

POKHARA: CITY ATTRACTIVENESS REPORT

2026

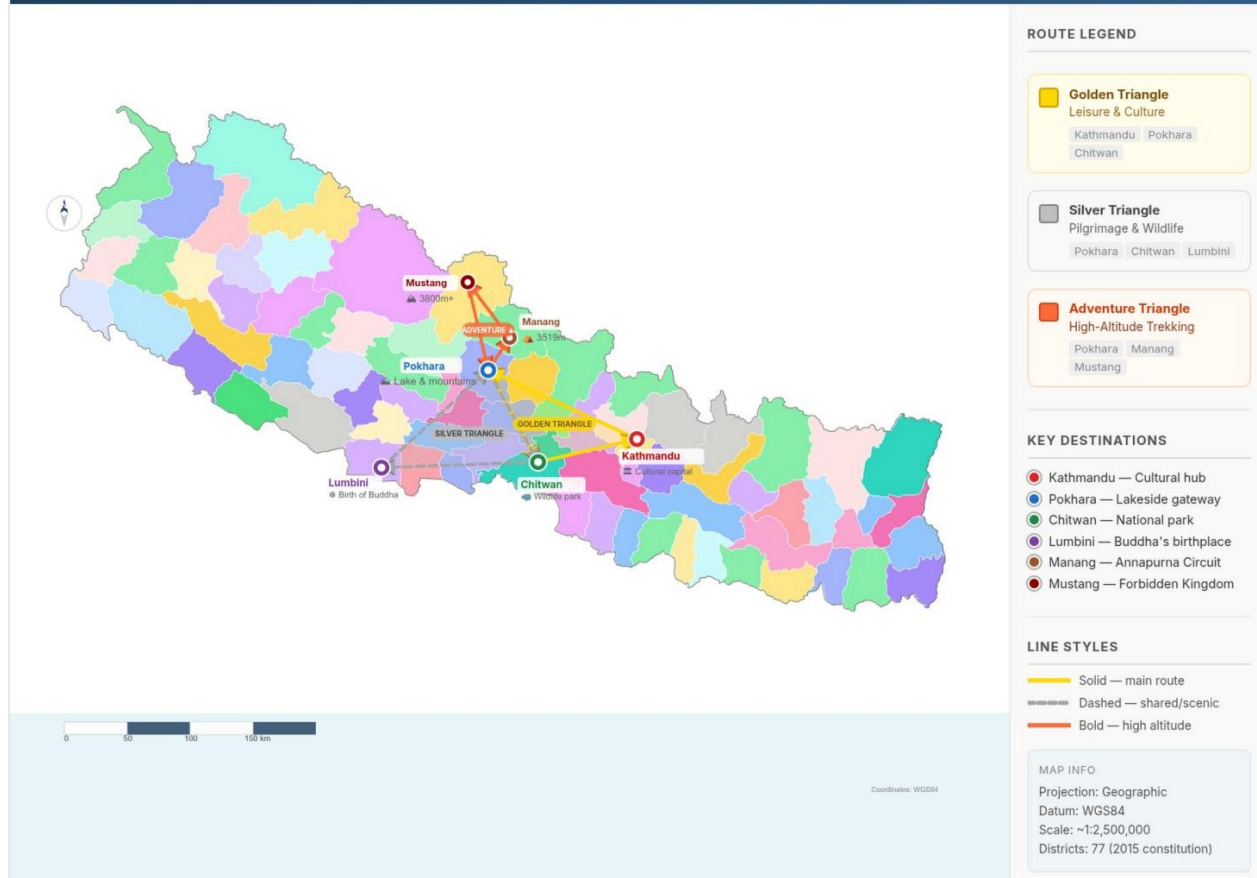


Pokhara Metropolitan City
Nepal

Nepal Tourism Triangle Routes

Three iconic travel circuits — leisure, pilgrimage & high-altitude adventure

Tourism Map 2025



Acknowledgement

Tourism today is no longer evaluated solely through traditional indicators such as visitor arrivals, hotel capacity or infrastructure development. The global tourism industry recognizes that the true competitiveness of a destination lies in how visitors emotionally perceive, experience and remember a place. This evolving understanding of destination attractiveness through a visitor-centered and sentiment-based approach has become critically important for sustainable tourism planning and global positioning. This study, *City Attractiveness Assessment of Pokhara: Insights from the Yanolja Tourism Attractiveness Framework*, is an important effort to assess the attractiveness of Pokhara using an internationally recognized methodological framework that captures travelers' lived experiences, perceptions, and emotional engagement with the city.

The completion of this study would not have been possible without the support, inspiration, and contributions of Pokhara Metropolitan City (PMC). I express my sincere gratitude to Dhana Raj Acharya, the Mayor of PMC with special thanks to Manahar Kadariya, chief of Economic Development Division and Nabaraj Adhikari, chief executive officer of Business Promotion Center of PMC. I am equally thankful to the Pokhara Tourism Council (PTC), the umbrella organization of tourism stakeholders associated with the tourism ecosystem of Pokhara and to all the travelers, reviewers, bloggers, tourism content creators and online communities whose publicly available experiences and narratives across digital platforms formed the analytical foundation of this assessment.

Special appreciation is extended to Yanolja Research for developing the innovative Global Tourism City Attractiveness Index framework, which has significantly advanced the understanding of tourism competitiveness from a demand-side perspective. Their pioneering work in integrating sentiment analysis, digital tourism discourse and visitor-centered attractiveness measurement has created a globally relevant methodology, the valuable tool for emerging tourism destinations such as Pokhara. The study team further acknowledges the valuable contributions of Yanolja Research team as the study clearly demonstrate that Pokhara's greatest strength lies not only in its spectacular natural scenery and rich cultural heritage, but also in the genuine hospitality and human connection experienced by visitors.

Finally, sincere appreciation is extended to everyone who directly and indirectly contributed to the successful completion of this study. It is hoped that this research will serve as a useful reference for future tourism planning, destination management, and annual attractiveness monitoring, ultimately supporting the sustainable and globally competitive future of Pokhara, the Tourism Capital Nepal.

Sincerely

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Executive Summary

The study titled *City Attractiveness Assessment of Pokhara: Insights from the Yanolja Tourism Attractiveness Framework* evaluates the tourism attractiveness of Pokhara using the internationally recognized Yanolja Attractiveness Index (YAI) framework developed by Yanolja Research in collaboration with Purdue University CHRIBA Institute and Kyung Hee University H&T Analytics Center. The assessment is based on 4,310 verified traveler reviews and social media entries collected from multiple tourism-related digital platforms expressed between 2023 and 2025. Unlike traditional tourism assessments that focus on supply-side indicators such as hotel capacity or visitor arrivals, this study adopts a demand-side and sentiment-based approach to measure how travelers emotionally perceive and experience Pokhara.

The findings confirm that Pokhara possesses a strong and globally competitive tourism attractiveness profile driven primarily by its experiential tourism contents, cultural richness, and exceptional hospitality environment. Among the four dimensions assessed under the YAI framework, *Experiential Tourism Contents* emerged as the strongest dimension, reflecting Pokhara's global recognition as an adventure and experience-oriented tourism destination. Activities such as paragliding, trekking, boating, rafting, hiking, and outdoor recreation were identified as major drivers of positive traveler sentiment. The *Culture and History* dimension also performed strongly, supported by the city's rich ethnic diversity, traditional culture, religious landmarks, museums, and spiritual tourism assets.

The study further highlights Pokhara's unique competitive advantage in hospitality. Travelers consistently praised the friendliness of local residents and the professionalism and kindness of tourism service providers, identifying the human warmth of Pokhara as one of its most memorable tourism assets. At the same time, the assessment identified relatively weaker performance in architectural aesthetics, nightlife management, and structured theme-based attractions. These gaps indicate the need for strategic investments in urban design, cultural evening economy, and diversified tourism products to strengthen the city's overall competitiveness.

Comparative analysis with Kathmandu reveals that while Kathmandu performs better in overall urban attractiveness and balanced tourism infrastructure, Pokhara significantly outperforms Kathmandu in experiential tourism and cultural immersion. This positions Pokhara as a globally attractive “*hidden gem*” destination with substantial opportunities for international repositioning and high-value tourism development.

