

# CHAPTER 4



## CHAPTER – 4

### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF ADVENTURE TOURISM : THE CASE OF NEPAL HIMALAYA

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# **Chapter 4**

## **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF ADVENTURE TOURISM: THE CASE OF NEPAL HIMALAYA**



### **4.1 Introduction**

Tourism is the world's largest, most diverse and fastest growing industry. Many nations rely on tourism as a primary source of generating revenue, employment, investment and infrastructure development. Travel and tourism directly and indirectly account for 11.7 per cent of world's Gross Domestic Product, generating US\$ 3.5 trillion revenue in 1999. A preliminary report released by the WTO shows that international tourist arrivals grew by 3.2 percent in 1999 to reach an estimated US\$ 657 million. Earning from international tourism also rose by 3.2 percent to reach US \$ 455 billion (Singh & Rana, 2006). Thailand during the recent Asian economic crisis, used travel and tourism as a catalyst for economic recovery, whereby international tourists bring in foreign exchange to stimulate economic growth and job creation, 200 million jobs which formed 8 per cent of world's total work force in 1999 were created through travel and tourism according to world Tourism and Travel Council's (WTTC) report. WTTC also forecast that it would continue to generate an approximately 5.5 million new jobs per year until 2010. International tourism is the world's largest export earner and an important factor in the balance of payments of many countries. Foreign currency receipts from international tourism reached US \$ 423 billion in 1996,

outstripping exports of petroleum products, telecommunication or any product or services.

Among the different categories of tourism, adventure tourism has already been identified as the most important recourse in recent decades (WTTC, 2003) and there is a substantial and growing literature on the development of adventure tourism (Beedie and Hudson, 2003; Cloutier 2003; Morgan 2001; Uriely et al., 2002). Defining adventure tourism is a difficult task because of its complex and multi-dimensional nature. However, some researchers have attempted to develop definition that can be used by academics and practitioners. Tourism Canada (1993), for example, defined adventure travel as an outdoor leisure activity that takes place in an unusual, exotic, and remote or wilderness destination. Similarly, Sung, Morrison & O'Leary (1997) suggested that adventure travel is "a trip of travel with the purpose of activity participation to explore new experience, often involving perceived risk or controlled danger associated with personal challenges in a natural environment or exotic outdoor setting." Hall & Weiler (1992) argued that adventure tourism is "a broad spectrum of outdoor touristic activities, often commercialised and involving an interaction with the natural environment away from the participants' home range and containing elements of risk in which the outcome is influenced by the participant, setting and management of touristic experience". It brings together travel, sport, and outdoor recreation. This experimental engagement makes it distinctive within the broader context. Attraction such as mountains, lakes, oceans, dessert, island, and other wilderness areas represent escape locations that offers excitement, stimulation and knowledge.

Adventure tourism activities can also be differentiated according to risk continuum of 'soft' and 'hard' adventure (Lipscombe, 1995). Hard adventure is usually high risk, high involvement, challenging for participants, and participants often need to physically fit (Mallett, 1992; Peterson, 1989; Rubin, 1989). Such activities include mountaineering, abseiling, caving, skydiving and scuba diving. Successfully meeting the challenges and dealing with the uncertainties and risk of such situations reinforce participants' feelings of confidence and competence. Soft adventure, however, are usually relative novices at the activity and setting and are looking for a carefully planned level of novel activity that provides excitement and emotional release (Lipscombe, 1995). Such adventure experiences are generally passive and rarely involve physical discomfort (Butler

& Waldbrook, 1991). Such activities include bush walking, hiking, horse riding, canoeing and snorkeling.

#### **4.2 As an important Market Segment of Tourism Industry**

Recently, there has been explosive growth in adventure tourism, with large numbers of consumers seeking novel, challenging and exciting adventure experience while on holiday. In fact, it is argued that adventure tourism is the fastest growing sector of the outdoor tourism market with an estimated annual growth of 15 per cent (Burak, 1998). Approximately one-half of US adult (98 million) has taken an adventure vacation within the past five years (Tsui, 2000) and this is predicted to grow in the future. Many travellers today prefer to experience a vacation, particularly those of beaten track, rather than spend their vacation sitting passively on a tour bus (Black & Rutledge; 1995; Tourism Canada, 1995; Vellas, 1995). Mallett (1998) finds that the total value of the NEAT Sector (Nature, Eco- and Adventure Tourism) in the United States has been estimated at \$ 220 billion per annum, or about half the size of the tourism industry as a whole. In particular, adventure tourism can be seen as a distinct NEAT Sector (Buckley, 2000), which exerts significant impacts on regional and national economies. Sir Edmund Hillary has observed that "Adventure tourism has blossomed into one of the world's most important economic activities (Hillary, 1991). Growth in the number of adventure travellers has been explosive in the last half of this century and can only be expected to increase (Kohl, 1988).

