taxis.

The all-season Pokhara Airport with regular flights to different parts of Nepal is in operation, though with frequent flight delays and cancellations due to weather conditions. A new international airport is being constructed in the southeast of the city. Flights from Kathmandu to Pokhara take approximately 30 minutes.

However, transportation is the area where the international visitors to Pokhara think improvement is needed most after the slow and unstable internet connection of the town.

(3) Accommodation

There are approximately 573 hotels in Pokhara of which two (the Fulbari Resort and Pokhara Grande) are ranked 5-star. Pokhara provides lodging and foods for a wide array of visitors from backpackers to luxury travelers. But there don't exist international brand hotels in operation yet.

Virtually all tourist hotels are located in Lakeside and Damside, near Fewa Lake. In addition, there are around 12 guesthouses uphill in Sarangkot. These guesthouses offer better views and less air pollution, but they are much more expensive for both accommodations and foods as there is limited competition.

(4) Amenities

Electricity is unstable throughout the town, affecting the business of hotels, restaurants and so on in the Lakeside. Some are equipped with a diesel generator. This frequent self-generation raises their costs of business greatly. Internet access is provided in many hotels and restaurants, but the connection is very unstable and slow, resulting in many complaints from the tourists.

There are many restaurants and retail shops around the Lakeside area, catering to the various needs of the tourists. But the water supply and solid waste management are not in place yet, polluting the lake. And the illegal construction of restaurants and stores obstruct the view of the lake, keeping the town from creating a strong sense of place. And the waterfront is underperforming its potential.

Nighttime activities are quite limited in general for tourists. And the restaurants and shops are closed after 10 at night. Besides, there aren't any interesting public spaces for tourists and residents around the Lakeside.

(5) Awareness

Nepal has become a hotspot destination for adventurous activities like mountaineering and trekking not only to westerners, but also to Asian tourists. The Hindu and Buddhist

religious heritage and the favorable weather conditions throughout the year have generated the spontaneous flow towards the tourist attractions. In the global tourism market, Nepal is popularly known as a country of Mount Everest and also the birth place of Lord Buddha. Besides Everest and Lumbini, Nepal has become the preserver of the most sacred and ancient shrines and monuments which are known as the holiest and reverent destinations for the spiritually and culturally aware people of the world. At the same time, unfortunately, Nepal has become known as a low-cost destination.

Pokhara, one of the most beautiful cities of Nepal, is established as a unique tourist destination because of its aesthetic potentiality generated basically from natural and topographical perspectives. The city is being recognized by different name like “City of Lake”, “City of Culture” and also” Heart of Nepal.” Pokhara's tourism is largely known for a tourist destination for soft and hard adventures. It is the gateway to the world renowned Annapurna trekking area.

3.3 Major Tourist Segments and Tourists Characteristics

(1) Major Tourist Segments

① Value Tourist Segment

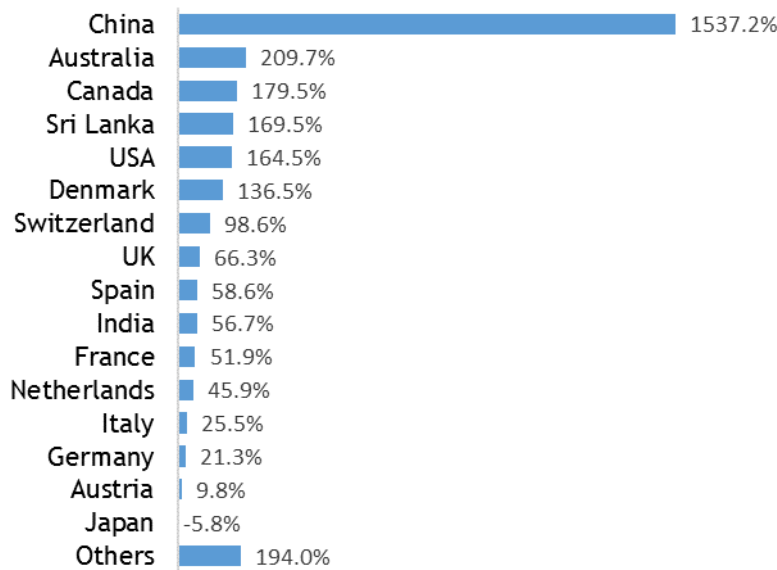
The value markets consist of those tourists who hail from long haul tourist generating countries like U.S.A, UK, Japan, Netherlands, Canada, etc. The tourists from these long haul tourists have the tendency of spending more and also have longer length of staying. They mainly indulge themselves into hard adventurous activities like long trekking, hiking, rock climbing, etc.

② Volume Tourist Segment

The visitors from the neighboring countries like India and China hold the major part of this tourist segment. The majority of the tourism industry players in Pokhara depend upon this segment. This segment of the tourist market consists of the tourists coming in large numbers. Mass tourism is considered very important for the tourism of Nepal. This segment of tourists is important in the sense that their flow doesn't limit to certain period of time but is continued all year round. Thus, this segment alleviates the fluctuation of the tourist flow to Nepal, and Pokhara for this matter, which causes a low or off season. The boom in the economy and the increase in per-capita income of these source markets have led the increase in their arrivals to Nepal and Pokhara. The easy access from these nations to Nepal with competitive airfares is another reason for their rise (NTB 2010). Where the Chinese love soft to medium adventure holidaying, Indians are mostly attracted into pleasure, relaxing and shopping. Pokhara caters to all these requirements with limitless opportunities and options.

(2) Changes in the Segment Composition

Chart 9. Changes in Tourist Arrivals in Nepal by Source Market from 2003 to 2014

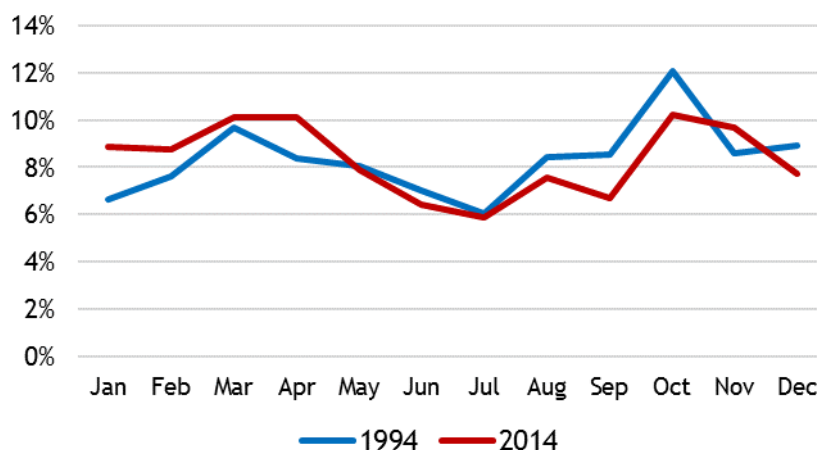


Source: Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Civil Aviation, Government of Nepal

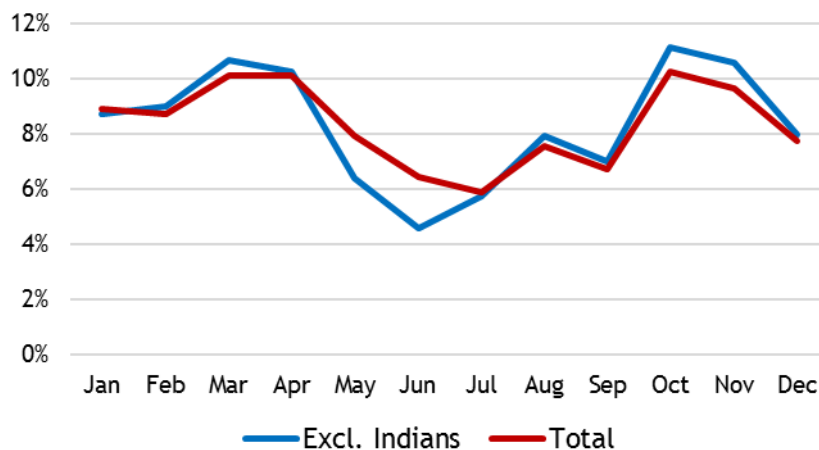
From 2003 to 2014, the international tourist arrivals to Nepal has grown 133.7%. The traditional value tourist segment hasn't caught up with this growth of the overall tourist market in Nepal over this period. The volume tourist segment, however, has gained much ground. For instance, the number of Chinese tourists increased 1,537.2%.

(3) Seasonality

Chart 10. International Tourist Arrivals to Nepal by Month in 1994 vs. 2014



Source: Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Civil Aviation, Government of Nepal

Chart 11. International Tourist Arrivals to Nepal by Month With/Without Indians

Source: Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Civil Aviation, Government of Nepal

The main trekking season is from September to April, due to appropriate climate, clear visibility of the mountains and no rains. More tourists visit Nepal during this period. And the time between the end of January to the middle of February is the main season for Chinese tourists as they have national holidays of their spring festival for 15 days which is widely known as the Chinese New Year. And then Indian tourists flock in both by air and road for summer vacations from May to August. Pokhara is a popular hideaway destination for Indians at this time to beat and avoid the extreme heat and summer in their country.

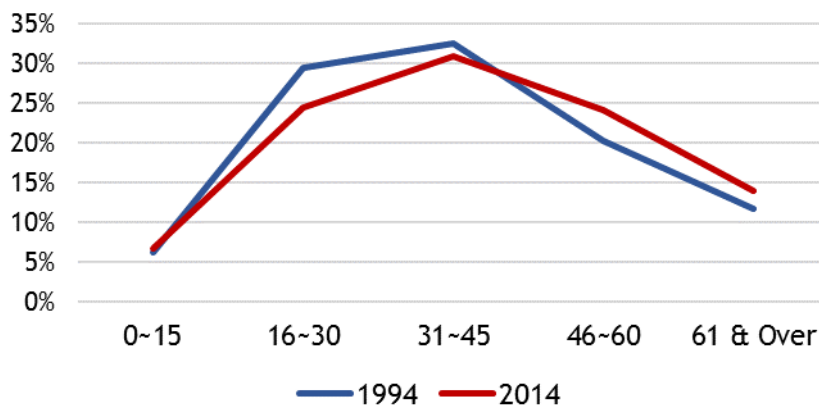
When the monthly tourist arrivals are compared for 1994 and 2014, the heavy concentration on September, October and December was alleviated while the arrivals from January to April were gaining ground. These changes in the monthly tourist arrivals over this period seemed to reflect the changes in the tourist arrivals of the traditional value segment and volume segment over this period.

When the monthly tourist arrivals are compared with and without Indians in 2014, the Indian tourist arrivals can be seen to have an impact on flattening the fluctuation of the monthly arrivals of international tourists somewhat.

(4) Age Profile

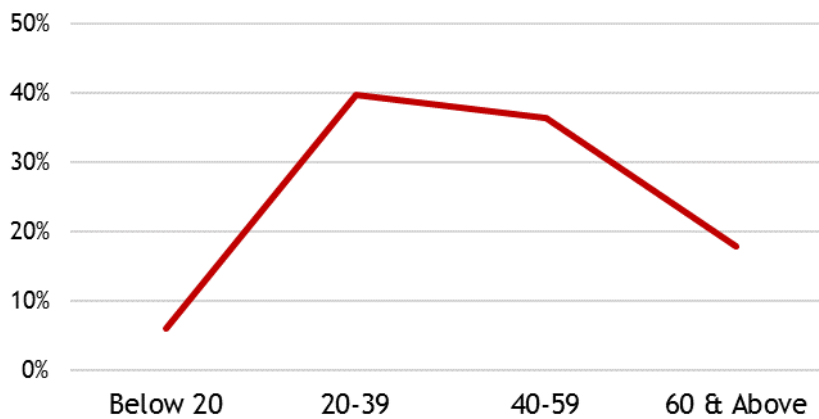
The age profile of the tourist arrivals in Nepal and Pokhara, as shown in Chart 12 and 13, can't be directly compared. But the high proportion of the tourists is thought to be in their 20's, 30's and 40's. And the age profile has been somewhat flattened over the period from 1994 to 2014, reflecting the fact that soft adventure activities are increasingly popular.