Overall, the study concludes that Pokhara has successfully evolved beyond a conventional trekking gateway into a multidimensional tourism destination characterized by immersive experiences, natural beauty, cultural authenticity, and emotional visitor engagement. The findings provide strong evidence to support Pokhara's future inclusion in the annual Global Tourism City Attractiveness Index rankings and establish an important baseline for annual tourism attractiveness monitoring.

Key Recommendations

1. **Reposition Pokhara as a Multidimensional Tourism Destination:** Shift global branding from a “trekking stopover” narrative toward a comprehensive destination identity that combines adventure, culture, spirituality, wellness, gastronomy, and hospitality.
2. **Promote Spiritual and Wellness Tourism:** Leverage Pokhara’s strong performance in religious landmarks, traditional culture, and educational tourism by developing structured wellness, meditation, yoga, and spiritual tourism circuits.
3. **Scale Up Adventure Tourism Commercially and Safely:** Strengthen international marketing of paragliding, trekking, rafting, bungee, and outdoor sports while enhancing safety standards, operator certification, and regulatory compliance.
4. **Address Experiential Tourism Gaps:** Invest in cultural evening programs, immersive heritage centers, nature/culture interpretation facilities, and weather-independent attractions to diversify visitor experiences.
5. **Improve Urban Aesthetics and Architectural Quality:** Enhance lakeside streetscapes, public spaces, pedestrian areas, heritage conservation, and gateway corridors through integrated urban design and heritage planning initiatives.
6. **Protect and Institutionalize the Hospitality Advantage:** Introduce structured tourism workforce development programs focusing on multilingual communication, digital service skills, hospitality management, and cultural sensitivity while preserving Pokhara’s authentic warmth and community-based hospitality culture.
7. **Establish an Annual City Attractiveness Monitoring System:** Institutionalize annual primary data collection and sentiment-based tourism monitoring under the YAI framework to support evidence-based tourism planning and international benchmarking.

This study is significant because it contributes toward positioning Pokhara within the global tourism attractiveness discourse at a time when destinations worldwide are increasingly competing on the basis of experience quality, authenticity, emotional engagement, and sustainability. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations generated through this assessment will support policymakers, destination managers, tourism entrepreneurs, and development partners in strengthening Pokhara’s long-term tourism competitiveness and enhancing its international visibility as a multidimensional and experience-oriented tourism destination.

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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Background

Pokhara, formally designated as the "Tourism Capital of Nepal" in March 2024, serves as the Nepal's primary gateway for adventure and leisure tourism. Strategically located as the nexus of the "Golden Triangle" (Kathmandu-Pokhara-Chitwan), the "Silver Triangle" (Pokhara-Chitwan-Lumbini), and the Adventure Triangle (Pokhara-Mustang-Manang) the city plays an important role in the national tourism economy (Poudel & Oli, 2025). While Nepal's tourism is often centralized around the Kathmandu valley for administrative purposes, Pokhara serves as the functional heart of the adventure sector, facilitating approximately 68% of all trekking activities in the country (NTB, 2023).



Figure 1: Strategic Location Pokhara for Tourism

Despite its geographical advantages, Pokhara exhibits a "Volume-Value Paradox." The city accounts for roughly 40–45% of all international arrivals to Nepal and hosts 43.8% of the country's tourist-standard hotels (CBS, 2024). However, its share of national tourism income sits at only 21.2%, reflecting a lower daily visitor spend of around USD 48 compared to high-yield segments elsewhere (NRB, 2023). Tourism is a major driver of Pokhara's local economy as it contributes 25.4% of municipal GDP of Pokhara Metropolitan City (PMC). In the meantime, the city possesses high Supply-Side tourism assets, but faces challenges in Demand-Side



Figure 2: What Pokhara Contributes to the Nepal's Tourism Economy

Optimization, particularly in increasing the average tourist stay duration beyond the current 3.2 nights.

1.2 The Context

In the global tourism landscape, competition among cities has intensified in the post-pandemic era, with destinations striving not only to attract visitors but also to create memorable and emotionally engaging experiences. This reflects a broader transition from “tourism competitiveness” (capacity-based) to “tourism attractiveness” (experience-based), emphasizing the importance of perception, satisfaction, and word-of-mouth in destination choice.

The concept of *city attractiveness* has emerged as a critical paradigm in contemporary tourism analysis, shifting focus from traditional supply-side indicators (e.g., infrastructure, visitor numbers) toward demand-side perceptions shaped by tourists’ experiences and emotions. The Global Tourism City Attractiveness Index (GTCAI) developed by Yanolja Research represents a significant advancement in this regard, as it evaluates cities based on tourists’ emotional attractiveness (sentiment) and cognitive reputation (visibility) using large-scale digital media data. The index conceptualizes attractiveness across four key dimensions: (i) urban aesthetics and natural scenery, (ii) culture and history, (iii) experiential tourism contents, and (iv) hospitality.

Within this evolving framework, Pokhara holds a unique position in Nepal’s tourism economy. Pokhara’s attractiveness is anchored in its exceptional natural scenery (e.g., Lakes and Himalayan views), adventure tourism (trekking, paragliding and bungee), and cultural heritages. The city has developed a diversified tourism ecosystem, including hotels, restaurants, adventure service providers, and cultural attractions. Domestic tourists driven seasonality demonstrates strong demand, with high hotel occupancy and increased tourist inflows. However, despite its long-standing reputation and resource endowment, Pokhara’s growth in international tourism has been relatively modest since long.

1.3 Issues and Objectives

Despite its strong natural and cultural assets, Pokhara faces disconnect between reputation and attractiveness. This gap highlights the importance of city attractiveness assessment where the Yanolja framework fits well. While Pokhara enjoys high recognition as a scenic and adventure destination, this does not necessarily translate into strong emotional attachment or high-value tourism experiences. At the same time, Pokhara’s tourism market is heavily skewed toward mid-

to low-value segments, including budget travelers, domestic tourists, and short-stay visitors. The limited growth in international tourist share over the past decade suggests that the city has not effectively captured the attention of high-spending, long-haul markets.

Pokhara remains largely absent from global benchmarking frameworks such as the Yanolja Attractiveness Index, limiting its visibility in international tourism discourse. Without inclusion in such global indices, the city lacks a data driven and regionally comparable measure of its attractiveness and performance. As global tourism increasingly values authenticity, sustainability, and quality experiences, failure to address these issues may erode the city's competitive position.

Despite its natural endowments and growing international profile, Pokhara has historically been assessed through conventional, supply-side tourism metrics such as visitor arrivals, hotel bed capacity, trekking permit volumes, and airport connectivity. These indicators are operationally useful but fundamentally inadequate for capturing the dimension of a destination. Such dimension seems to be powerful in determining the city's competitiveness i.e. the city attractiveness as experienced and expressed by the real travelers.

The City Attractiveness Index (CAI), developed by Yanolja Research in collaboration with Purdue University's Center for Hospitality and Retail Industries Business Analytics (CHRIBA) Institute and Kyung Hee University's Hospitality and Tourism (H&T) Analytics Center, addresses this gap by adopting an explicitly demand-side (visitor-centric) measurement framework.

In this regard, the overall objective of this study is to assess the city attractiveness of Pokhara using the methodological framework of Yanolja Research. It aims to generate evidence for Pokhara's inclusion in the Global Tourism City Attractiveness Index annually published by Yanolja Research. The specific objectives are:

- a. To measure Pokhara's tourism attractiveness based on the four core dimensions:
 - Urban aesthetics and natural scenery
 - Cultural and historical heritage
 - Experiential tourism contents
 - Hospitality
- b. To analyze Pokhara's reputation and attractiveness using demand-side indicators, including sentiment analysis and global tourism discourse.

- c. To benchmark Pokhara against comparable global tourism cities using the same methodology adopted by Yanolja Research.
- d. To generate evidence-based insights that support Pokhara's potential inclusion in the annual GTCAI rankings.

1.4 Significance of the Study

It is recognized that while Pokhara possesses strong inherent tourism assets and a well-established reputation, its ability to translate these advantages into measurable global attractiveness remains limited. By applying the Yanolja Research methodology, this study aims to bridge this gap and provide a robust analytical foundation for enhancing Pokhara's position as a competitive, high-value global tourist destination. This study is justified on multiple grounds i.e. policy, business management, and behavioral dimensions.