Meanwhile, the destination makers are excited about this growth market and suppliers are investing heavily into adventure products and services to capitalise on consumers' relatively high spend and environmentally sensitive nature (Wight, 1996; Ewert & Shultis, 1997). With a huge growth in this niche market of adventure travel, websites, books magazines, clothing suppliers, outdoor stores, travel agents and tour operators are proliferating- all catering for the specific needs of adventure tourism customers. The scope and diversity of adventure activities would seem to indicate that this niche market is relatively long term proposition for tour operators.

### **4.3 Aims of Study and Sources of Data**

Despite its growing popularity and rapid expansion in the tourism industry, little systematic investigation has been attempted of adventure tourism (Sung et al, 2000). There is an immediate need for empirical research to provide useful information for both the industry and management. The majority of research focuses on the demand side of visitor needs and wants while neglecting the supply side of characteristics of adventure destinations. Analysis of adventure destinations for the purposes of tourism development and policy evaluation is still an underdeveloped research field (Weber, 2001). The purpose of this paper is to briefly review the challenges and opportunities associated with adventure tourism in Nepal and propose recommendations to improve the development of adventure tourism in the country. This study is based on the secondary data. The data and information are obtained from the statistical Year Book, Nepal, Tourism Statistical Report, 2004 and from other published documents of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Tourism Board, Nepal. Some other information related to the adventure tourism has also been collected from the journals, books and websites.

### **4.4 Nature of Adventure Tourism in Nepal**

Mountaineering, trekking, nature tours into the lowland Tarai jungles and white water rafting are the main forms of adventure tourism in Nepal. These derive from a much longer list of adventure travel activities offered worldwide by US based adventure travel firms which is shown in table 4.1. River rafting is relatively new in Nepal but it has earned the reputation of one of the best destinations for white water rafting while several river offer rafting opportunities, 89 percent of all rafters in 1988 went on the Trisuli River, which is most accessible from Kathmandu. Jungle Safaris, although less developed in Nepal than in the African game parks (Rajotte, 1987), are popular in the lowland Tarai regions where exquisite habitat still remains for wildlife viewing. Nature tourism must, however, contend with the fact that wild habitat in Nepal is commonly sacrificed for national modernisation purposes. One of the goals of nature tourism is to call attention to the problems of habitat loss and endangered species and to provide economic support for their management (Boo, 1990; Laarman, et al., 1989).

**Table 4. 1: U.S. Based Adventure Programmes Worldwide**

Programme type	Destinations
Trekking	Argentina, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, Turkey.
Vehicle Overland	China, Egypt, Malawi, Mongolia, Sahara region, Tibet, Tunisia, West Africa.
Natural History	Antartica, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Gulapagos, Madagascar.
Wildlife Safari	Central Africa, Kenya, Tanzania
Archaeology	Egypt, Tunisia
Kayaking/Rafting	Mexico

*Source: Author's U.S. Adventure Travel Industry Survey, 1989-90.*

Mountain trekking is the most important adventure activity in Nepal. Group trekker are arranged and paid for abroad or in Kathmandu. Alternatively, individuals may trek without group service, relying instead on the village route for food and lodging. The purpose of mountain trekking is to pass slowly through the landscape allowing time to explore both nature and village life.

#### **4.5 Nepal, a Paradise for Adventure Tourists**

Nepal has mountains, hills and, even more important, the people to provide both the adventure and walking tour holidays that cannot be matched anywhere in the world. The small Himalayan country and over 1, 47,181 sq. kms of area is situated on the lap of Central Himalayas. The country has 79 per cent of its area under mountainous topography (Chauhan, 2004). The towering massive series of the mighty Himalayan ranges separated by some of the deepest gorges provides a picturesque scene for tourists.