Chart 12. Tourist Arrivals to Nepal by Age Group



Source: Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Civil Aviation, Government of Nepal

Chart 13. Tourist Arrivals to Pokhara by Age Group in 2011



Source: the field survey for ‘Impact of “Nepal Tourism Year 2011” on tourist arrival in Pokhara,’ Himalayan Journal of Sociology & Anthropology-Vol. VI (2014)

3.4 SWOT ANALYSIS

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats faced by the tourism of Greater Pokhara are summarized in Table 1 below. Greater Pokhara has a diversity of attractions. Especially its natural endowments are potentially excellent in attractiveness. But it is underperforming its potential, due to its weak tourism competitiveness and enabling capacity

Growing demands, thanks to the rising middle class in the neighbouring markets as well as Nepali domestic market, offer opportunities to the tourism of Greater Pokhara. On the other hand, a growing competition in tourism and the instability in the Nepali politics are expected to be limiting factors.

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of Greater Pokhara Tourism

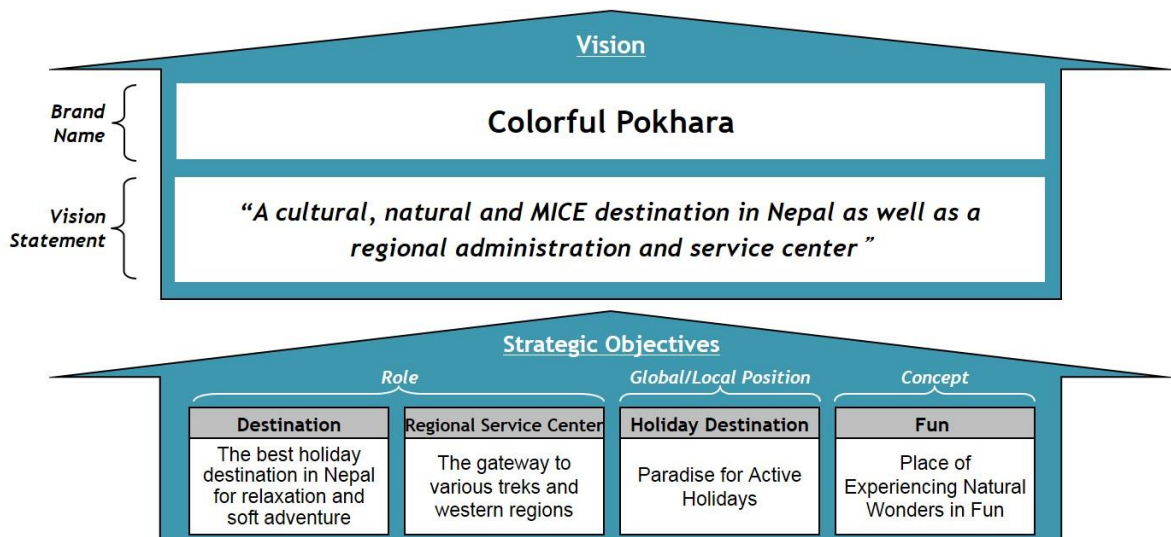
| | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|--|---|
| Origin of Factors | Internal | <div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Strengths</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong natural endowments ▪ Diversity of attractions ▪ Established image and niche | <div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Weaknesses</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor infrastructure ▪ Degrading of nature & facilities ▪ Weak governance & leadership ▪ Human resource constraints ▪ Positioned as a low-cost destination |
| | External | <div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Opportunities</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growing middle class in neighboring markets ▪ Growing domestic market ▪ Growing demand for new, nature products | <div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Threats</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growing competition ▪ Political instability ▪ Blockade |
| | | Positive | Negative |
| Impact on Greater Pokhara | | | |

the above strategy map, where entrepreneurs start seeing business opportunities at the present.

It is entirely possible for Pokhara to make improvements without ever confronting the need to regenerate its core strategy, without ever being forced to rethink the boundaries of its tourism industry, without ever having to imagine what visitors might want in ten years' time, and without ever having to fundamentally redefine its served market. Yet without such a fundamental reassessment, Pokhara will be overtaken on the road to the future. Defending today's leadership is no substitute for creating tomorrow's leadership.

There's no such thing as sustained leadership; it must be reinvented again and again. Pokhara must offer new attractions in activities and experience and expand its visitor segments to rise to a higher level. Pokhara must aspire to become a true destination of its own by leveraging its unique landforms and position as a gateway.

Table 2. Vision and Strategic Objectives of Greater Pokhara



Pokhara must achieve the following strategic objectives to turn its vision into reality:

- ① Its role as a destination will be to become the best holiday destination in Nepal, and South Asia for that matter, for relaxation and soft adventure.
- ② Its role as a regional service center will be to become a more efficient gateway to various treks and western regions.
- ③ Pokhara will position itself as a paradise for active holidays in the international and domestic markets.
- ④ Its strategic development concept will be to become a place of experiencing natural wonders in fun.

4.2 DEVELOPMENT GOALS

To create the future Pokhara must change in some fundamental way the rules of engagement in its long-standing tourism industry, redraw the boundaries of its tourism business, and/or create entirely new experiences. A capacity to invent new tourism industry and reinvent old one is a prerequisite for getting to the future first and a precondition for staying out in front.

Thus, for the strategic objectives to be achieved, the following four development goals must be accomplished: I. Improved infrastructure, II. Diversified activities & experiences, III. Environmental conservation, and IV. Improved image. And they also must be aligned with each other well to be sustainable.

I. Improved infrastructure

① Transport infrastructure

The small current domestic airport at Pokhara with frequent flight delays and cancellations is a limiting factor in access to the international tourists. A new international airport which has just started being constructed in the southeast of the city will improve access when completed.

A ride on the Prithvi Highway from Kathmandu to Pokhara, which is a 200-km journey and takes approximately 6 hours, can be scary and painful. This main access road to Pokhara needs major expansions and improvements. Also the roads from China and India need improvements since the tourists from these countries are increasingly on the rise.

The road conditions within Pokhara itself need improvements as well. They are too dusty, noisy and unsafe at times for tourists to drive and walk. They are also lacking proper signage. These improvements may be important for the tourists to walk out of the Lakeside and explore Pokhara.

② Urban infrastructure

The power outages are frequent and the internet connection is unstable and slow throughout the Pokhara area. They seriously undermine the visitor experience and hike the costs of tourism businesses. A major investment and better management are required.

Many small businesses still use unclean water, posing a threat to the health of the tourists. And waste is dumped into the lake, causing pollution and damaging attractiveness. More investment and better management are required, but a more important thing is that regulations must be in place and strictly enforced.

③ Tourism service infrastructure

There are a good number of hotels and restaurants, mostly concentrated around the Lakeside. However, there is a need for attracting international brands. They might be of help in raising the service quality standards of the town and bringing in new tourists.

There are also some of the things that the Lakeside and other tourism hubs need to enhance the visitor experience. They include a visitor center, gathering plaza and signage, to name just a few.

Pokhara also needs certain tourism infrastructure for better tourism policy or tourism business service which will all translate into better tourism service or competitiveness after all. They include tourism statistical data collection and analysis, human resource development, destination management organization and tourism business licensing control.

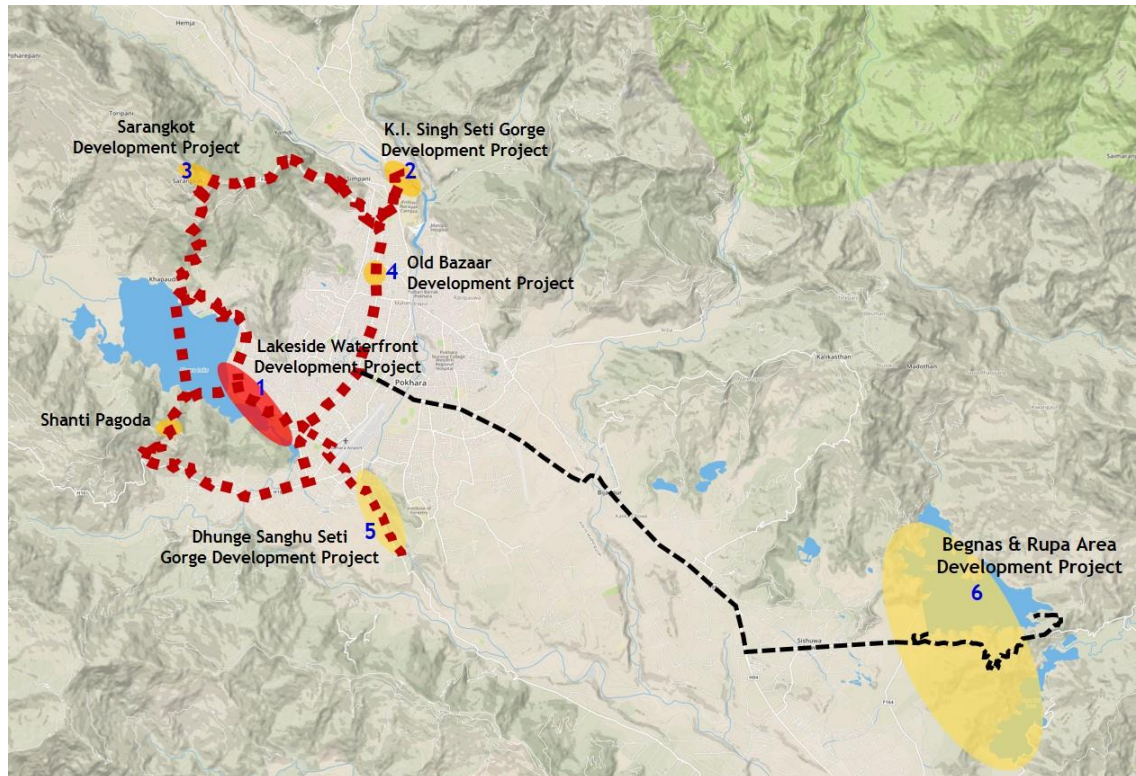
II. Diversified activities & experiences

It is essential to diversify the activities and experiences Greater Pokhara offers to the tourists in its efforts to become a true destination. The primary signature experience Pokhara offers will be “Up close with the Himalaya Mountain Range in Fun Ways.” It is the theme towards which all the activities and programs are geared or aligned to attract a wider array of tourists.

This primary signature experience is offered basically in two forms. The first is aerial experience of the unique landforms in Greater Pokhara in more pleasant manners for those who are not serious mountaineers or trekkers. For instance, a cable car from Fewa Lake to Sarangkot may provide more tourists with opportunities to appreciate the panoramic view of Machhapuhhre, Annapurna, Dhaulagiri and Ganesh Himal, the full view of the whole lake and almost all the valley of Pokhara, and the impressive view of the sunrise and early sun shine on Himal turning into golden color. And the second is more casual ways of exploring the Seti Gorge, lakes and hills around Greater Pokhara. For instance, a glass-bottomed bridge over the Seti Gorge may provide the tourists with opportunities for a thrilling walk over the gorge. Or horse-back riding along or down the gorge may be an alternative way of exploring the gorge.

The secondary signature experience to be offered is “Connecting with the local culture and lifestyle.” For instance, museums are supposed to play a role in this theme. But the museums in Pokhara must be upgraded in contents, presentation and experiential programs. Or large-scale water or gorge performance with stories about people and culture of Pokhara may be staged for better understanding and entertainment. And a lights and drama extravaganza at cliff may be prepared for the same purpose. Or tourists may take part in some of the various volunteer programs for preservation. The knowledge and passion of the foreign tourists will contribute not only to the protection of local nature, but also to the awareness of this issue. And the participants will have lasting strong emotional ties with Pokhara.