Policy Relevance: as the study provides a data-driven and globally comparable framework for assessing tourism attractiveness beyond the traditional metrics, policymakers can:

- Shift from quantity-based to quality-based (experience and perception) tourism strategies
- Identify priority areas for investment across the four attractiveness dimensions
- Monitor the effectiveness of tourism policies through changes in attractiveness scores over time

Business and Management Implications: this study offers actionable insights for tourism entrepreneurs and destination managers to:

- Enhance product design and service quality, particularly in hospitality and experiential offerings
- Align products with high-value market segments (e.g., premium adventure, wellness, cultural tourism)
- Strengthen destination branding based on authentic visitor perceptions and user-generated content

Behavioral and Market Insights: it contributes to understand tourist behavior and decision-making patterns, particularly the role of emotional perception (effective image) and reputation (cognitive image) in destination choice. This is critical in an era where travel decisions are increasingly influenced by digital content, reviews, and social media narratives.

Strategic Positioning: the study serves as a strategic tool for:

- Positioning Pokhara within the global tourism competitiveness landscape
- Enhancing its visibility and credibility through inclusion in international indices
- Supporting the transition toward a high-value and experience-driven tourism model

1.5 Limitations of the Study

One key limitation of this study lies in the restricted access to comprehensive social media data. Although this study incorporates insights drawn from publicly available forums and open digital platforms, it was unable to systematically capture or analyze data from major social media channels due to privacy restrictions, Application Programming Interface (API) limitations, and platform-specific data access policies. As a result, a substantial portion of real-time user-generated perceptions, sentiment dynamics, and informal traveler or resident experiences—often expressed through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter)—could not be fully integrated into the analysis. This constraint may have limited the depth of understanding regarding evolving city perceptions, particularly among younger and digitally active populations. This may lead to an underrepresentation of nuanced, experience-based attractiveness factors that are increasingly influential in shaping destination image and urban appeal.

Chapter II

Methodology & Research Design

2.1 Yanolja Methodology

This study was conducted using the methodology developed by Yanolja Research to represent the Yanolja Attractiveness Index (YAI) for the Pokhara. The purpose of adopting the Yanolja Methodology is threefold: a) to establish a baseline attractiveness score across all 17 sub-dimensions of the YAI framework; b) to identify the city's structural competitive strengths and areas of strategic opportunity; and c) to provide actionable recommendations for destination managers, policymakers, and private sector stakeholders who are engaged in Pokhara's tourism.

The theoretical foundation of this study rests on the Push–Pull framework of tourism motivation (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979), supplemented by Destination Image Theory (Gartner, 1994). Together these frameworks establish that a city's tourism attractiveness comprises both a cognitive dimension i.e. how well-known and recognized the city is and an affective dimension i.e. the emotional strengths of visitors' experiences and evaluations. The YAI adapted these two dimensions as Reputation (supply-side) and Attractiveness (demand-side). The YAI focuses the demand side dimensions to measure a city's tourism attractiveness.

The demand-side evaluation captures the lived perceptions and emotional responses of real travelers rather than supply-side services and infrastructure metrics. This study rests on the attractiveness (affective) dimension as measured through sentiment analysis of traveler-generated online content.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The YAI framework recognizes that tourism attractiveness is not determined by a single attribute but rather by the combined influence of environmental, cultural, experiential, and hospitality-related dimensions. Together, these dimensions provide a holistic framework for understanding how different attributes contribute to the attractiveness of tourism cities, making the YAI a useful tool for tourism planning, destination management, and policy analysis. As illustrated in the figure below, tourism attractiveness is structured around four major dimensions: a) Urban Aesthetics and Natural Scenery, b) Culture and History, c) Experiential Tourism Contents, and d) Hospitality.

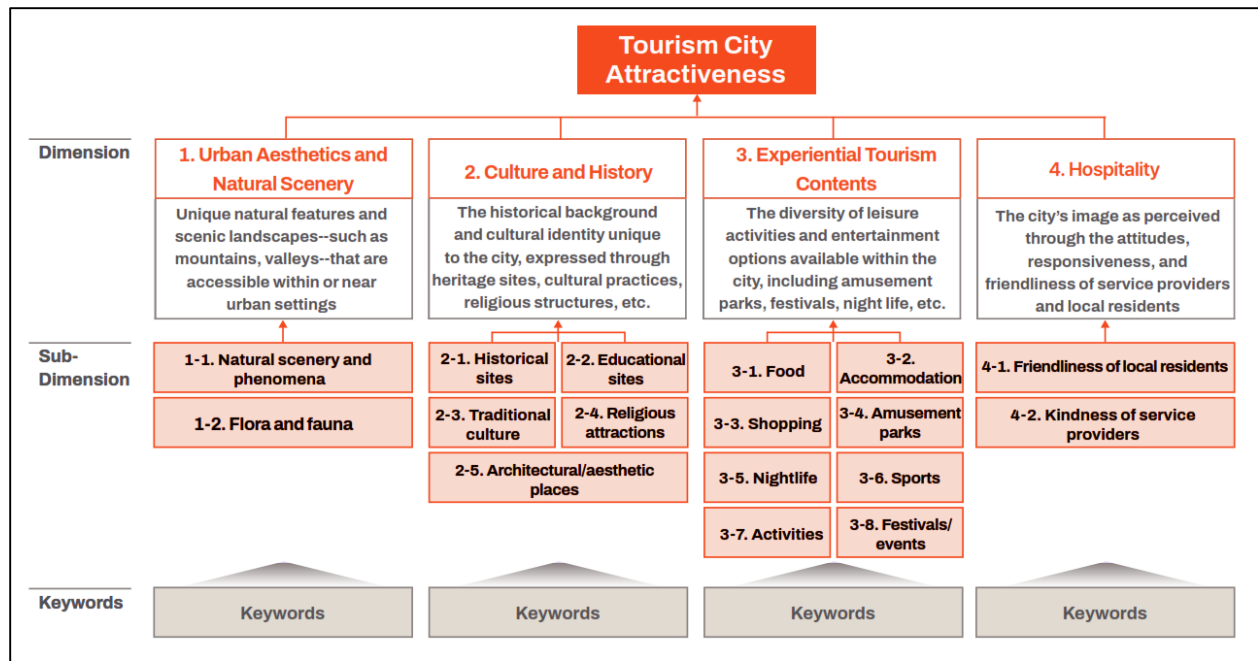


Figure 3 : Conceptual Framework of Tourism City Attractiveness

These dimensions collectively capture both the tangible and intangible characteristics of a city that influence tourists' satisfaction and destination competitiveness. The framework further divides each dimension into measurable sub-dimensions, enabling a comprehensive assessment of tourism city attractiveness. The first dimension emphasizes natural beauty and environmental appeal through indicators such as natural scenery, flora, and fauna, signifying the importance of ecological and visual attractiveness in tourism. The second dimension focuses on cultural and historical identity, including historical sites, educational sites, traditional culture, religious attractions, and architectural heritage, highlighting the uniqueness and authenticity of a city. Thirdly, experiential tourism contents, assesses the diversity of recreational and entertainment opportunities available to visitors, including food, accommodation, shopping, amusement parks, nightlife, sports, and festivals/events. Finally, the hospitality dimension captures the social and service-oriented aspects of tourism attractiveness by evaluating the friendliness of local residents and the kindness of service providers.