In Asia, the Himalayas are the home of adventure tourism. Nepal is a trekker, rafter and mountain biker's 'paradise', whatever is one's level of competence or thirst for adventure tourism, Nepal has something for everyone. The majestic Himalayas are home to 8 of 14 highest mountains in the world above 8000 meters in height. Himalayan flora and fauna untouched for centuries, thrives here in abundance, adding a rare visual treat to one's adventure trip in Nepal. The great ridges carpeted in alpine flowers, forests of rhododendrons, exotic birds and animals are unforgettable sights while trekking.

Nepal has many rivers originating in the glaciers of the Himalayas which are the early tributaries of the mighty rivers of the plains. They offer opportunities for

various tourist attractions like white water rafting, canoeing and kayaking at different levels of difficulties. One can glide on calm water, drinking in the beauty of the surroundings or tumble through the roaring rapids. The pristine river banks offer crystal clear water for swimming and bug - free beaches for camping. Climbing, mountaineering, biking and trekking of different degrees of difficulties await one on every tour. Adventure tourism in Nepal also offers an opportunity to meet with likeminded people from all over the world who share a thirst for adventure, seek new places and want to learn how the rest of the world live. Further, travellers have the privilege and the joy of interacting with simple village folk who possess nothing by western standards but a life full of love.

#### **4.6 Adventure Tourism Potential and Attraction**

The Himalayan landscape of Nepal offers a multitude of diverse adventure-based tourism activities such as trekking, mountaineering, rafting, ballooning, bungee jumping, paragliding etc., which have made Nepal famous in international arena.

- **Trekking**

Among the many tourist adventure activities in Nepal, trekking is by far the most popular. The natural diversity of Nepal and a range of exotic culture make this country ideal for trekking. Most treks go through areas between 1,000 to 3,000 meters, although some popular parts reach over 5,000 meters above sea level. Protected regions along the Himalayas, like Shey Phoksundo National Park, Annapurna Conservation Area Manaslu Eco Tourism Area, Langtang National Park, Sagarmatha National Park and Makalu Barun National Park provide excellent trekking option in Nepal, which offer the unbeatable combination of natural beauty and cultural diversity ranging across easy walking excursions to the strenuous scaling of of the snowy peaks. Annapurna and Everest (Khumbu) are the two most popular trekking areas in Nepal in terms of visitors while Langtang is in third position. It is estimated that a total of 69,442 trekkers who visited Nepal in 2004 have been recorded. Out of them 42,347 or (61.0 percent) visited Annapurna area while those visiting the Everest and Langtang regions accounted for 20,051 or (28.9 percent), 3,020 (43 percent) respectively (NTS, 2004).

- **Annapurna Region**

The Annapurna region lies toward the north of Central Nepal. The region has been recognised as one of the world's best trekking trials according to recent survey (Bichsel *et al.*, 2002). The highlights of this part of Nepal are Annapurna peaks, Mt. Dhaulagiri, River Kali Gandaki and several other peaks. The most prominent ethnic groups of Annapurna region are Grung, Thakali and Manangha. Animals found here are Pika, blue sheep and Himalayan Tahr and vegetation ranges from tropical species to temperate forest of oak, beech and rhododendron. The popular trekking routes of this region are Jomsom, Annapurna circuit and Annapurna Base camp, Annapurna foothills, Sikles, Lamjung, and Dhaulagiri etc.

- **Everest Region**

The Everest region is located in the northeast of Nepal. It is a renowned tourist destination in Nepal and was declared a 'World Heritage Site' in 1980. It has a unique position in global mountain tourism; it has 5 of the world's 10 highest peaks and is the main centre of tourism within the region. This region is dominated by the mighty but hidden Mount Everest (8,848 m). The major ethnic groups that live in the Everest region are Sherpas, Rais, Tamang, Brahmins and Chhettri. Animals to be sighted in this region are goat, musk deer and barking deer, etc. Popular trekking areas are Everest Base Camp, Gokyo valley, Lukla, Pike Danda, Dudh Kunda, Chiwong Circuit, Hongu valleys and Everest to Arun valley. Namche Bazar, Khumbu's main tourist hub, has the appearance of a small town but has much better facilities and services other much larger, hill town in Nepal appear less developed than Namche.

- **Lamtang Region**

Lamtang area is to the north of Kathamandu valley. The scenery here is spectacular, and the trek more adventurous as the area is visited by fewer tourists. To the west of Lamtang is Ganesh Himal with a range of 6,000 to 7,000 meters. The forest in this region has temperate and sub-alpine vegetation. The main ethnic groups living here are Sherpas and Tamang. Wildlife includes migratory birds, deer, monkey and Tahr.