The Lakeside will continue to be an important tourist center of Pokhara. But the existing tourism products of Pokhara should be integrated with each other and new product additions and upgraded to the tune of signature experiences. And some additional tourist hubs or sub-hubs should be developed as well. The following are some of the proposed major destination development projects:

Map 3. Proposed Tourist Routes and Major Destination Development Projects

① Lakeside Waterfront Development Project

This will be a gathering place, day and night, for the tourists and residents alike with lots of spectator activities and participatory events. The visitors will be able to enjoy the presence of the lake and/or participate in various water activities, including boating, yachting, kayaking, swimming and sunbathing.

Clearing the lake side of Lakeside Road of all the buildings will be an ideal opportunity to create and boost a strong sense of place. But the constructions on this side seem to be an irreversible change. Access to and visibility of the waterfront and the lake must be improved as much as possible.

Included in the project are promenade, park, visitor center, toilet, plaza, night food market, streetlighting, benches, music fountain, opening of Ratna Mandir, lakeside walking trail, water activities and artificial beaches, relocation of fishery research center, etc.

② K.I. Singh Seti Gorge Development Project

This area is in need of a strong attraction pulling the tourists so as to become a new sub-hub. This will be a place where the tourists can have a thrill of appreciating the Seti Gorge hundreds of meters down underneath their feet through a glass-bottomed bridge. With the presence of the new anchor attraction over the gorge, the tourists will increase their footprints towards upgraded Gurkha Memorial Museum and Annapurna Natural History Museum where the understanding of local culture and nature can be enhanced, as well as the long hanging bridge nearby.

Included in the project are a new glass-bottomed bridge, upgrading of Gurkha Memorial Museum and Annapurna Natural History Museum, living butterfly exhibition hall, parking, etc.

③ Sarangkot Development Project

This will be a popular hill station for the tourists. They can just cool out at one of the resorts and appreciate the panoramic view of Machhapuhhre, Annapurna, Dhaulagiri and Ganesh Himals, the full view of the whole lake and almost all the valley of Pokhara, and the impressive view of the sunrise and early sun shine on Himal turning into golden color. Or they can participate in various activities like paragliding and trekking.

A new cable car will make access to this hill station easier and offer an alternative means of access. An iconic structure on the hilltop will only add to its attraction and will give a reason to climb up to the hill even when the snow-capped mountain range is not visible because of weather conditions. It can be a gigantic statue of a universally appealing historic person.

Included in the project are cable car, iconic structure, resorts, summit plaza and public amenities, access to the summit plaza, upgrading of access road and trails, etc.

④ Old Bazaar Development Project

This Old Bazaar area will be revived as a gallery street with the workshops of local artists and artisans, cafes and restaurants along the main street and into the back alleys.

Included in the project are remodeling and preservation of old Newari buildings, galleries, workshops or schools of artists and artisans, cafes, restaurants, event plazas, parking, etc.

⑤ Dhunge Sanghu Seti Gorge Development Project

This will be a place where the tourists will experience the gorge up close in various ways. The tourists will be guided to explore the gorge by walking, horse-back riding, etc. Or they can experience the grandeur of the gorge through a large-scale lights and drama extravaganza at cliff. Or they can try rock climbing or cliff climbing.

Included in the project are a lights & drama show at cliff, upgrading of International Mountain Museum, adventure activity training center, cliff/rock climbing, cliff walking, horse-back riding, gorge expedition, etc.

⑥ Begnas & Rupa Area Development Project

This lake area will be developed as a new tourism hub or sub-hub with a higher-end resort development for those who wish to experience more peaceful lakeside landscape. Efforts are to be made to increase the flow of tourists, but in a more regulated manner.

Cliff resorts or hotels and restaurants can be developed on the west side of Begnas Lake. And an ecological observation deck in the lake will be an interesting must-

visit. A large-scale lake performance, for instance that tells the story of Gurkha Regiment, can be offered at Rupa Lake in the nighttime.

Included in the project are resort development, more regulated development of retail shops at the entrance, circular observation walk, large-scale water performance, etc.

III. Environmental Conservation

The preservation and conservation of nature and cultural heritage are of paramount importance for the future of the tourism industry in Greater Pokhara since they are and will be the main attractions. Many efforts have been made for conservation and preservation, but not always successful. The efforts have been hindered by institutional inefficiency in terms of inadequate cooperation and coordination among stakeholders, leading to the tragedy of commons.

① Fewa Lake Conservation

This is the highest priority conservation area. The major problems of Fewa Lake are shoreline encroachment, water pollution and sedimentation. The basic strategies for conservation of Fewa Lake should include general awareness program, improving degrading water quality, solid waste disposal, stopping illegal & unregulated construction, removing invasive plants, and stopping & reversing siltation.

② Conservation of Other Tourism Assets

Urban and development pressure is not serious on other tourism assets in Pokhara as much as Fewa Lake. However, lack of care and illegal squatting are widespread. Thus, the basic strategies should include general awareness program, preparation of conservation plans and stopping illegal squatting & encroachment.

③ Urban Beautification

Efforts should be made to beautify the urban environment to provide better living conditions to the local residents as well as making walking in Pokhara more attractive and bringing more tourists out to the walks for serendipitous opportunities to explore Pokhara. The basic strategies should include general awareness program, cleaning neighborhoods, and improving air & noise pollution. And small, but consistent efforts by local residents and international volunteers such as “guerilla gardening” will make a positive impact.

IV. Improved Image

Pokhara got its global name and fame in the world due to its topographical and natural connection with Mt. Annapurna. It was marketed not really by domestic tourists but mainly by international tourists through their verbal words. Also having influenced the images of Pokhara are guidebooks such as Lonely Planet and the country’s civil war in the last decade. It is known as the gateway to Annapurna, a low-cost destination or an unsafe tourist destination, due to its political instability to a certain extent. However, it

lacks a strong branding overall. There isn't any message or tag line that reflects its potential to amuse and refresh tourists.

① Phase I

In the first phase, a substance has to be built up: enhancing infrastructure and diversifying products and activities, enhancing a legal and regulatory framework, and enhancing a destination management capacity. Pokhara must rebuild itself as a multi-faceted destination.

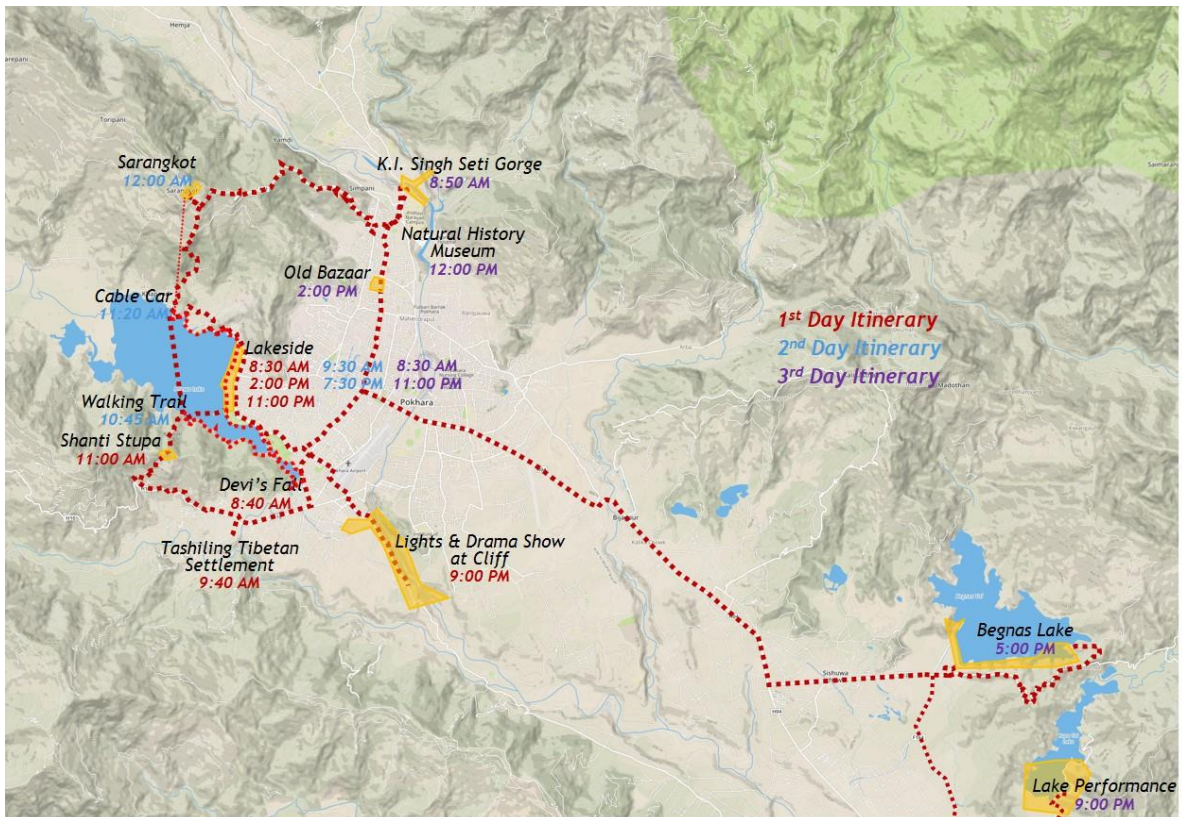
② Phase II

Based on its destination making, Pokhara can communicate effectively to the markets and position itself as a holiday destination. The objective of its image building or branding will be expanding its target tourist segments and increasing the amount the tourists spend in the region at the end.

4.3 DESIGNING TOURIST FLOWS

Tourists flows can be designed along the tourist routes proposed in Map 3 above in collaboration with tour operators when the proposed destination development projects are completed. A tour itinerary of a typical tourist in Pokhara can be envisaged as follows:

Map 4. Designing Tourist Flows



(1) 1st day

Leave Lakeside at 8:30 AM – Arrive at Devis’ Fall at 8:40 AM – Arrive at Tashiling Tibetan Settlement at 9:40 AM – Arrive at Shanti Stupa in a car at 11:00 AM – Take a walk down to the lakeside and a boat ride to arrive at Lakeside at 2 PM – Having a late lunch and spend a few hours at Ratna Mandir Garden – After visiting International Mountain Museum and having a dinner, arrive at Lights & Drama Show at Cliff at 9:00 PM – Return to the hotel at Lakeside at 11 PM

(2) 2nd day

Leave Lakeside to take a walk on a walking trail around Fewa Lake at 9:30 AM – Arrive at the lakeside boating station at the foot of Shanti Stupa hill at 10:45 AM – Arrive in a boat at the cable car station at 11:20 AM – Arrive at Sarangkot hilltop in a cable car at 12:00 PM – After having a lunch, an iconic structure tour, panoramic views at hilltop, sunset view and dinner, return to Lakeside at 7:30 PM – Spend the rest of the night at the waterfront enjoying various activities and events there

(3) 3rd day

Leave Lakeside at 8:30 AM – Arrive in a car at K.I. Singh Seti Gorge to visit Gurkha Memorial Museum and New Seti Gorge Sky Walk at 8:50 AM – Arrive at Natural History Museum and live butterfly exhibition hall at 12:30 PM – Arrive at Old Bazaar for late lunch at 2:00 PM – Arrive at Begnas Lake to visit the ecological observation gallery and enjoy the sunset view at the cliff development at 5:00 PM – Arrive at Rupa Lake for the Lake Performance at 9:00 PM – Return Lakeside at 11:00 PM

Tourist itinerary can be planned for at least full three days, which is translated into at least a 4-night stay for tourists.