2.3 Analytical Framework

The Yanolja CAI scans tourism city's attractiveness through the systematic analysis of traveler-generated digital content. Key sources of such contents are social media posts, review platform entries, forum discussions, blog narratives, and video commentary. It does not consider the supply-side indicators such as hotel capacity, airport size, or government tourism expenditure etc. This

approach reflects a city's true tourism value is determined not by what it has built, but by how deeply it resonates in the minds and memories of those who visited it. Under YAI framework, City Attractive Index (CAI) is calculated through two core components:

- Positivity Ratio:** the proportion of positive sentiment across tourism-related keyword-based social data, measuring how deeply travelers evaluate the city positively.
- Buzz Volume Ratio:** the relative share of mentions for each sub-dimension reflecting recognition and distinctiveness within global tourism discourse

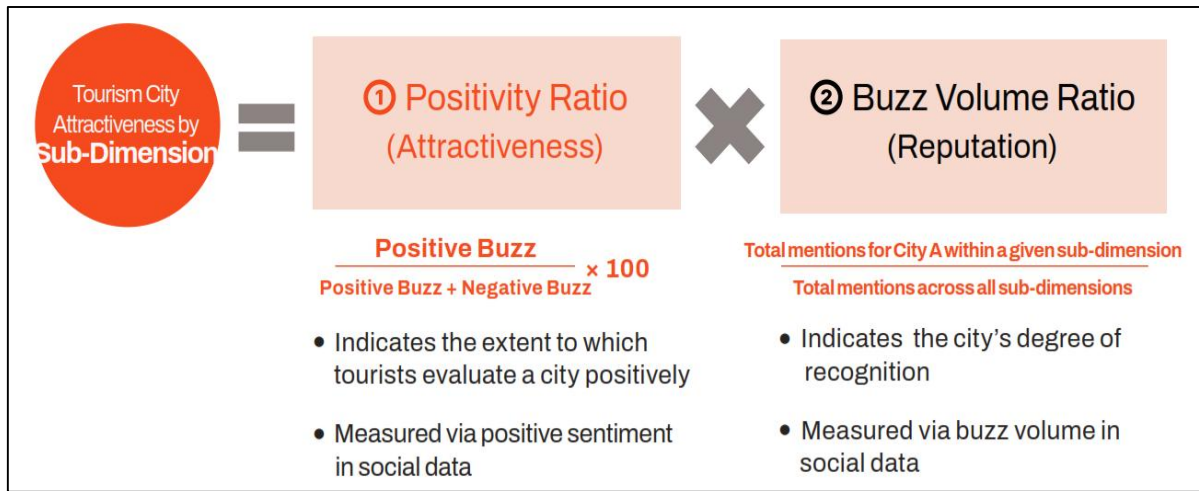


Figure 4 : Construction of Tourism City Attractiveness Index by Sub-Dimension

The Yanolja CAI is calculated through a weighted scoring approach that integrates both sub-dimensional and dimensional analysis. This weighted framework enables a balanced and systematic assessment of tourism destinations by capturing environmental, cultural, experiential, and service-related aspects of city attractiveness (Figure 5).

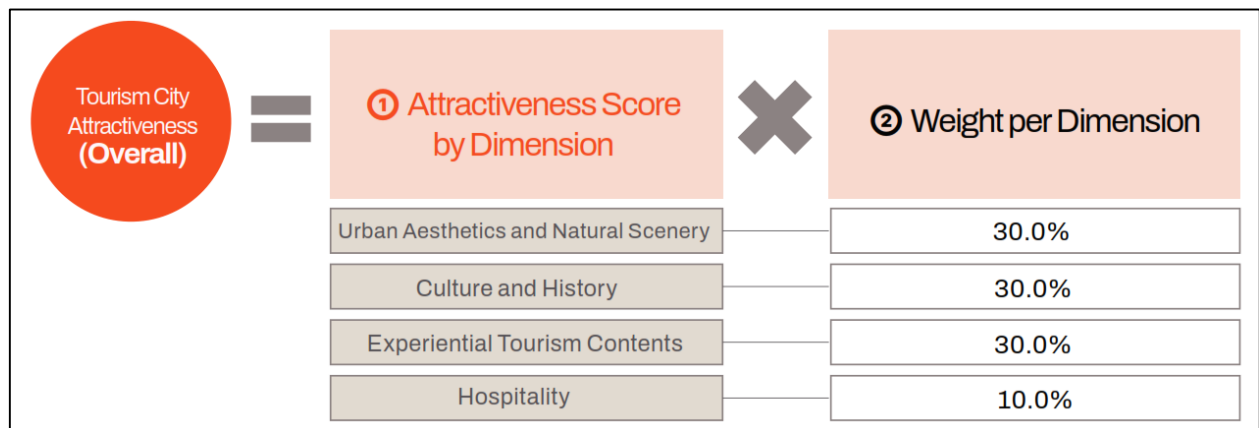


Figure 5 : Construction of Tourism City Attractiveness Index, Overall

While calculating the CAI, first of all, attractiveness scores are generated for each sub-dimension and multiplied by their respective weights, which are determined based on the buzz volume and relevance of the corresponding year (Figure 4). These weighted sub-dimensional scores are then aggregated into broader dimensional scores (Equation 1).

$$CAI_d = \sum_{1}^N CAI_{sd} \times W_{sd} \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where; N = Total number of sub-dimensions under the corresponding dimension
 CAI_d = Tourism city attractiveness score by dimension
 CAI_{sd} = Tourism city attractiveness score by sub-dimension
 W_{sd} = Weight of corresponding sub-dimension, calculated based on the total buzz volume across all sub-dimensions

In the second stage, the overall tourism city attractiveness score is computed by applying dimension-wise weights (Equation 2).

$$CAI_{Overall} = \frac{\sum_{d=1}^4 \{CAI_d \times W_d\}}{4} \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

Where; 4 is total number of dimensions under YAI framework
 CAI_d = Tourism city attractiveness score by dimension
 W_d = Weight of corresponding dimension, established by YAI framework

2.4 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive and sentiment-based tourism attractiveness research design to evaluate the city attractiveness of Pokhara using the YAI framework. The study analyzed 4,310 verified social media and online review entries stated between 2023 and 2025 in the multiple tourism-related digital platforms, including traveler review sites, discussion forums, travel blogs, and operator websites. Using four major dimensions and seventeen sub-dimensions, the research applied a weighted sentiment scoring methodology to assess visitor perceptions of Pokhara's urban aesthetics, cultural heritage, experiential tourism contents, and hospitality environment. Positive, negative, and mixed sentiments were systematically classified, and overall attractiveness scores were computed using buzz-weighted positivity ratios and dimension-specific weights to generate a comprehensive tourism attractiveness assessment.

Table 1: Research Design

City	Pokhara, Gandaki Province, Nepal
Framework	Yanolja Attractiveness Index (YAI), Yanolja Research Insights, Vol. 30 (2025). Developed in collaboration with Purdue University (CHRI BA Institute) and Kyung Hee University (H&T Analytics Center).
Total Entries	4,310 verified social media and online review entries
Dimensions	4 dimensions and 17 sub-dimensions
Data Period	2023–2025 (most recent publicly available visitor reviews and social content)
Language	English, with source cross-referencing across multilingual platforms
Data Sources	TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, Reddit (r/Nepal, r/travel, r/solotravel, r/Buddhism), Viator, GetYourGuide, Instagram, YouTube, Travel Blogs (e.g. MagicalNepal, EverestHoliday), Nepal Tourism Board publications, Race timing databases, Operator websites
Excluded Sources	News reports and broadcast media, as they predominantly reflect promotional or issue-driven content misaligned with direct visitor sentiment
Sentiment Classes	Positive (+): traveler expresses clear satisfaction, enthusiasm, or recommendation; Negative (–): traveler expresses dissatisfaction, complaint, or deterrence; Mixed (~): entry contains both positive and negative assessments
Scoring Formula	$\text{Positivity Ratio} = \frac{\text{Positive}}{\text{Positive} + \text{Negative}} \times 100$ $\text{Sub-Dimension Score} = (\text{Positivity Ratio} \times \text{Buzz Volume Ratio})$ $\text{Dimension Score} = \text{buzz-weighted average of sub-dimension positivity ratios}$ $\text{Overall Score} = \sum (\text{Dimension Score} \times \text{Dimension Weight})$
Estimation Note	Sub-Dimension 3-2 (Accommodation) was estimated based on the average of comparable sub-dimensions of dimension-3, in the absence of primary data. Real data collection is recommended for future reporting cycles.

Chapter III

Results and Discussion

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and interprets the findings of the city attractiveness study in a dimension-wise manner based on the YAI framework. The analysis is organized around the four core dimensions of destination attractiveness i.e. Urban Aesthetics and Natural Scenery; Culture and History; Experiential Tourism Contents; and Hospitality. According to the YAI framework, each of the dimension contributes differently to the overall attractiveness, as per the established weighting structure. In the YAI framework first three dimensions are assigned equal weights of 30 percent as primary determinants of destination choice and visitor satisfaction. Hospitality—the final dimension—carries a weight of 10 percent due to its role as a supporting factor.