- **Mountaineering**

Mountaineering is another prime adventure attraction of Nepal. The mountains of Nepal have stood as irresistible landmarks for the adventurous of the world

since Nepal opened its door to visitors in the 1950s. It has become a great arena of mountaineering activity and the drama of success and failures have provided impetus to thousands of men and women to meet the ultimate challenge. With eight of the highest peaks in the world, it is hardly surprising that Nepal has been the stage for some of the most outstanding achievements in the world of mountaineering. The dauntless icy peaks have since decades, challenged the bodies and spirits of those daring enough to conquer the hulks.

- **Rafting/Kayaking/Canyoning**

Few rivers in the world are able to compete with the thundering rivers of Nepal. These rivers originated from the snow melt-down and the rains in the Himalayan region. The rivers run through twisted canyons, slice through valleys and are untamed for most people other than rafters. A river trip is one of the best ways to explore the typical cross-section of the country's natural as well the ethno-cultural heritage accompanied by a high degree of excitement. An extremely popular sport in Europe, canyoning is now available in Nepal. There are numerous rivers in Nepal which offer excellent rafting or canoeing experience.

The government of Nepal has opened sections of 16 rivers graded on a scale of 1 to 5 for commercial rafting. For white water rafting, Sunkoshi is one of the most enjoyable rivers in the country. The Karnali river is some of the most challenging rapids in the world while Sunkoshi is a big and challenging Nepal's raftable river. The below has shown some major rivers of Nepal (Table 4.2) which provide rafting service in the country.

**Table 4.2: Major Rafting Rivers**

Name of River	Location	Distance in K.M.	Famous for
Trishuli	Central region	35	Rafting/Kayaking
Sunkoshi	Eastern region	270	White water rafting/Kayaking
Marshyandi	Western region	47	White water rafting/Kayaking
Seti	Western region	35	Rafting/Kayaking
Kali Gandaki	Western region	70	Rafting/Kayaking
Karnali	Mid Western region	180	Rafting/Kayaking

Source: [www: Nepalinformatin.com](http://www.Nepalinformatin.com)

- **Paragliding**

Paragliding is a recreational and thrilling modern flying sport. It is nothing but a free flying foot-launched aircraft. Paragliding in Nepal is a relatively new adventure sport. However it has become very popular among thrill seekers. The thrill it provides to the adventure seekers is uncomparable. Floating in the air high above the snowcapped mountains is an extremely thrilling experience. It is something which every adventure lover longs to have. Paragliding is done in Nepal mostly in Annapurna range more specifically the Pokhara valley because, it gives marvellous view of the world's 8,000 m peaks. Several training schools in Nepal offer training in paragliding.

- **Jungle Safari**

The tropical jungle of Nepal's Tarai preserve boasts of some of the best wildlife habitat in the subcontinent. Nepal has 16 national parks, wildlife reserves and conservation areas. Jungle safaris on elephant back or jeep rides are offered at the Parsa wildlife Reserve, Royal Bardia National Park, Royal Chitwan National Park and the Royal Shukla Wildlife Reserve, all located in the Tarai.

- **Bungy Jumping**

The ultimate thrill of a bungee jump can be experienced in Nepal as one of the best sites in the world. Nepal's first bungee jumping site is situated 160 meters over the wild River Bhote Koshi. This site is located close to the Nepal-Tibet border at Barahbise and is a three hour bus rides from Kathamandu. The thrill of bungee jumping surrounded by some of the highest mountains in the world is truly an opportunity not to be missed by the lovers of adventure travel.

- **Hot Air Ballooning**

It is one of the oldest and safest means of adventure activity. Propane gas is fired into the balloon which heats the air and causes it to rise and once the balloon is filled with enough hot air, it takes to the skies. Once the balloon is full and systems double, the lines are let loose and the passenger basket is carried up over the morning fog and into the sunlit skies. The balloon is float at about 1200 to 1500 meters above the Kathmandu valley. From this altitude, the entire Himalayan range will be in sight providing 360 degrees of visibility as well as fantastic downward views of the Kathmandu valley itself.

- **Rock Climbing**

Rock climbing is another challenging sport for outdoor lovers. Most of the areas for rock climbing are situated toward the north of Kathamandu valley in the vicinity of the Nagarjun forest and the Shivapuri Watershed and Wildlife Reserve. Since one is a National Park, and the other protected area, trips to this place can be combined with hiking, bird watching and other activities. Shivapuri is 9 kilometers away from Kathamandu valley.