5. PROPOSED TRANSFORMATIONAL AND PILOT PROJECTS

5.1 SCREENING SUB-PROJECTS

The key sub-projects are developed for each of the major destination development projects, improved infrastructure and environmental conservation proposed in 4.2 Development Goals above and are listed in Table 3 below.

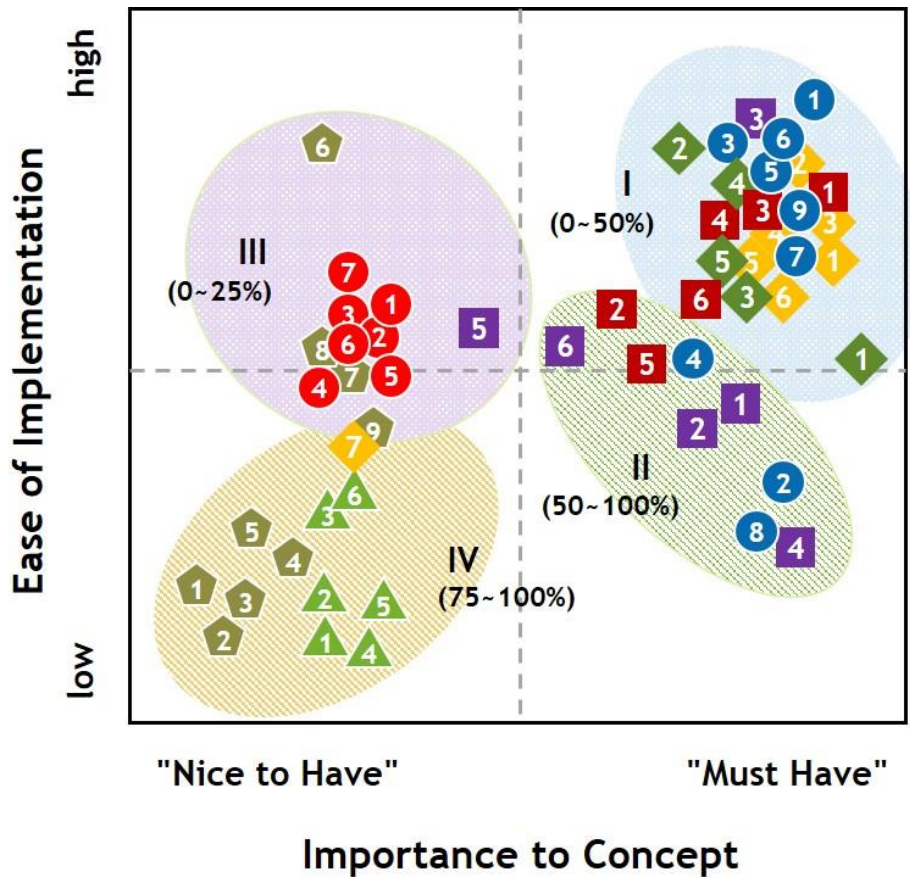
Table 3. List of Key Sub-Projects

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| Lakeside Waterfront Developm't Project | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Promenade 2 Park 3 Visitor Center/Plaza 4 Amenities 5 Streetlighting 6 Night Food Market 7 Dancing Music Fountain 8 Water Activities 9 Walking Trail | Old Bazaar Developm't Project | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Galleries 2 Workshops of Artists and Artisans 3 Artisans' School 4 Cafes & Restaurants 5 Remodeling of Newari Buildings 6 Plaza & Street Artists Corner 7 Parking |
| K.I. Singh Seti Gorge Developm't Project | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Glass-Bottomed Bridge 2 Upgrading of Gurkha Museum 3 Upgrading of Natural History Museum 4 Living Butterfly Exhibition Hall 5 Parking | Dhunge Sanghu Seti Gorge Developm't Project | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Lights & Drama Extravaganza 2 Cliff/Rock Climbing 3 Cliff Walking 4 Horse-Back Riding 5 Upgrading of Mountain Museum 6 Parking 7 Adventure Activity Training Center |
| Sarangkot Developm't Project | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Cable Car 2 Resort 3 Iconic Structure 4 Walking Trail 5 Upgrading of Access Road 6 Summit Plaza & Parking | Begnas & Rupa Area Developm't Project | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Resorts 2 Entrance Retail Shops 3 Circular Observation Walk 4 Large-Scale Water Performance 5 Walking/Biking Trail 6 Parking |
| Improved Infrastructure | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Improved Road 2 Power Supply 3 Water Supply 4 Waste Management 5 Internet 6 Signage 7 DMO 8 Developing Human Resources 9 Tourism Business Licensing Center | Environmental Conservation | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Improving Lake Water Quality 2 Stopping Illegal Construction 3 Removing Invasive Plants 4 Stopping & Reversing Siltation 5 Improving Air Pollution 6 Improving Noise Conditions |

And these sub-projects are screened and prioritized for the selection of the possible transformational investment projects. Two comprehensive criteria are used for this purpose: Importance to Concept and Ease of Implementation. Importance to Concept refers to how a particular sub-project is directly related to implementing the development concept and thus contributes to increasing new arrivals, visitor stay and spend. And Ease of Implementation means whether a particular sub-project has a limit to land acquisition, opposition from stakeholders, and/or a risk of duration.

In Table 4, x axis refers to Importance to Concept and y axis Ease of Implementation. All the sub-projects are displayed in Table 4, according to their ratings in terms of these two criteria. And then, they are categorized into four groups.

Table 4. Categorization of the Key Sub-Projects



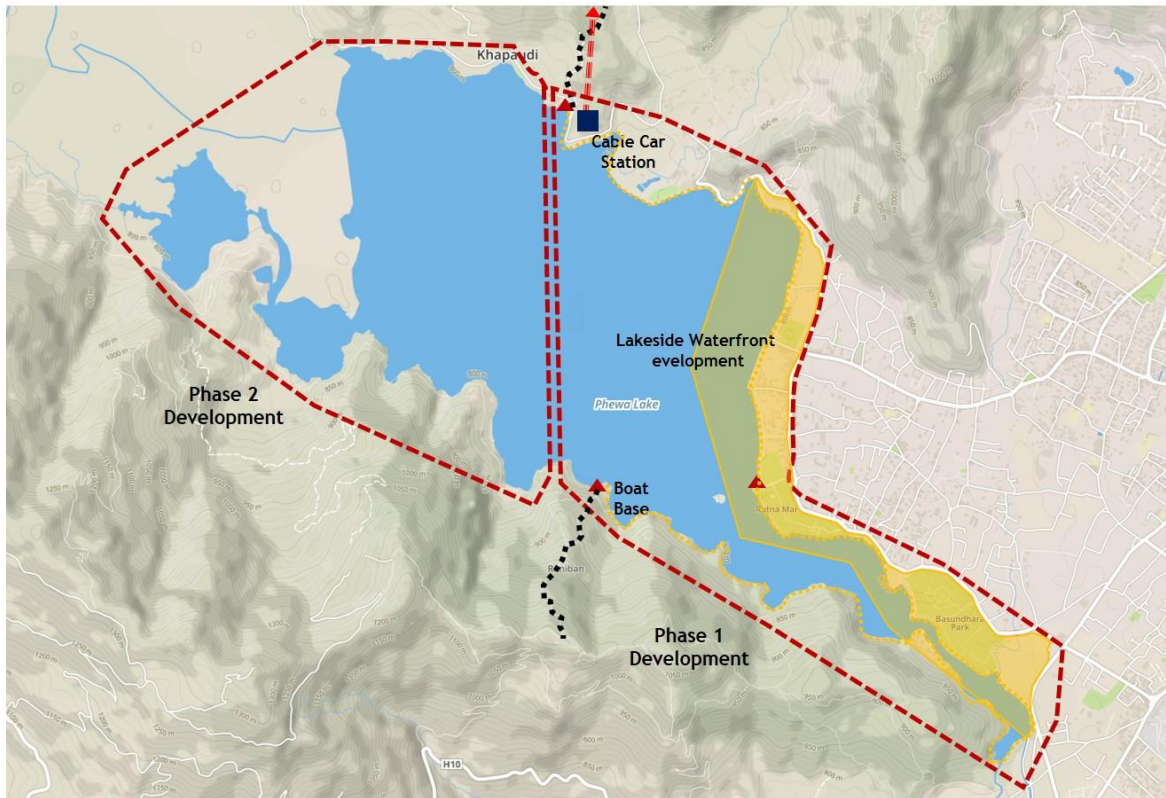
Percentage(%) implies the probability of the local government or the master developer bearing the cost

- I. The sub-projects in this category are the major concept implementers. They are directly related to the concept implementation and likely to attract tourists. They are also relatively easy to implement. They are likely to interest private investors. And they are good candidates for transformational investment projects.
- II. The sub-projects in this category are also concept implementers. But they are more difficult to implement or attract tourists in the short term. If they are to be implemented in a short term, they are likely to be developed by the government or the master developer.
- III. The sub-projects in this category are related to creating points of differentiation more than contributing to the concept implementation. They are likely to interest private investors. But some issues have to be resolved first before the private investors get involved.
- IV. The sub-projects in this category are also related to creating points of differentiation. They are always important and essential for the improved competitiveness of Pokhara

tourism in the future. They are likely to be a burden to the government or the master developer.

5.2 TRANSFORMATIONAL INVESTMENT PROJECTS

Map 4. Mapping of Fewa Lake Development

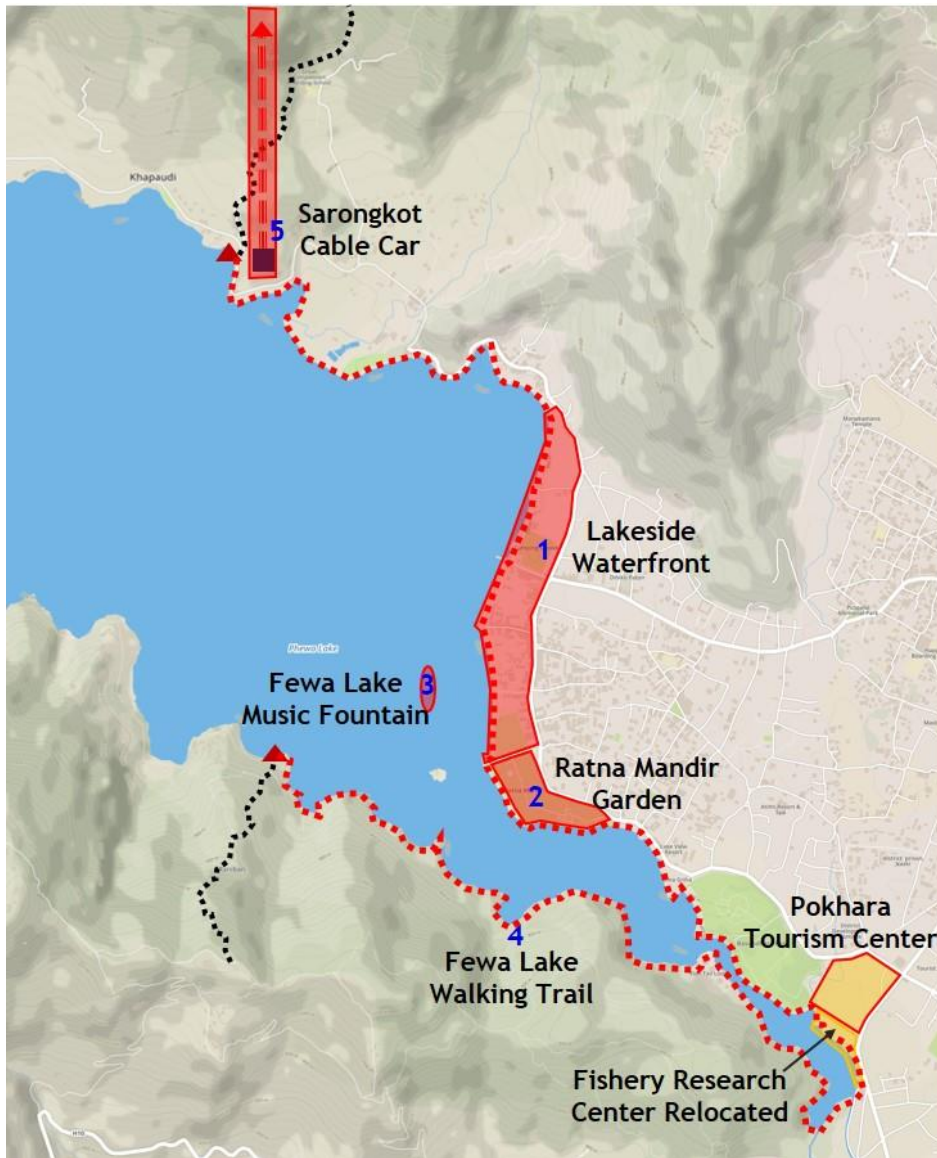


As discussed in the above, Fewa Lake is the priority conservation area. But it's also one of the most important tourism assets of Pokhara for the future as well as for the present. Thus, it is worth a look before we move to possible individual transformational investment projects.