However, the Hospitality dimension is strategically significant factor influencing the quality of service delivered and memorability of visitor experiences. Furthermore, within each dimension, the relative importance of sub-dimensions is determined dynamically based on buzz volume, representing the frequency of traveler discussions in the collected dataset. This approach enables the analysis to reflect the actual priorities and perceptions of travelers, thereby providing a more evidence-based and experience-oriented assessment of city attractiveness.

3.2 Dimension 1: Urban Aesthetics and Natural Scenery

Dimension one evaluates the aesthetic quality of Pokhara's natural and urban environment as perceived and communicated by visiting travelers. It encompasses the mountain backdrop, lake environments, valley landscapes, flora, fauna, and the overall visual and sensory character of the city. Results within this dimension confirm that the natural environments of the city are perceived by visiting travelers as a tourism asset of exceptional quality.

Table 2 : Pokhara's Performance Under Dimension 1

Sub-Dimension	Buzz Volume	Positive	Negative	Positivity Ratio	Buzz Volume Ratio (Weight)	Attractiveness Scores
Dimension Average	410	366	44	89.27	30%	0.508
Natural Scenery	275	257	18	93.45	67.07%	0.627
Flora and Fauna	135	109	26	80.74	32.93%	0.266

The results highlight the importance of natural endowments for tourism city. The Himalayan range, visible from multiple points within the city and most dramatically from Sarangkot was featured in traveler commentary with a consistent and high scale of emotional intensity. The reflective surface of Phewa Lake and integration of urban amenities in the lakesides create a pleasant environment that travelers keen to describe, as seen for iconic global destinations. The Seti River gorge, Devi's Falls, and natural Caves highlight the geological diversity, extending the natural appeal well beyond the mountain scene alone.

The 44 negative entries within this dataset are primarily attributable to seasonal weather constraints, specifically monsoon cloud cover that obscures mountain visibility during the peak-rain months and to occasional concerns about the cleanliness of lake-adjacent public spaces. These issues are manageable through targeted environmental management rather than being structural weaknesses of the natural product itself. The positive sentiment (80.74 %) towards flora and fauna is strongly corroborated the incredible importance of wildlife observation, birdwatching in the Pokhara Valley, and engagement with the forest and riparian ecosystems of the Annapurna Conservation Area all generating strongly positive traveler sentiment.

3.3 Dimension 2: Culture and History

Dimension 2 assesses the depth and quality of Pokhara's cultural heritage and historical identity as experienced by visitors. It is structured around five sub-dimensions that collectively capture the full spectrum of a city's cultural tourism offer: historical sites, educational venues, traditional living culture, religious heritage, and architectural aesthetics. The CAI score of this dimension confirms that the international travelers are actively seeking meaningful, educational and culturally immersive urban experiences as the primary purpose of their journeys.

Table 3 : Pokhara's Performance Under Dimension 2

Sub-Dimension	Buzz Volume	Positive	Negative	Positivity Ratio	Buzz Volume Ratio (Weight)	Attractiveness Scores
Dimension Average	1300	1150	150	88.46	30 %	0.182
Historical Sites	200	185	15	92.50	15.38%	0.142
Educational Sites	200	194	6	97.00	15.38%	0.149
Traditional Culture	300	293	7	97.67	23.08%	0.225
Religious Landmarks	300	278	22	92.67	23.08%	0.214
Architectural Landmarks	300	200	100	66.67	23.08%	0.154

Historical Sites

Sub-dimension of historical sites bears a strong performance indicating high significance of the historic religious sites that generate consistent positive sentiment related to its spiritual atmosphere, hilltop setting, and the authenticity of its active worship culture. Hindu Temples, Museums, Old Bazaars, Buddha Monasteries, and Lake Clusters were consistently well-regarded for cultural heritage attraction, particularly among international travelers, as heritage assets of international significance. The negative buzz entries in this sub-dimension primarily reflect concerns about the physical preservation condition of heritage structures, inadequate interpretive signage in English, and the absence of a structured heritage trail or visitor guidance system that would allow independent travelers to engage systematically with the city's historical narrative.

Educational Sites

This sub-dimension assesses travelers' perceptions of city's educational and cultural exhibition infrastructure such as the museums, cultural centers, galleries, and knowledge institutions that constitute the city's formal intellectual and cultural tourism offer. In the case of Pokhara, the highest positivity ratio of 97.0 percent places Educational Sites as one of the most significant influencers. This finding confirms that the travelers are increasingly motivated by the desire for learning, self-development, and meaningful cultural immersion rather than passive sightseeing.

The International Mountain Museum, the Gurkha Museum and Natural History Museum are the most frequently referenced educational assets in Pokhara's tourism content and receives near-universal commendation for the quality and comprehensiveness of its exhibits on Himalayan mountaineering history, mountain ecology, and Nepalese ethnic diversity. The negative comments are related primarily to limited opening hours and, in some cases, inadequate English-language materials.

Traditional Culture

This sub-dimension evaluates travelers' perceptions of living traditional culture of Pokhara which includes the indigenous practices, folk arts, traditional costume, ceremonial life, and multi-ethnic cultural expressions that distinguish the city's cultural identity from its historical monuments. Traditional Culture is one of the most consistently celebrated dimensions of Pokhara the core of which is the unification of Gurung, Magar, Thakali, Newar, Tibetan, Chhetri, Brahmin, and numerous other ethnic communities within a relatively compact urban geography.

The negative entries are characterized primarily by concerns about the over commercialization of certain cultural performances, specifically the perception that some cultural shows in the entertainment sectors have been modified to meet tourist expectations at the expense of authentic representation. This tension between authenticity and accessibility is a structural challenge common to all high-traffic cultural tourism destinations and needs careful management.

Religious Landmarks

This sub-dimension evaluates the quality of religious heritage as a tourism asset — the temples, monasteries, pagodas, pilgrimage circuits, and sacred landscapes that constitute the city's spiritual tourism offer. In this aspect, Pokhara reflects the quality of Pokhara's religious heritage assets and the growing global significance of spiritual as well as wellness tourism as a travel motivation category. The World Peace Pagoda (Shanti Stupa), situated on a ridge overlooking Phewa Lake with panoramic views of the Annapurna range, is described by travelers as one of the most profound and visually spectacular religious sites in Asia.

The temples like Barahi and Bindhyabasini generate remarkable positive sentiment related to the combination of its sacred character, its scenic setting, and the ritual experience. Similarly, Buddhist heritages—specially the monastery circuits provide a depth of engagement that travelers consistently rate as among the most meaningful experiences of their visit. At the same time, negative entries are individually attributable to access constraints and festival crowd management rather than any assessment of the heritage assets themselves.

Architectural Landmarks

This sub-dimension evaluates traveler perceptions of the city's architectural heritage, aesthetic landmarks, and urban visual identity where the built environment contributes to the city's distinctiveness as a visual and aesthetic tourism experience. In the case of Pokhara, this sub-dimension is the least performer, thus requires careful interpretation. It does not indicate that Pokhara lacks architectural interest, but rather that the city's built environment is perceived as uneven in quality, with significant variation between the aesthetically compelling historic and tourist areas with visually unpleasant urban developments.

The street infrastructures receive strong negative commentary thus the negative entries within this cluster primarily around observations about inconsistent urban development. The visual impact of unplanned construction in peripheral areas, and the perceived underinvestment in public space

quality receive criticisms as a strategic planning challenge. Urban design investment targeting the gateway corridors, lakefront streetscape, and heritage building area could meaningfully improve this sub-dimension score within a planning cycle of few years.

3.4 Dimension 3: Experiential Tourism Contents

This dimension measures the breadth and quality of experiential tourism offer including the activities, content, and services that constitute a traveler's active engagement with the destination. This dimension encompasses the greatest diversity of measurable tourism elements and demonstrates significant importance where travelers' demand is evolving most rapidly. Such experiential performance of Pokhara has been examined across eight sub-dimensions (Table 4).