- **Boating**

Nepal, a country rich in rivers, provides an array of options for boating. Both rivers in the Terai plains and glacier fed lakes both can be availed for recreational boating which is a very refreshing experience. Phewa lakes in Pokhara are in particular very popular among the tourists. Baidam is center of tourism activities in Pokhara. Begnas and Rupa are located in the outskirts of Pokhara. Narayani and Rapti River are also famous for boating.

- **Mountain Flight**

This is the most fascinating flight in the world. This flight offers a panoramic view of the Himalaya in just one hour. During flight one can see the mightiest Himalayas including Shishra Dangma (8,013), Dorje Lakpa (6966 m.), Phurbi Chyachu, Choba Bhamre (5933 m.). Mt. Gaurishankar and other important peak like Sagarmatha and the glimpse of Kanchanjunga. The Nepal mountain flight take one within the camera range of some of the highest peaks in the world and cruising so close to the awe-inspiring massifs of rock and ice, is a heavenly experience.

- **Mountain Biking**

Nepal is the world's number one adventure playground for mountain bikers. From the flat land to Tarai to the terraced hillside farms, the vertical landscape soars towards the snow clad peaks of the Himalayas, inviting the world to share the adventures associated with this awesome landscape. The tropical lush vegetation is a rich contrast against the stark, arctic regions where winds have swept, sculpting amazing forms on arid valleys of the Tibeta Plateau. Mountain biking is an exciting way to see the exotic sights of the country, such as ancient routes on Trans-Himalayan traders and rural village life of Nepal.

A number of other attractions such as, jet scooter riding, ultra light aircraft flight, fishing and angling, hunting and sight seeing of cultural heritage offer a magnificent views and experiences to the lover of adventure tourism. In addition,

there are several special interest tours like orchid tours, culture trek, honey hunting, village tours, gulf tours, fossile hunting, meditation courses and seminars, etc.

To promote the adventure tourism and tourism as a whole, a large number of manpower as well as agency have been involved to cater their service to the industry since 1999-2007, which is shown in table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Travel, Trekking, Rafting Agencies and Licensed Manpower Guide (1999-2007)**

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Travel Agency	563	637	691	738	788	877	948	1026	1078
Trekking Agency	475	537	580	611	645	705	740	793	872
Rafting Agency	87	87	87	87	90	91	92	92	94
Tour Guide	1691	1854	1900	2001	2071	2149	2202	2271	2282
Trekking Guide	1967	2155	2745	3094	3457	3930	4395	4663	5098
River Guide	174	174	174	174	180	182	182	182	182

*Source: Annual Statistical Report 2004, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Government of Nepal.*

Table 4.3 shows a positive growth trend. The number of travel, trekking and rafting agency including all kinds of guides increased year to year since 1999 to 2007, which signifies future prospect of tourism development.

#### **4.7 Tourist Arrival Pattern and Development Trend**

It is obvious from the above fact that the tourism in Nepal has great potential. However, mainly because of internal conflicts and security uncertainable regarding security, Nepal's tourism has seen a varied growth and fall pattern which is indicated in table 4.4 below.

**Table 4.4: Tourist Arrival by Purpose of Visit (1999 – 2007)**

Year	Arrival (Total)	Annual Average Growth Rate (in %)	Trekking & Mountaineering	
			Total Arrival	Share (in %)
1999	491,504	-	107,960	22.0
2000	463,646	-5.7	118,780	25.6
2001	361,237	-22	100,828	27.9
2002	275,468	-23.1	59,279	-21.5
2003	338,132	22.1	65,721	-19.4
2004	385,297	13.1	69,442	-18.0
2005	375,398	-2.1	61,488	16.4
2006	383,926	2	66,931	12.7
2007	526,705	37	101,320	19.2

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

In the above table, the pattern of tourists' arrival has been fluctuated during 1999-2007. The highest tourists arrival was recorded to 526,705 in 2007, representing an annual growth rate of 37 percent. Although, the share of adventure tourists arrival was recorded to 27.9 percent in 2001 which came to decline by 21.5 percent to 12.7 percent between 2002 and 2006. A strong recovery was noted in 2007, the share of adventure tourists arrival rose by 19.2 percent.