The tourism development around Fewa Lake must be concentrated in Phase 1 Development area in Map 4 above. New activities and events should be introduced and integrated with the existing businesses and activities, but in a more regulated and refined manner.

Phase 2 Development area must be preserved and conserved for the future generation. Tourism development must be restricted in the area. A possible exception is the expansion of the walking trail from the Phase 1 Development area. And it must be built in a way that intrusion to its environment is minimal.

Map 5. Mapping of Transformational Investment Projects 1~5



(1) Lakeside Waterfront Development



Main facilities: promenade, park, visitor center with amenities, plazas, night food market, streetlighting, benches, boating station, etc.

Expected investment: USD 5 million

Proposed investment model: Public or PPP

Implementing agency: Pokhara Submetropolis

The recreational potential of Fewa Lake is to be fully capitalized to the benefit of tourism and the community. This is a project that reconnects tourism and the community to one of the greatest resources of Pokhara, Fewa Lake. Many participatory and spectator activities are to be offered at the waterfront.

When this project is completed, the access to and visibility of the lake and waterfront will be enhanced, contributing to the creation of a stronger sense of place. A variety of recreational opportunities and events will be provided at various points along the waterfront. And the tourists are expected to use the waterfront multiple times a day, day and night. It will be the place of gathering for both tourists and residents.

(2) Ratna Madir Garden



Main facilities: heritage museum, garden, café, quality restaurant, etc.

Expected investment: USD 4 million

Proposed investment model: BTL or PPP

Implementing agency: National Trust

This is a former royal summer palace to be turned into a heritage museum and biodiversity park. It will be a place of peaceful oasis in the touristic area with a unique royal summer retreat and varieties of flowers and fauna. The place will be restored in the model of Garden of Dreams in Kathmandu.

With the project, an unused heritage site is to be opened to the public. It will be an interesting addition to the tourism assets of Lakeside, generating revenues and enabling proper maintenance of the place.

(3) Fewa Lake Multimedia Music Fountain



Main facilities: music fountains and multimedia system, etc.

Expected investment: USD 1~2 million

Proposed investment model: Public or PPP

Implementing agency: Pokhara Submetropolis

This is a wonderful light and water show of dancing fountains perfectly synchronized with music at the Lakeside Waterfront. It is interacting with the audience in various events like birthdays.

It is one of the main nighttime attractions at the Waterfront. It will help the tourists and residents to have memorable events.

(4) Lakeside Walking Trail



Main facilities: soil/gravel/wooden trails, depending on the terrain, etc.

Expected investment: USD 1 million

Proposed investment model: Public or PPP

Implementing agency: Pokhara Submetropolis

A year-round walking is being made possible through this Lakeside Walking Trail around Fewa Lake, where both water and mountain views are plentiful. It will be a new hallmark of Fewa Lake.

The Walking Trail offers an alternative way of experiencing Fewa Lake to a wide array of visitors. It also offers an entry point of the extensive trekking system of Greater Pokhara.

(5) Iconic Structure at Sarangkot Hilltop



Main facilities: iconic structure (statue), summit plaza, retails, cafes and restaurants, parking, etc.

Expected investment: USD 5.5 million

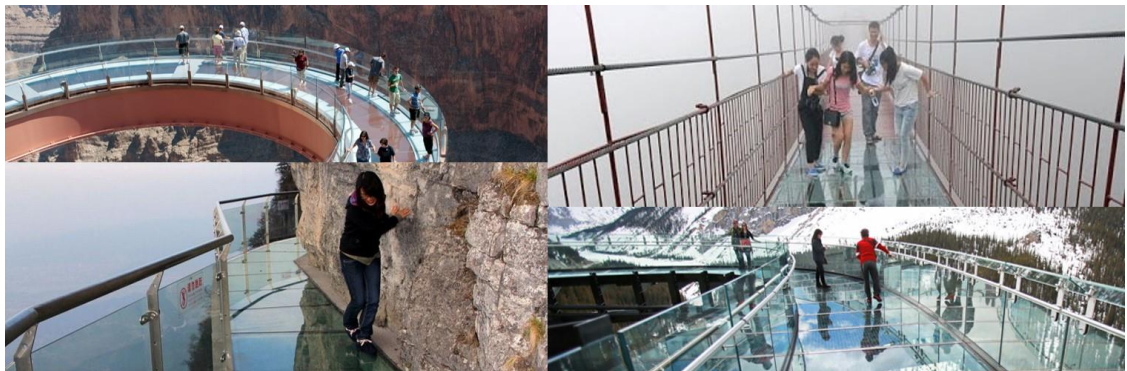
Proposed investment model: BTL or PPP

Implementing agency: Pokhara Submetropolis

This is an iconic structure to be built on a hilltop to add to its overall attraction. It will be a new must-visit that will dominate the skyline of the Pokhara Valley. It will be a gigantic statue of a universally appealing historic person..

It will offer a reason to visit Sarangkot even when the snow-capped mountain range is not visible, as this becomes common, due to weather conditions. And it will play a role as Sarangkot becomes a popular hill station. Businesses at Sarangkot, including cable car, will be boosted as well.

(6) Seti Gorge Sky Walk



Main facilities: glass-bottomed bridge, ticket office, management and maintenance office, parking, etc.

Expected investment: USD 10 million

Proposed investment model: BTL or PPP

Implementing agency: Pokhara DMO/Ministry of Tourism

The Seti Gorge Sky Walk is a glass-bottomed bridge over the gorge and allows tourists aerial views of the Seti Gorge with minimal disruptions. And the tourists will have a thrilling and memorable experience of a natural wonder.

It will be a new strong anchor product away from the Lakeside and will be possibly able to make the area a strong sub-hub, having a positive impact on other tourist places of interest, such as Gurkha Memorial Museum and Annapurna Natural History Museum.

Map 6. Mapping of Transformational Investment Projects 6 & 7



(7) Annapurna Natural History Museum



Main facilities: upgrading and expansion of the museum, research hall, living butterfly exhibition hall, parking, etc.

Expected investment: USD 2 million

Proposed investment model: Public or PPP

Implementing agency: ACAP

The museum offers the tourists opportunities to learn about the geological and biological conditions of Pokhara. It preserves, studies and exhibit geological and biological records about the local environment. Major upgrading is necessary in contents and presentation. The visitors will also be able to observe various butterflies of the region up close.

It will be a new top-class visitor attraction. And it will contribute to strengthening the region's emotional ties with the tourists by enhancing their understandings of the region's geology and biodiversity.

(8) Lights & Drama Extravaganza at Cliff



Main facilities: lights projection (laser beams) and sound system, outdoor seating, maintenance office and amenities, parking, etc.

Expected investment: USD 1.5 million

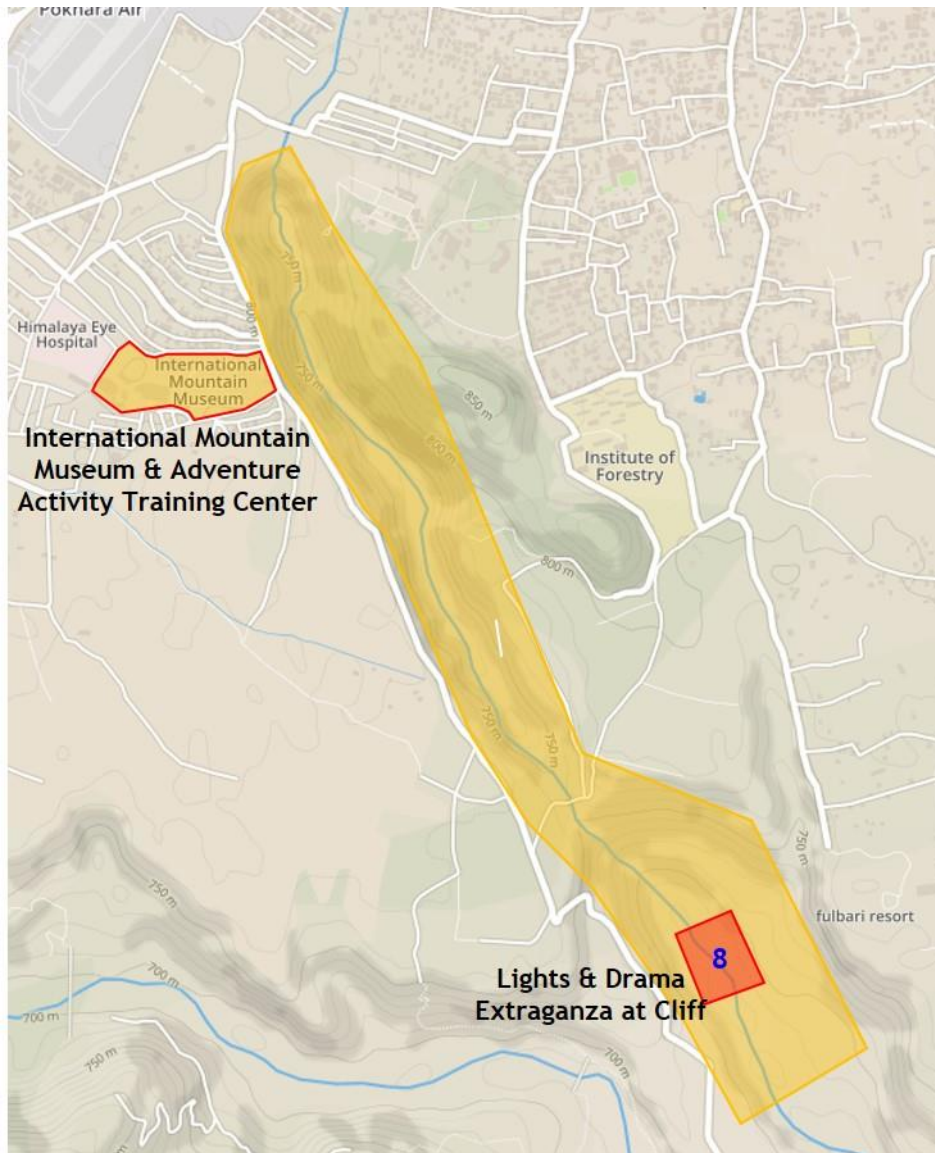
Proposed investment model: PPP

Implementing agency: Pokhara DMO/Ministry of Tourism/Nepal Mountaineering Association

This is a large-scale lights, sound and drama extravaganza rendered outdoors against the background of a cliff of the Seti Gorge. It is a unique multimedia nighttime entertainment on the subject of Pokhara, Nepal or Gurkha Regiment.

It will be a diversified nighttime entertainment for the tourists. And it offers an alternative way of experiencing a unique local landform at nighttime.