Table 4 : Pokhar's Performance Under Dimension 3

Sub-Dimension	Buzz Volume	Positive	Negative	Positivity Ratio	Buzz Volume Ratio (Weight)	Attractiveness Scores
Dimension Average	2050	1684	366	82.15	30 %	0.104
Food & Dining	300	292	8	97.33	14.63%	0.142
Accommodation	200	180	20	90.00	9.76%	0.088
Shopping	200	194	6	97.00	9.76%	0.095
Theme Parks & Attractions	300	200	100	66.67	14.63%	0.098
Nightlife	300	185	115	61.67	14.63%	0.090
Sports	250	205	45	82.00	12.20%	0.100
Outdoor Activities	250	216	34	86.40	12.20%	0.105
Festivals & Events	250	212	38	84.80	12.20%	0.103

Food and Dining

This sub-dimension evaluates travelers' perceptions about food and dining culture of a city, covering local cuisine, ethnic culinary traditions, street food, restaurant diversity, dining environment and the overall gastronomic experience of the city. The result places Pokhara in a tier of global culinary tourism destinations that includes cities with internationally established food reputations, and does so on the strength of a genuinely distinctive and authentically diverse food culture rather than a globalized restaurant offer. The diversity of Pokhara's food environment is its defining strength accompanied by the cafe culture characterized by rooftop restaurants with mountain and lake views, strong local coffee, and a relaxed social atmosphere generate consistently high positive sentiment. The negative entries in the area relates primarily to price sensitivity, specifically the perception among budget travelers and some incidents of food quality inconsistency.

Accommodation

This sub-dimension evaluates travelers' perceptions on accommodation sector spanning hotels, guesthouses, resorts, boutique lodges, and budget facilities across all price tiers. For Pokhara Accommodation is the slowest-growing sub-dimension reflecting a strong base of well-regarded guesthouses and mid-range hotels in the tourist corridors, partially offset by the relatively limited supply of high-end resort accommodation and by the seasonal capacity management challenges that emerge during peak trekking season.

Shopping

This sub-dimension examines travelers' opinions about the shopping environment including the retail experience, product quality, market diversity, and commercial infrastructure of the city's primary shopping areas. For Pokhara, this reflects the distinctive character of retail offer, which is anchored in authentic handicraft production, trekking and outdoor equipment, and traditional textile and craft items rather than the mass-produced souvenir merchandise, anchoring Pokhara a distinct tourism destination. The Lakeside bazaar area is consistently cited as one of the most enjoyable visitor experiences as a concentrated market environment for quality trekking gear from established brands, Tibetan thangka paintings, Nepali pashmina, Khukuri knives, singing bowls, traditional jewelry and handmade paper products.

The authenticity of the retail offer is found as a significant driver of positive sentiment that travelers repeatedly note or knowledge local retailers. This validates the fastest-growing retail experience as a component of destination attractiveness of Pokhara. The negative entries indicate the aggressive vendor approaches rather than the quality of the retail offer itself.

Theme Parks & Attractions

This evaluates travelers' experience about the theme parks, structured attractions, and large-scale leisure facilities including the entertainment venues and experience products of Pokhara. Pokhara's theme park and structured attraction seems to be limited in scale and diversity relative to the depth of its natural and cultural assets. The Zip Flyer, the Avia Club ultralight aircraft, Bungee jump are the most commercially prominent structured adventure attraction and generates predominantly positive sentiment for the quality of its operational standards and the dramatic character of its descent.

The relatively high negative entries in this cluster reflect a genuine product gap for the travelers who are seeking structured, weather-independent entertainment options beyond adventure sports. The absence of a high-quality cultural theme park, an aquarium, a botanical garden of international standard, or a structured heritage walk with professional interpretation represents an opportunity for investment that would directly address this gap without compromising the city's original character.

Nightlife

This seems more important for Pokhara as it evaluates travelers' perceptions on nighttime economy. The bars, live music venues, clubs, cultural shows, evening activities, and overall quality of the city's after-dark hospitality environment reflect the heterogeneous and evolving nature of Pokhara's nighttime economy. The Lakeside bar and live music scene anchored by venues such as Busy Bee Cafe, Old Blues Bar, and several rooftop establishments with mountain views receives consistently positive coverage for the quality of live performance, the relaxed atmosphere, and the relatively affordable pricing. Cultural evening programs, most notably the traditional Nepali cultural show, receive strong positive sentiment from travelers seeking authentic cultural engagement after dark.

In the meantime, high-quality live music venues and culturally rich evening entertainment are the segments that attracted criticism for noise pollution, safety concerns, and incongruence with the city's broader tourism identity. The negative entries primarily found around three concerns: excessive amplified music creating noise disturbance in residential areas; the behavior of a small number of late-night venues and limited options for travelers who are not interested in bar culture but seek evening entertainment alternatives. These issues are manageable through noise ordinance enforcement, venue licensing standards, and targeted investment in cultural evening programming.

Sports

Sports tourism offers a participation-based outdoor activities and spectator sports events available within or accessible from the city. For Pokhara it reflects a solid but not exceptional performance relative to the city's adventure and outdoor activity potentials. The Pokhara International Marathon, certified by the Association of International Marathons and Road Races (AIMS), is the most frequently referenced sports event. The quality of event organization and the enthusiastic community support along the route were highly praised. Similarly, water sports on Phewa Lake

generate positive sentiment among travelers who engage with them, though awareness of these activities as a structured sports offer is lower than their potential.

Mountain biking in the trails above the Annapurna foothills and cycling on the quieter roads of the Pokhara Valley are emerging areas of sports tourism that appear in the reviews with increasing frequency. At the same time, negative entries expressed concerns to the limited diversity of organized sports events, particularly the absence of a regular calendar of competitive water sports events, cycling races, or climbing competitions that would attract sports tourists with specific competitive participation interests.

Outdoor Activities

This is more about outdoor and adventure activities which could offer the participation-based active experiences that constitute the city's most globally distinctive tourism proposition. Result of this sub-dimension confirms the strongest growth potential for Pokhara's competitive uniqueness in the global tourism market. Paragliding from Sarangkot is the single most frequently referenced activity in the assessment, described by travelers from a wide range of nationalities and experience backgrounds as among the most visually extraordinary experiences of their lives.

Trekking gateway access for both the Annapurna Base Camp (ABC) route and the Poon Hill/Ghorepani circuit generates significant positive sentiment from travelers who used Pokhara as their starting and ending point. Rafting and kayaking on the Seti, Modi, and Kali Gandaki rivers, bungee jumping and rock climbing all contribute to a portfolio depth that no comparably accessible mountain destination in South or Southeast Asia can match. While the negative entries were primarily about overcrowding at peak times on popular routes and platforms and quality of certain adventure operators' safety standards, an issue to comply with the equipment certification guidelines.

Festivals & Events

This sub-dimension evaluates the festivals and events calendar including the cultural celebrations, community events, adventure sports festivals, and organized public events that animate the city's tourism offer across the calendar year. For Pokhara, the result is reflecting the genuine richness of its annual events calendar and its growing international profile as a festival destination. The Pokhara Street Festival, held annually in the Lakeside area, is the most prominently referenced event and is praised for its combination of cultural performance, food and craft fair elements, adventure sports demonstrations, and large-scale community participation.

The Pokhara International Paragliding Festival attracts international paragliding pilots and generates strong positive coverage both from participants and from audiences who observe the competition from the lakeside vantage points. Nepal's major Hindu and Buddhist festivals generate positive sentiment from travelers who are present during these periods, with the communal celebration atmosphere, the cultural accessibility of public rituals, and the festive lighting and decoration of public spaces all contributing positively. The negative reviews primarily related to the concentration of major events in specific calendar windows creating access and accommodation pressure, and limited advance international marketing of Pokhara's festival calendar relative to comparable events in Thailand, India, and Japan.

3.5 Dimension 4: Hospitality

This dimension captures the quality of human connection in Pokhara such as the warmth, responsiveness, and professionalism experienced by visiting travelers in their interactions with both the local resident community and the professional tourism service providers. Although carrying the lowest dimensional weight at 10 percent, Hospitality functions as a multiplier across the entire visitor experience. Destinations that score exceptionally in this dimension consistently generate stronger word-of-mouth, higher rates of return visits and more positive online recommendation pattern. The results of this dimension reflect a broad-based significant across the global tourism market as the most meaningful point of differentiation for Pokhara (Table 5).