Although, the largest number of tourists visited Nepal for recreational purposes (41.4%), adventure tourists had the highest average length of stay in the country, which accounted for 11.96 days. A total of 162 expedition teams were granted permission to scale different Himalayan peaks during 2007 out of which only 86 teams were successful in their attempt. The number of mountaineers was 1,128 while expedition teams employed 4,823 persons.

Foreign exchange earning in convertible currency from tourism was accounted for US \$ 230.6 million in 2007, which represented an increase of 641.7 percent over the earning of 2006. The share of tourism to the GDP of the nation was 1.5 percent and it accounted for 4.5 percent of the total foreign exchange earning during fiscal year 2006-2007 (Economy Survey-2007-2008).

It can be noted that Nepal had witnessed more or less a steady growth up to 1999. The decline in the tourist arrival however started from 2000. The main reasons for the poor performance in tourism were the political instability, conflict,

general strikes, bands which gave rise to negative publicity factor in international market about tourism in Nepal.

#### **4.8 Problems and Challenges**

Nepal has abundant natural resources which are extremely varied and diverse in attraction. Its landscape and adventure based tourism products are unique and is wonder of the rest of the world. However, tourism has affected in recent years due to a number of factors including the followings:

(i) Political instability, insurgency and disturbance. (ii) Poor infrastructure and low air connectivity. (iii) Limited road accessibility and lower quality roads. (iv) Poor service quality including in the first point of contact on arrival that is customs, immigration and airport halls. (v) Inadequate promotion and development of natural, cultural and religious attraction. (vi) Inadequate financial resources. (vii) Inadequate marketing and research. (viii) Absence of co-ordination in programmes and action between private sector and government and within the private sector despite the establishment of the Nepal Tourism Board.

#### **4.9 Strategic Initiatives**

In order to cope with the challenges of adventure tourism and to develop Nepal a renowned international tourist destination, the following strategies could be useful, promoting tourism growth in the country.

- **Infrastructure Development**

Accessibility of tourist destinations is one of the most important components of tourism development. This is one of the major constraints for expanding tourism activities of the country. In Nepal road density is about one half of the average of the least developing countries. The Government's effort in infrastructural development is not satisfactory. Therefore, the following steps would be highly effective for infrastructural development. (i) Quality road construction has to be initiated on a priority basis. (ii) Accessibility schemes must be developed by examining different alternative like air, road, trekking trails or a combination of all three. (iii) Upgrading and proper maintenance of existing roads, again on priority basis has to be initiated. (iv) Access to and from India and China by road needs to be built, widened and improved to attract rapidly rising middleclass population of these countries. (v) Microhydro or solar energy should be developed and grid electricity should be expanded in major tourist destination.

- **Air Connectivity**

A large number of tourists arrive in Nepal by air. The cost of airfare is therefore, an important element in the marketing of Nepal vis-à-vis other destinations. Due to operational limitations, wide body aircraft of the kind used for long haul flight cannot take off from Tribhuvan International Airport. As a result, tourists from European and American origins need to transit in the Middle East or South East Asia before arriving to Nepal in a smaller capacity aircraft. This makes the cost of flying to Nepal more expensive compare to other similar alternative destinations. In the long run, a second international air port should be built with a capacity and operational parameters to accommodate bigger size of aircraft. In the meantime, regional airport should also be upgraded to receive international flights. Biratnagar, Bhairahawa and Pokhara would all qualify for a new airport that could accommodate flights that originate within the South-East Asian Region.

- **Services and Hospitality**

Tourists have to suffer a long wait in a disorganised queue to complete a number of Visa and entry related formalities. Visitors have to rush and struggle against a number of disorganised hotel touts and porters, while risking being run over by vehicles that pass directly across the point where passengers emerge. Moreover, tourists report the condition of green plate taxis operating from the airport a disgrace. Much could be done to improve facilities like signposts, toilets, security system, and immigration procedure and so on for tourists at TIA. The following improvements need to be done: (i) Improvement of TIA services including immigration and transportation. (ii) Strengthening quality of teaching at all hospitality and tourism training institutes and promoting in-service training. (iii) Developing service monitoring mechanism. (iv) Enforcing developed standards in the services to be provided in hotels and restaurants. (v) Strengthening and expanding tourism information centres. (vi) Developing and implement security services in the tourist areas, especially in the context of developing wilderness and adventure tourism. (vii) Developing consumer (tourist) service strategy based on exit survey of the tourists.