Map 6. Mapping of Transformational Investment Project 8



(9) Lake Circular Walk



Main facilities: circular observation deck, bridge, café, toilet, etc.

Expected investment: USD 0.6 million

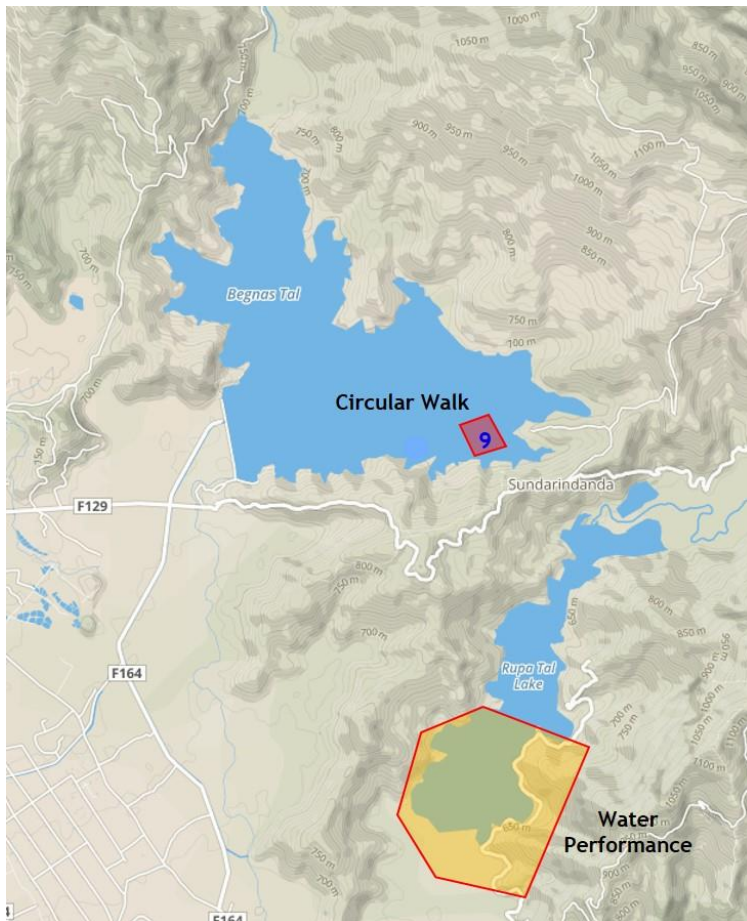
Proposed investment model: Public or PPP

Implementing agency: Begnas Tourism Development Committee

This is an ecological circle gallery for observing wildlife and ecology in the area. And it will be a landmark structure of Begnas Lake.

The structure will bring Begnas to a regular tourist corridor for ecological observation.

Map 7. Mapping of Transformational Investment Project 9



5.3 PROPOSED PILOT PROJECT

(1) Project Name and Description

The proposed first pilot project is to construct an iconic structure at the Sarangkot hilltop. It will be a statue of a universally appealing historic person to be constructed on a fortified hilltop plaza with cafes, restaurants and souvenir shops.

(2) Statement of Needs

Pokhara needs some strong anchor attractions to be developed to pull and circulate tourists away from the Lakeside. The Sarangkot hilltop seems to be an ideal location for one of those new attractions.

Pokhara also needs a unique iconic landmark that will be also a must-see attraction, just like an Eiffel Tower in Paris and Taj Mahal in Agra.

The view of the snow-capped Annapurna Mountain Range is a signature image of Pokhara. However it's quite lucky to have a good glimpse and take some good souvenir photo shots of the range these days because of weather. Pokhara seems to need an all-weather landmark.

(3) Site Context

Map 8. Site Context of Sarangkot



The Annapurna Mountain Range can be viewed in the north to northeast direction from the Sarangkot hilltop (1). And little stores and hotels are lined downhill along the trail leading to the hilltop from the south (2). Paragliding take-off spots are located further downhill to the south or southeast from the hilltop (3). And a large-scale new resort hotel is being constructed on the ridge to the northwest from the hilltop (4). And the Pokhara Valley along with Fewa Lake and the Lakeside can be viewed in the south to southeast direction from the hilltop.

Map 9. Site Context of Sarangkot Hilltop



There is a short-cut trail leading to the hilltop from the parking (A) and another passing the lined stores, cafes and hotels along the way (B). Both trails meet in the middle and continue all the way to the hilltop. There is a new Hindu shrine being constructed close to the trail near the top (C). And this shrine started constructing a small separate building nearby (D). This small new building almost sits on top of the trail. And still under construction, the shrine blocks the trail and collects fees from all those who walk up to the hilltop seriously restricting the public right of way.

The view of the Himalayan peaks from Sarangkot can be described as almost a religious experience due to the vast panoramic sweep of those peaks. Globally recognized as a top venue, Sarangkot offers unique pleasures of experiencing this equally unique aerial sport of paragliding against the backdrop of the Pokhara Valley.

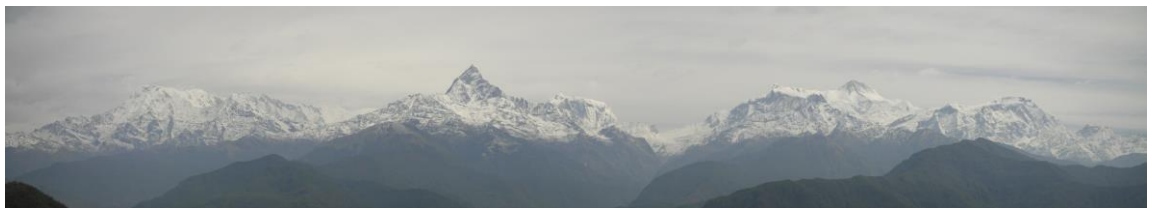


Photo 1. The view of Himalayan peaks from the Sarangkot hilltop



Photo 2. Paragliders are preparing for take-off against the backdrop of the snow-capped Annapurna Mountain Range (left); and paragliders are taking off into the valley (right)

(4) Challenges and Opportunities

Ideally this iconic landmark and hilltop view point should be developed and managed by the public sector. And overall development at Sarangkot should be better organized and managed. But space is limited at Sarangkot and development is already sprawling. The possibility is that this project can be impossible and nothing can be done in the near future. But the government doesn't seem to have enough capacity and budget for this project for the time being.

Fortunately, the private sector is interested in developing Sarangkot. Some private investors are already constructing a large-scale resort hotel near the hilltop. And others are investing in a cable car facility that will connect Sarangkot hilltop to the northeastern corner of Fewa Lake. The same investors show interests in the idea of an iconic structure at the hilltop and are willing to make an investment.

There are a dirt road and walking trails leading to Sarangkot. But they need upgrading and improvement to handle a much higher volume of visits in the future. So do the parking and other amenities. A new cable car which has just started to be installed will offer an alternative and easier access to this hill station.

There is a broadcasting antenna at the very hilltop where the iconic landmark is to be developed. And the Hindu shrine which is being constructed near the hilltop may be in the way of access. And it may also hinder or restrict the project itself.

Most of all, Sarangkot is already a popular place that many tourists visit. And it has a potential to draw a much higher flow of visits once a new landmark is successfully installed. Thus, the site offers a good chance of being feasible in a business perspective.

Such development at the high hilltop raises costs of construction. This must be considered in its feasibility study and development model.

(5) Development Model

The revenue generating components, such as entrance fees and rents for commercial spaces, will be added to the development of the iconic landmark structure. Tourists can buy entrance tickets to walk up the stairs inside the gigantic statue to the top or its head

to have undisturbed panoramic views around. And retail spaces in the hilltop plaza can be rented out.

The revenues of entrance fees and rents will increase as visits to the hilltop rise over the time. And the property prices will rapidly increase as well. If the public sector takes the lead and take on the project, it will be able to make the project feasible over the years. Even if the private sector makes an investment, this development model is still valid. But the private investors can sell part of retail spaces to enhance their investment feasibility in the early stages.

(6) Development Concept

Map 10. Development Site of the Iconic Structure



The iconic landmark statue will be constructed at the current hilltop viewpoint (A), facing south towards Fewa Lake and the town of Pokhara. It will stand 40 meters high on a pedestal. There are a ticket window and entrance to the statue.

The South Plaza is a terraced plaza located to the south of the iconic statue, facing down the Pokhara Valley. Tourists can watch the statue up close at the front or have a panoramic view of the Pokhara Valley that includes Fewa Lake and the town of Pokhara. And there are cafes, restaurants and souvenir shops.

The North Plaza is a horizontal plaza located to the northwest of the statue. Tourists can have inspirational moments with a panoramic sweep of Himalayan peaks or have shots of the statue and the Pokhara Valley at the same time. There are an event space as well as cafes, restaurants and souvenir shops.

(7) Risks Involved

① Business & Development

□ Delay in Development Execution

- Possible Causes: Disputes, failure to secure a development license, failure to secure finance, lack of development capacity, etc.
- Probability and financial sensitivity: Medium-high probability and high financial sensitivity
- Actions required: Investors' financial and management capabilities to be checked beforehand, advance monitoring and support from the public sector where possible

□ Delay in Revenue Generation or Change in Costs of Development

- Possible Causes: Incoherent development, unprofessional management or unrealistic development projections and plans
- Probability and financial sensitivity: medium probability and medium financial sensitivity
- Actions required: Attracting a capable management company, effective promotion and demand creation, strategic investors to be attracted or development to be expedited

□ Hindu Shrine

- Possible Causes: Restriction of access to the hilltop and construction of the hilltop plaza
- Probability and financial sensitivity: High probability and low to medium financial sensitivity
- Actions required: Relocation of the shrine to be negotiated (the investors of a new large-scale resort hotel and cable car are the major financial donators to the construction of the shrine and are likely to have influence), free and better access to negotiated, or a new access to be developed

② Environment

□ Environmental Damage

- Possible Causes: damage to the forest, pressure on use of water and other resources
- Probability and financial sensitivity: medium to high probability and low to medium financial sensitivity
- Actions required: Planning and construction to be strictly overseen (sprawling development is already in progress), this project to be leveraged to organize the overall hilltop development

(8) Investment

The fact that the construction at a high hilltop will in general raise costs of development is considered. And since aesthetics and architecture are important factors for the success of such a project, they are also to be factored into the estimation of investment. The expected investment is as follows:

| Category | Amount |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Design | USD 0.5 |
| 2. Construction of the Statue | USD 2.5 |
| 3. Construction of the Plazas | USD 2.5 |
| Total | USD 5.5 |

(9) Case Study (Christ the Redeemer at Rio de Janeiro)