Table 5 : Pokhar's Performance Under Dimension 4

Sub-Dimension	Buzz Volume	Positive	Negative	Positivity Ratio	Buzz Volume Ratio (Weight)	Attractiveness Scores
Dimension Average	550	504	46	91.64	10 %	0.462
Friendliness of Local Residents	250	226	24	90.40	45.45%	0.411
Kindness of Service Providers	300	278	22	92.67	54.55%	0.505

Friendliness of Local Residents

This sub-dimension evaluates travelers' perceptions of the warmth, openness, safety, and welcoming character of the city's resident population as experienced directly during their visit. The result establishes that the Pokhara's community as one of the warmest and most positively regarded in international tourism commentary. This reflects the multicultural composition of Pokhara's population, a diversity of about thirty distinct ethnic communities, as one of the distinct tourism assets. A long-established relationship with international trekking and adventure travelers

spanning more than five decades has created a resident population that is authentically comfortable with cultural diversity, genuinely curious about international visitors, and structurally oriented toward hospitality.

Most importantly, travelers from a wide range of source markets including regions where Nepal receives limited tourism marketing exposure consistently describe the warmth of their reception in Pokhara in terms that distinguish it from the transactional hospitality of more commercially mature tourism destinations. The characteristic described in many reviews is a quality of human attention—an interest in the visitor as a person rather than a customer—that is identified as increasingly rare in heavily commercialized tourism environments. The negative entries within this sub-dimension are individually attributable to specific incidents rather than general issues.

Kindness of Service Providers

This evaluates the professionalism, responsiveness, and service quality of Pokhara's tourism industry workforce that includes accommodation staff, restaurant personnel, adventure sports operators, trekking guides, and other frontline service providers. The highly positive result is notable for what it reveals about the relationship between community culture and professional service quality in the city where hospitality is deeply embedded in cultural identity rather than professional service standards.

Trekking guides of Pokhara are the most consistently praised service providers as the guides are described as knowledgeable, physically capable, culturally informative, personally attentive, and genuinely invested in the quality of their professional incentive. Adventure sports operators, particularly paragliding tandem pilots and rafting guides, receive strong commendation for safety standards, technical competence, and the quality of the experiential narrative they provide during activities. Hotel and guesthouse staffs are praised for warmth and responsiveness, though a smaller segment raise concerns about the service consistency, signaling that the gap between the best and the average is high. The negative reviews found primarily to communication challenges in English for lower-tier service providers.

Chapter IV

Findings and Conclusions

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and conclusion of the study which reveal that Pokhara possesses a strong and globally competitive tourism attractiveness profile, particularly driven by its natural scenery, cultural richness, and experiential tourism offerings. The detail analysis demonstrates that experiential tourism presents significant opportunities for further growth and diversification. Although certain areas such as nightlife and theme-based attractions require strategic improvement, the overall results confirm that Pokhara has successfully established itself as an experience-oriented tourism destination with high international appeal. The study therefore concludes that sustained investment in tourism infrastructure, destination management, and diversified visitor experiences will further enhance Pokhara's long-term tourism competitiveness and global positioning.

4.2 Overall Attractiveness of Pokhara

This section presents the consolidated cross-dimensional analysis of Pokhara's City Attractiveness Index (CAI) performance. The overall index has been drawing together the 17 sub-dimension scores into aggregated scores of the four dimensions followed by the weighted calculation that produces the final attractiveness score of Pokhara.

The results (Table 6) reveal an uneven but highly distinctive destination attractiveness profile of Pokhara across the four YAI dimensions. The highest score is observed in Urban Aesthetics and Natural Scenery (0.508), indicating that Pokhara's tourism appeal is strongly driven by immersive natural beauty. This reflects the city's prominence as an adventure and nature tourism hub, supported by attractions such as paragliding, trekking, boating, hiking, and other outdoor recreational activities that generate strong visitor engagement and appeal.

The second strongest dimension is Hospitality (0.462), followed by Culture and History (0.182) suggesting that Pokhara also possesses unique and world-class hospitality with a meaningful cultural and heritage appeal. The presence of temples, indigenous Gurung culture, local traditions, festivals, and historical sites contributes positively to visitors' perceptions and tourism

experiences. Together, the high scores in experiential and cultural dimensions indicate that Pokhara's tourism identity is largely experience-centered and emotionally engaging.

Table 6 : Summary of Pokhara's Attractiveness Scores

Sub-Dimension	Buzz Volume	Positive	Negative	Positivity Ratio	Buzz Volume Ratio	Attractiveness Scores
Overall	4310	3704	606	85.94%	30 %	0.071
Urban Aesthetics & Natural Scenery	410	366	44	89.27	67.07%	0.508
Natural Scenery	275	257	18	93.45	32.93%	0.627
Flora and Fauna	135	109	26	80.74	30.16%	0.266
Culture and History	1300	1150	150	88.46	30 %	0.182
Historical Sites	200	185	15	92.50	15.38%	0.142
Educational Sites	200	194	6	97.00	23.08%	0.149
Traditional Culture	300	293	7	97.67	23.08%	0.225
Religious Landmarks	300	278	22	92.67	23.08%	0.214
Architectural Landmarks	300	200	100	66.67	47.56%	0.154
Experiential Tourism Contents	2050	1684	366	82.15	30 %	0.104
Food & Dining	300	292	8	97.33	9.76%	0.142
Accommodation	200	180	20	90.00	9.76%	0.088
Shopping	200	194	6	97.00	14.63%	0.095
Theme Parks & Attractions	300	200	100	66.67	14.63%	0.098
Nightlife	300	185	115	61.67	12.20%	0.090
Sports	250	205	45	82.00	12.20%	0.100
Outdoor Activities	250	216	34	86.40	12.20%	0.105
Festivals & Events	250	212	38	84.80	12.76%	0.103
Hospitality	550	504	46	91.64	10 %	0.462
Friendliness of Local Residents	250	226	24	90.40	54.55%	0.411
Kindness of Service Providers	300	278	22	92.67	67.07%	0.505
Total	4310	3704	606			

In contrast, relatively lower scores are recorded in Experiential Tourism Contents (0.104) is the lowest performer dimension. This indicates that although Pokhara is internationally attractive for its natural beauty, the lower score in this dimension may imply limitations in urban infrastructure, cityscape management, cleanliness, traffic systems, or the digital representation of scenic assets in visitor-generated content. The moderate score is significantly enough to introspect that the accommodation, food services, and visitor support systems are satisfactory but may still require improvement to match the city's strong experiential tourism potential.

Overall, the radar chart demonstrates that Pokhara's competitive advantage lies primarily in its experiential and cultural tourism strengths, while improvements in urban aesthetics and hospitality area could help create a more balanced and globally competitive destination profile.

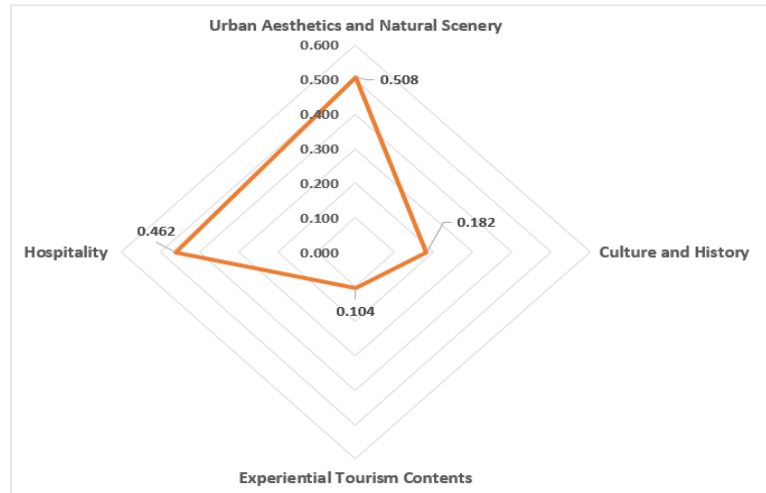


Figure 6 : Comparative Scores by Attractiveness Dimensions

4.3 Comparative Analysis of Pokhara and Kathmandu

Despite Pokhara's strong performance in experiential and cultural dimensions, the overall score remains lower (0.022) than Kathmandu's 0.055¹. This implies that Kathmandu maintains a more balanced and consistent destination attractiveness profile across dimensions, while Pokhara's strengths are concentrated in selected tourism experiences. The comparative results indicate distinct differences between Pokhara and Kathmandu across the four dimensions of destination attractiveness.