#### **4.10 Product Enhancement and Development for Tourism Growth**

Some of the tourist destinations which need to be developed on a priority basis are as follows. It includes conservation, promotion and development of the tourist destinations.

(i) There are a few destinations, which have strong potential. These destinations, if developed, cannot only become the destination for overseas and Indian tourists but also can promote domestic tourism such as Rara Lake National Park (Mugu), Phoksundo National Park (Upper Dolpa) and Buddhist Monasteries in Upper Dolpa, Bardia National Park and Bidahiya Tal in Bardia are some of the other major tourist destinations that need to be developed. (ii) Tansen, a hill station, if properly developed can prove to be an attraction to foreign, Indian as well as domestic visitors. (iii) The tourism potential is extremely high in view of rich natural resources, bewitching scenery and unique cultural and ecological heritage. Close proximity to the astounding Himalayan ranges of Annapurna, Dhaulagiri and Lamjung Himal with two peaks above 8000 meter. Annapurna and Dhaulagiri and Machhapuchhre, one of the most beautiful peaks in the world, overlooking Pokhara valley, are some of the major trekking and sightseeing attraction of the country. (iv) Museums (including the mountaineering museum of Nepal) and sports (paragliding, rafting, hang gliding and rock climbing) provide additional attraction. (v) The Annapurna circuit is among the best trekking circuit in the world (ranked in top 20). The upper Mustang regions, up to Lomanthang, accessible by surface transport from Tibet, also provide a further attraction. Other major and very popular route to go to Manang via Beshi Shahar, Ghandrung, Annapurna base camp and up to Kali Gaudaki to Kagbeni and Muktinath, the latter being a site of religious importance. (vi) Trekking routes are famous in Rasuwa and Sindhupalchowk district in Central region. Trekking routes exist from Dhunche to Kenjingompa in Langtang via Syafru, Sundarikal to Hilambu, Panchkhal to Helambu, Melamchi to Helambu and Dhunche to Melamchi. These routes attract the third highest number of trekkers after Annapurna Circuit and Everest treks. The natural resources include Himalayas and the region has Ganesh, Langtang, Jugal and Rolwaling Himalayan ranges. (vii) There are many hill resorts within or nearby the valley like Nagarkot and Dhulikhel. (viii) Chitwan National Park and Parsa Wildlife Reserve are major tourist attractions, the former having the third largest tourism inflow after Kathamandu and Pokhara. Other

resources include historical sites in Chitawan and Bara, and areas like Daman, which could be promoted as hill stations. (ix) The Eastern region has three major trekking routes though; many more are feasible and should be developed. The most important route starts from Lukla airport and goes to Everest base camp via Namche, Thyang boche, Dinboche, Pheriche, Lobuche and Kala Pathar. The two other routes also go from Namche, the first to Gorakchhep and the second to Thame. Gorakchhep Lake and rivers like Likhu, Dudhkoshi, Sunkoshi and Kamala provide further attraction. (x) There are cultural diversity spots like Sherpa culture in Solukhumbu, and Gurung culture in Hills of Rumjatar. (xi) Makalu-Barun National Park (east of the Everest area, at the borders of regions (7 and 8) and Kanchanjunga conservation Area in the vicinity of Kanchanjunga (third highest peak in the world) offer good treks. Neither routes are popular and attract only nominal numbers of visitors. (xii) There are many sites capable of development as hill stations in particular Illam, Shree-Antu, Pashupatinagar, Bhedetar, Dhankuta and Hile. (xiii) Rafting along the Sunkoshi River.

#### **4.11 Tourist Promotion**

In order to increase the tourism potential in the economy the following marketing promotional strategies need to be forcefully pursued.

(i) Reducing the seasonal nature of tourism, which is often founded on incorrect assumptions about weather pattern and improving the seasonal and spatial distribution of visitors? (ii) Expanding the volume and value of tourism by repackaging and promoting presently available tourism products. (iii) Promoting lesser known attraction that lie outside the common perception of Nepal as a trekking destination and enhancing the growth of new tourism areas. (iv) Promoting Nepal tourism band.

Government of Nepal, Nepal tourism Board, Travel Industry, local bodies and NGOs should all work in a coordinated manner to decide on strategies, agree on action programmes and implementation and monitoring responsibilities. This is an appropriate time for tourism development must not be lost.