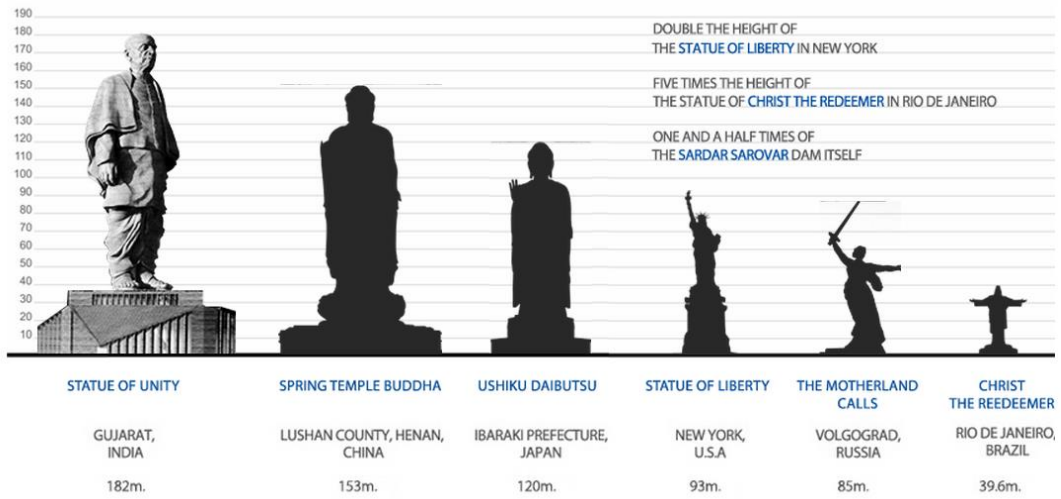
- ① Location: the peak of the 700-meter Corcovado Mountain in the Tijuca Forest National Park overlooking the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- ② Designer: created by French sculptor Paul Landowski and built by the engineer Heitor da Silva Costa of Brazil in collaboration with French engineer Albert Caquot
- ③ Material: reinforced concrete and soapstone
- ④ Height: 30 meters, and 38 meters high with its pedestal
- ⑤ Statue weight: 635 metric tons
- ⑥ Completion date: October 12, 1931
- ⑦ Cost: USD 250,000 (in 1931, about USD 3 million today)
- ⑧ Visitor number: nearly 2 million people per year
- ⑨ Multiple ways of access: public bus, electric train, vans, hiking trail
- ⑩ Prices: prices for round-trip transportation, plus admission to the statue range from 51~62 reals (approximately USD 16~19) for adults





Photo 3. Reference photos of the Christ the Redeemer at Rio de Janeiro

Chart 14. Gigantic Statue Size Comparison



Source: IndiaSpend

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEXT STEP

6.1 IMPLEMENTATION

(1) A Phased Approach to Implementation

The proposed transformational investment projects are to be implemented in phases as the records of implementation of various plans and projects that have been carried out in the past in Nepal are not so encouraging. Government policy sets broad goals for the tourism development, with occasional specific targets, but without strong focus or prioritization

In Phase 1, relatively easy-to-implement projects, or “low-hanging fruits,” should be taken on first, focusing on making “small successes.” When successfully implemented, these small successes will create cohesiveness among tourism assets as well as among the stakeholders. They are expected to allow Pokhara or Pokhara Destination Management Organization some time to get familiar with implementation.

These relatively easy-to-implement projects can be either those projects that the public sector is willing to pursue and finance like Fewa Lake Walking Trail or those projects that the private sector sees business opportunities and is interested in making an investment like Iconic Structure at Sarangkot Hilltop. In either case, these projects will contribute to the destination making in creating a unique sense of place or becoming a place full of fun and comfort.

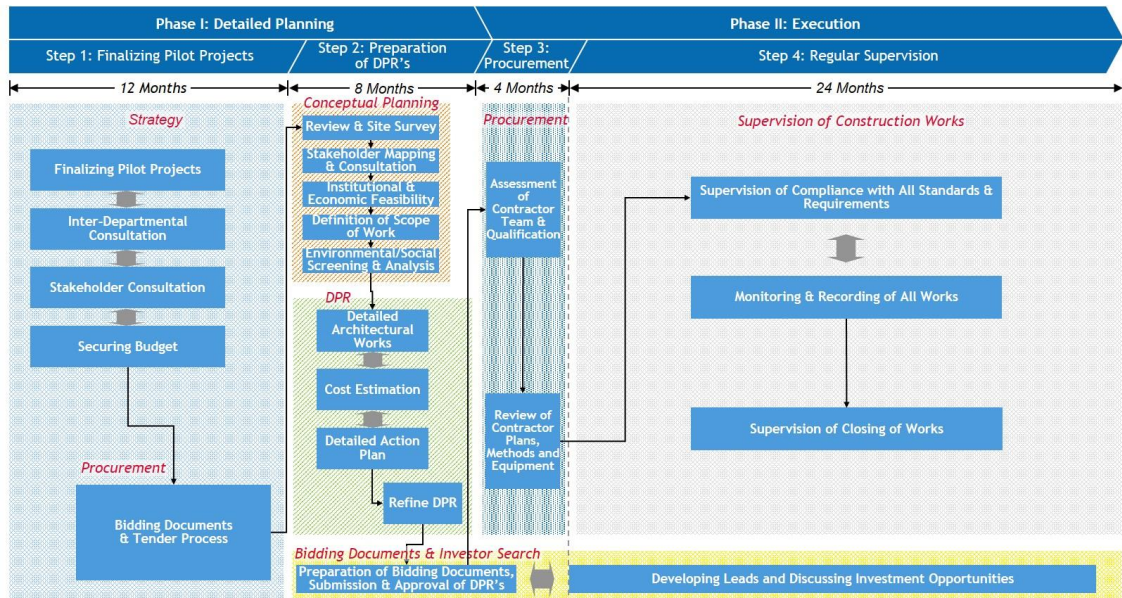
In the meantime, possible concept implementers or strategic investors should be profiled and talks with them be initiated. The small successes will be of great help in securing credibility of Pokhara or Pokhara Destination Management Organization for its efforts towards the destination development and ushering in the initial soft landing of the integrated destination making.

In Phase 2, the credibility of the initial project successes will be leveraged in bringing all stakeholders behind the iconic projects, such as Seti Gorge Sky Walk and Fewa Lake Waterfront Development. And the platform from Phase 1 will be upgraded and taken advantage of in implementing these transformational projects.

When all these transformational projects are completed, the tourism assets of Pokhara will be clustered and integrated to create synergistic relations among themselves. The visitor experience will be greatly enhanced so as to increase tourist arrivals, stay and spend with better spatial allocation and circulation of the tourists in Pokhara.

Then Pokhara will be ready to renew its destination-making efforts to include more sites, such as Kahun Danda, Thulakot Hill and Kalika, in these tourist routes or to expand these tourist routes to such places as Dhampus and forests.

(2) Tentatively Proposed Timeline



6.2 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

(1) Destination Plan Update & Destination Management Organization

③ Set up a destination management organization

A strong leadership is essential for making a true destination. Many of the things that need to be done in the process will require concerted actions. Setting up a destination management organization is a good option for a better local leadership building and accountability. It will be the decision-making and implementing body in the tourism of Greater Pokhara.

④ Coordinate and control changes & start detailed planning

Requests for change, such as the demands of various stakeholders and design changes of architects, must be coordinated and controlled to keep in step with development concept and goals. And the detailed project reports (DPR's) must be prepared to guide the bidding & construction process, to keep stakeholders on the same page, to provide a guideline for budget and quality control, and to provide guideline for long-term management.

⑤ Proceed with tender process

The tender documents must be prepared and the tender process must be initiated.

(2) Biz Eco-system & Enabling Capacity Enhancement

① Promote & enable investment environment

The investment environment must be improved to enhance or create business opportunities. The nighttime business curfew may be lifted to provide better business opportunities for entrepreneurs and better nighttime entertainment for

tourists. And the designation of the Lakeside and other tourist places as special tourism areas to offer incentives, such as longer business hours and tax breaks, must be considered.

There is a lack of reliable information on tourists and tourism businesses in general. Tourism data must be properly collected and analysed to be made available.

② Control tourism business supply

Price-cutting competition is widespread in Pokhara, in part due to informal businesses propping up everywhere in the Lakeside. A diversity, discipline and competition must be boosted in the market for better quality and service. Illegal businesses and construction must be monitored and strictly controlled. And the market demands must be monitored and forecast for a better control of new supply.

③ Build capacities and human resources

Talent shortage is widespread and exacerbated by the “brain drain” in the hospitality industry. There should be more training facilities as well as the upgrading of the training programs. The attraction of more international brands in hospitality will be of help in this regard. The capacities of the public sector must be enhanced as well. They include a better relationship and partnership with the private sector.

(3) Secure Major Investors

① Key investors will draw other investors as well

Securing key strategic investors early on will be critical for the integrated tourism destination development. Separate efforts should be made from early on to look out and find right investors for Pokhara. Strategic equity investors will draw other investors as well. So it will be wise to have brokerage houses on board early and secure advice from them.

② Develop customized IM for individual strategic investors

It is important to learn about the needs of the strategic investment candidates and align them with the strategic development goals of Pokhara. For this purpose, it is necessary to develop customized information memorandum for individual strategic investors. And they can be invited on site tours to get familiarized with the sites and their investment environment.

6.3 DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION (DMO)

(1) Purpose and Scope of Pokhara Tourism Destination Management

This Integrated Tourism Destination Development Plan for Pokhara and Surrounding Areas adopted a new strategy which created two roles for Pokhara: destination and regional service center. This came about from the realization that the purpose of travel to Pokhara has been diversifying over the years. The proportion of Pokhara visitors

who also visit ACA came down to 39.1% in 2010 from 83.9% in 2001. The audiences for these two roles want slightly different experiences. And in order to maximize their opportunities, it would be essential to perform them synergistically but individually.

The Annapurna Mountain Range and surroundings are clearly an important driver of visitors into Pokhara and will always have a part to play. However new tourism propositions are emerging that benefit from clustering and integrating what Pokhara itself has to offer. So it is only right that Pokhara tourism assets are developed and managed appropriately.

The key challenge is to use all available channels and build partnerships to boost visitor numbers and spend in the region resulting in demonstrable economic and employment growth. The DMO must identify an ambitious shared vision and common goals for how this might be achieved.

The DMO should provide a framework for all partners from public, private and third sectors, with an interest in the tourism industry to work together effectively to improve and develop the visitor product over the next five to ten years. It should provide the basis for future priority actions and resource allocation. It should also demonstrate the importance of the tourism sector to the region's economy as a whole, the potential of the industry to provide and enhance local services and employment and the capacity for generating visitor expenditure and a strong sense of pride in the area.

(2) Pokhara Context

Destination management is a subject of growing importance as destinations compete to deliver wonderful experiences and excellent value to visitors. The business of tourism is complex and fragmented and the visitor experience is affected by many services and experiences, including a range of public and private services, community interactions, environment and hospitality.

Delivering excellent value depends on many organizations working together in unity to ensure the viability and integrity of the destination now and for the future. In reality, however, there is a lack of concerted actions to develop and manage the tourism of Pokhara. Poor management is widespread from installation of infrastructure to management of tourism attractions which are getting degraded. It also severely hampers the ability to develop new products.

In the national level, government policy sets broad goals for the tourism development, with occasional specific targets, but without strong focus or prioritization. Many key powers and responsibilities relating to tourism development are distributed among various ministries. Tourism policies have not consistently been backed up with practical plans and budgets.

In Pokhara, there are multiple tourism organizations in operation: Pokhara Regional Center of Nepal Tourism Board, Pokhara Tourism Council, and various tourism business associations. Some are suffering from internal affairs. And others are focusing on destination marketing/promotion and/or acting as a pressure group on behalf of their

members. These existing organizations are either unfit or suffering from a conflict of interest to assume overall responsibility for destination management.

Pokhara is in need of a strong destination management organization (DMO), whose role is far broader than destination marketing. The DMO of Pokhara should not only lead on marketing and promotion, but must also be the strategic leader in destination development by driving and coordinating destination management activities within the framework of a coherent strategy.

(3) Defining the DMO of Pokhara

⑪ Proposed Name

DiscoverPokhara (www.discoverpokhara.org).

⑫ Coverage of Geographical Area

Destination management is typically split between national, provincial/regional and local levels. Normally the national level is responsible for the more strategic roles while the local level has responsibility for the more operational elements. The DMO of Pokhara is a local DMO responsible for the management and marketing of tourism based on the Greater Pokhara region. This is a small geographic area that attracts approximately 40 percent of the international arrivals to Nepal.

⑬ Critical Assets

The Pokhara DMO's most critical assets will be its credibility as a strategic leader in tourism destination marketing and development and its ability to facilitate industry partnerships and collaboration towards a collective destination vision.

Successful destination management is based on effective partnership between the many organizations, public and private, that together deliver quality of experience to visitors. Bringing those players together into a team requires strong leadership. This is a vital ingredient for success in every destination

⑭ Destination Management Governance

Destination management takes a strategic approach to bringing sometimes very separate elements that make up a destination (attractions, amenities, access, marketing, human resource development and pricing) in unity for the better management of the destination. It can identify any destination management gaps in delivering quality of experience to visitors that are not being addressed and help to avoid duplication of effort with regards to promotion, visitor services, training and business support.

There are various options for destination management governance as follows:

- Department of single public authority;
- Partnership of public authorities, serviced by partners;
- Partnership of public authorities, serviced by a joint management unit;
- Public authority outsourcing delivery to private companies;

- Public-private partnership for certain functions – often in the form of a non-profit making organization;
- Association or company funded purely by a private sector partnership and/or trading – again for certain functions.

One important aspect to consider is the fact that politics holds sway over governance in Nepal. For instance, the Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) is a state-owned enterprise that has a monopoly on the supply and distribution of oil. The state is supposed to keep the nation's oil supply effective and efficient through the NOC. In reality, however, the fact that its chairman and managing director are appointed by the government disrupts the business purpose of the organization. They are more interested in fulfilling the interests of the political parties and political masters, resulting in the rampant use of adulterated fuel and unbearable air pollution and therefore sacrificing the interests of the consumer and country. Such incompetency, inefficiency and inability are repeated by The Nepal Electricity Authority, the state-owned monolith that generates, transmits and distributes power. Time after time, it has shown its inability to harness the promise of hydropower that Nepal's huge water resources holds.

But change seems possible when one looks into the entry of Standard Chartered Bank into Nepal in 1988 and its impact on the banking sector. Standard Chartered focused on building a management team that was distinct from ownership. They brought in international standard operating procedures, checks and balances system, a logistical framework and a sharp focus on service delivery.

Considering all these, an independent non-profit making organization would be the best governance option for DiscoverPokhara. One of the key factors for success is securing the organization's independence from politics. Its key management team must be elected through an open and independent public nomination process. Strict transparency and accountability must be instituted and established in its operation.

The Pokhara DMO is an implementation body for the tourism strategy, offering apolitical continuity and integrity to the destination development process and serving the interests of the entire value chain. When the importance of Pokhara in Nepal tourism is considered, the Pokhara DMO should actively engage in destination marketing as well and will have its own marketing budget.

⑮ Partnerships

The partners of DiscoverPokhara are categorized by sector and include:

- Public Sector
 - Central Authorities: MoT, Nepal Tourism Board
 - Local Authorities: regional & district administrations, Pokhara Submetropolis, local development committees,
- Non-profit Organizations
 - Nepal Tourism Board

- Pokhara Tourism Council
- Business Associations
 - Pashimanchal Hotel Association
 - Western Regional Association of Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal
 - Regional Association Pokhara of Nepal Association of Tour & Travel Agents
 - Pokhara Chapter of Restaurant and Bar Association of Nepal
 - Taxi Association of Pokhara
 - Pokhara Bus Entrepreneurs Association
 - Trekking Equipment Shops' Association, Pokhara
 - Embroidery and Garment Association, Pokhara
 - Nepal Air Sports Association
 - Annapurna Chapter Pokhara of Nepal Mountaineering Association
 - City Restaurant and Bar Association of Nepal (City REBAN) Pokhara
 - Fewa Boat Entrepreneurs Association, Pokhara
 - Prithvi Hotel Entrepreneurs Association, Pokhara
 - Lekhanath Hotel and Restaurant Association
 - Money Changer Association
- Attractions Group
 - Attractions of Pokhara, such as Word Peace Pagoda and museums
- Education Establishment
 - Nepal Tourism and Hotel Management College
- Outside the tourism industry, but still significant partners
 - Pokhara Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Relevant place-making teams
 - Local architects and engineering firms

(4) The Role of Pokhara DMO

In the most general sense, the DMO's main role should be to oversee the development and implementation of the agreed tourism strategy. This role requires it to enable the public, private and third sector players to work together through the whole process. In addition, the Pokhara DMO has the following roles to play:

- ① Tourism Statistics and Monitoring

High-quality statistics allow the DMO to make strategic changes to programming and maximize resources. Government agencies collect baseline tourism statistical data about arrivals and revenues as part of immigration and tax collection systems. The DMO can gather data from a variety of sources to provide a better understanding of tourism supply and demand at its own destination and beyond.

The DMO can use tourism statistics to inventory destination products, assess capacity, monitor changes, and better ensure marketing positioning by ensuring that rates and availability are commensurate with the competition. The most common means to collect industry data is through a survey, either online or in person. Data should be collected regularly. Any analysis that relies on data shared by businesses should be shared with those who contributed.

Common industry indicators include:

- Hotels
- Available rooms
- Occupancy rate
- Average daily rate (ADR)
- Revenue per available room (RevPAR)

Understanding visitor profiles helps to identify target markets, craft meaningful messages, and develop products and resources in such a way that they meet particular demands. Surveys can be given while visitors wait in line for an attraction, during transfer from one location to another, or left at the accommodation to be filled out. Common questions for the traveler include:

- Age, gender, race
- Travel party size
- Point of origin
- Length of stay at the destination
- Average daily expenditure
- Types of activities planned and completed
- Type of traveler (independent or group tour)
- Methodology for booking travel arrangements
- Level of satisfaction

② Industry Advocacy

The DMO must communicate regularly with stakeholders to learn their concerns and ideas and reach a destination-wide consensus on salient issues. It can strengthen understandings about efforts and challenges through informational meetings, seminars, and other thematic events focused on cultural heritage management, environmental stewardship or transportation. And the DMO can represent

stakeholder interests before the Ministry of Tourism and other national government agencies.

③ Asset Advocacy

The tourism industry has a vested interest in the well-being of the environment, quality of life of the people, and the preservation of cultural elements that create the basis for visitation. The DMO works with local partners such as non-profit organizations and educational institutions to identify potential threats and improvements for the destination's assets. It also organizes working groups and task forces to minimize impacts on at-risk assets such as water, solid waste, and sacred sites.

④ Industry Support & Training

The DMO can also provide training to improve destination management, business practices, and community interaction.

⑤ Engaging Residents

Destination residents have a large stake in the tourism industry. Not only can economic revenue drive growth, but the way in which tourism is managed can have serious impacts on everyday lives as in the case of additional vehicle traffic during peak season. In some cases, the development of new tourism facilities may compete for local resources such as electricity and water. And participation and commitment of residents are essential for keeping the destination clean.

In order to maintain a positive relationship with local residents, the DMO can hold regular forums to discuss salient topics, regularly solicit resident feedback on a website or at strategic locations such as DMO or civic centers, or invite residents and community leaders to participate in the DMO's executive council or board of directors.

(5) Key Priorities

Outlined below are Pokhara's key priorities as identified in this Integrated Tourism Destination Development Plan for Pokhara and Surrounding Areas. These reflect the findings of the situation review and analysis and essentially remain unchanged for years.

① Place making for greater experiences

The DMO will raise satisfaction levels of the visitor experience by making the most of Pokhara's assets, improving and integrating them.

② Connecting visitors with great experiences

The DMO will improve and invest in Pokhara's information service provision and understand the interaction in visitor encouragement.

③ Improving the infrastructure

The DMO will support and attract investment in the infrastructure in terms of transport, urban amenities and fast and stable internet connection.

④ Growing Pokhara's share of visitor markets

The DMO will lead the way in enhancing the Pokhara's image and improving its brand positioning, which will translate into more visitor arrivals, stay and spend.

(6) Monitoring and Evaluation

A robust monitoring system will be established to facilitate an effective and regulated process of reviewing the performance of the Pokhara DMO against short and long term goals set. This monitoring and evaluation will be led by Discover Pokhara, in conjunction with the private and public sector partners, highlighting the success against agreed key performance indexes.

The overall performance of the Pokhara DMO will be linked to the performance of Pokhara as a tourism destination. Success therefore needs to be measured based on appropriate short, medium and long term goals such as:

- Growth in visitor numbers, stays and expenditure
- Growth in jobs created and sustained and new investment
- Improved visitor satisfaction
- Enhanced tourism business performance
- Awareness of Pokhara as a destination

The evaluation of the performance of the Pokhara DMO will be based on a research that can facilitate the setting and monitoring of performance indicators. In addition, research will be required from time to time to evaluate performance against the overall goals as well as those that are project specific.

APPENDIX

6.1 VALIDATION WORKSHOP AT THE MOT

(1) Date: June 21, 2016

(2) Location: Meeting room at the MoT, Kathmandu

(3) Participants

- Mr. Danduraj Gimire, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation
- Mr. Sudarshan Prasad Dhakal, Director General, Department of Tourism
- Mr. Ajaya Ratna Sthapit, Managing Director, Lumbini Garden Hotel
- Ms. Subrita Sthapit, Business Development Manager, Lumbini Garden Hotel
- Mr. Wouter Schalken, Senior Tourism Specialist, World Bank Group
- Ms. Raihana Rabbany, Private Sector Development Specialist, World Bank Group
- Mr. Saurabh Rijal, Investment Facilitation Expert, World Bank Group
- Natalia Juanco, Investment Policy Analyst, World Bank Group
- Milton Hyun Soo Kal, Development Specialist, World Bank Group

(4) Major Points Learned

- The public sector wished for the expansion of the destination development area to include Dhampus and forest area, to name a few.
- The public sector agreed to the need for the Pokhara Destination Management Organization (DMO) and informed that there had already been some discussions on and advances in the issue.
- Mr. Sthapit informed that one of the proposed transformational investment projects, the Sarangkot cable car project, were already initiated by a group of private investors and that its construction was about to commence.

6.2 VALIDATION WORKSHOP WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

(1) Date: June 24, 2016

(2) Location: Conference Room at Temple Tree, Pokhara

(3) Participants

- Mr. Binaya Acharya, Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal (TAAN) Pokhara
- Mr. Rajendra Dhakal, Managing Director, Hotel Association
- Mr. Chau Belr Grg, REBAN Pokhara
- Mr. Dharma Raj Panthi, TAAN Pokhara
- Mr. Dambar Bahadur KC, PTC/TAAN Pokhara
- Mr. Bikal Tulachan, Hotel Association Pokhara
- Mr. Bharat Raj Parajuli, Hotel Association Pokhara
- Mr. Tika Ram Sapkate, Pokhara Tourism Council
- Mr. Chiranjibi Pokhrel, Pokhara Tourism Council
- Mr. Tirtha Raj Tripathi, Director, Annapurna Cable Car Pvt. Ltd. Sarangkot
- Ms. Raihana Rabbany, Private Sector Development Specialist, World Bank Group
- Mr. Saurabh Rijal, Investment Facilitation Expert, World Bank Group
- Natalia Juanco, Investment Policy Analyst, World Bank Group
- Milton Hyun Soo Kal, Development Specialist, World Bank Group

(4) Major Points Learned

- The private sector requested for the inclusion of more sites in the destination development. The following are some of those sites mentioned:
 - Kahun Danda, northeast of the Lakeside
 - Adventure school (already included in the plan)
 - Thulakot Hill & Kalika
 - Western region of Nepal
 - Hill station around Begnas Lake
 - Bhadra Kali Temple, east of Pokhara
 - Open zoo and botanical garden at Lakeside forest
 - Buddhist monasteries
 - Beach area development at the north lake side of Fewa Lake

- Dhungesanghu – George and Stone Bridge near Fulbari Resort
- The private sector participants wanted to know the possibility of investment by the IFC and were informed that the current mission is limited to the destination development planning at the request of the MoT.
- The private investors who are currently constructing a large-scale resort hotel at the Sarangkot hilltop and cable car showed their interests in the idea of an iconic landmark structure at the Sarangkot hilltop. They were willing to initiate their internal discussion on the possible investment.