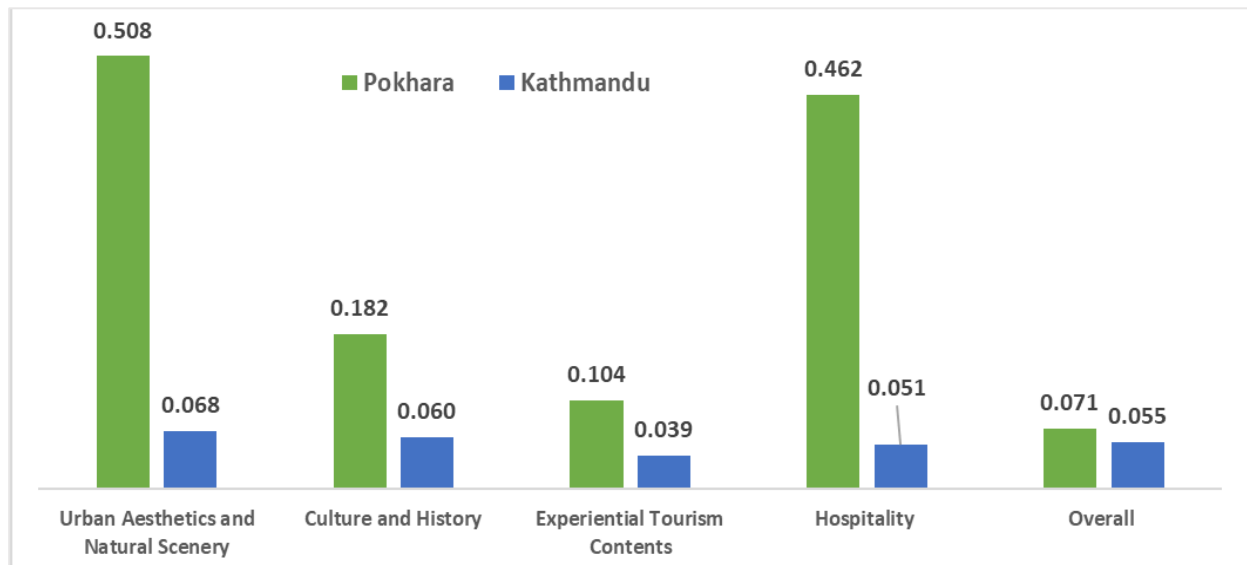


Figure 7 : Comparative Scores by Attractiveness Dimensions

¹ Yanolja Attractiveness Index-2025, City Summary Report

Pokhara leads in Urban Aesthetics and Natural Scenery with a score of 0.508 compared to Kathmandu's 0.068, demonstrating Pokhara's superior urban visual appeal and seamless integration with natural landscapes, as reflected in online perceptions and visitor-generated content. Pokhara also outperforms Kathmandu in the Hospitality dimension, scoring 0.462 against Kathmandu's 0.051, indicating consistently better hospitality-related experiences and service quality for visitors. Furthermore, Pokhara records substantially higher scores in Culture and History 0.182 compared to Kathmandu's 0.060) and achieves a relative lead in Experiential Tourism Contents 0.104 versus Kathmandu's 0.039.

These results confirm that Pokhara is far more strongly associated with immersive tourism experiences, adventure-based activities, and culturally engaging attractions. The significant gap in experiential tourism underscores Pokhara's clear competitive advantage as a premier experience-oriented destination, driven by world-class activities such as paragliding, trekking, lakeside tourism, and nature-based recreation. Taken together, Pokhara emerges as the undisputed leader across every measured dimension, making it the superior destination for both domestic and international travelers seeking quality, adventure, and natural beauty.

4.4 Conclusions

Overall findings of this study indicate that Pokhara possesses a high potential for globally attractive tourism profile, characterized by encouraging performance across all four dimensions of the YAI. Experiential Tourism Contents followed by Culture and History emerge as the strongest dimension, highlighting Pokhara's warm multicultural social environment, welcoming community culture, and quality tourism services as its most consistent competitive advantage. Urban Aesthetics and Natural Scenery demonstrate relatively low performance, reflecting the global appeal for environmentally friendly urban development practices are highly important for Pokhara.

Natural endowments like Phewa Lake, the Annapurna mountain panorama, and the city's rich natural biodiversity as well as rich Culture and History records remarkably positive perceptions from the international visitors. Although Hospitality scores comparatively low, it remains a major strength and the most promising area for future tourism growth, particularly through food and dining experiences and shopping activities. At the same time, relatively lower performance in theme parks, attractions, and nightlife suggests potential areas for strategic tourism investment and diversification.

Overall, the findings confirm that Pokhara's tourism competitiveness is primarily driven by its natural beauty, cultural richness and immersive visitor experiences, positioning the city as a distinctive and experience-oriented international tourism destination. The findings suggest that Pokhara possesses strong experiential and cultural tourism potential, whereas Kathmandu benefits from broader urban attractiveness and overall destination competitiveness.

Chapter V

Strategic Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The strategic recommendations presented in this chapter are derived directly from the sub-dimension scores of Pokhara obtained from the attractiveness assessment framework of the Yanolja Research Insights Vol. 30 (2025). Each recommendation is grounded in the specific score data and the analytical findings presented in the preceding chapters, and is oriented toward practical, implementable action rather than aspirational statement. The recommendations are addressed to the full stakeholder community responsible for the planning and management of Pokhara's tourism future.

5.2 Reposition Pokhara as Multidimensional Destination

The most significant strategic implication of the YAI assessment is the gap between Pokhara's objectively measured attractiveness, placing it in the higher global tier and its current positioning in international tourism marketing. This highlights one of Pokhara's genuine strengths but logically underrepresented breadth and depth of the city's tourism offer. A repositioning from trekking stopover to a multidimensional destination should be done in collaboration with the Nepal Tourism Board, the Pokhara Tourism Council, and key private sector stakeholders. A narrative should be built as a city that offers world-class adventure, profound cultural immersion, exceptional food, and extraordinary human warmth within a single destination.

This narrative should be guided by the high positivity ratios achieved across all four dimensions of the YAI framework, the most credible form of destination communication in high-end global tourism markets. The attractiveness-reputation matrix established by the YAI framework categorizes cities with high attractiveness but lower global reputation as 'hidden gems'. Pokhara's current position in this quadrant is not a permanent condition but it is an addressable competitive opportunity. As the city's YAI score provides

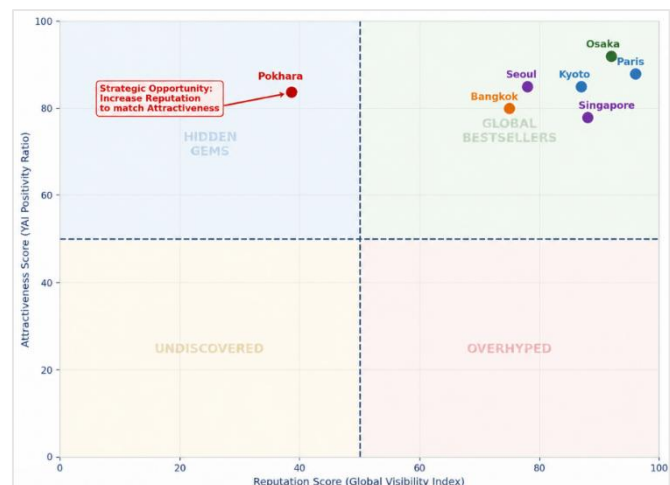


Figure 8 : Pokhara, a Hidden Gen for Tourism

compelling evidence to support international media partnerships, a collective effort from the diverse stakeholders including the private sector is of utmost importance of the day.

5.3 Leverage Religious and Cultural Excellence for Wellness Tourism

Religious Landmarks, Traditional Culture and Educational Sites are Pokhara's three strongest sub-dimension and collectively represent the most globally distinctive and emotionally resonant component of the city's tourism appeal. The global YAI 2025 report identified Culture and History as the fastest-growing dimension across all 191 assessed cities, reflecting a reconfiguration of travel motivations toward meaningful, educational, and spiritually engaging experiences—collectively being branded as spiritual tourism. Pokhara's geo-societal position offers the best suitable opportunity to benefit disproportionately from this global trend of spiritual tourism, provided that its cultural and spiritual assets are marketed with the visibility and sophistication of their value.

The Hindu temples and Buddha monastery circuits accompanied by the living culture of Gurung, Thakali, and indigenous communities represent assets of international wellness tourism that are currently underexposed in global marketing. Structured spiritual and wellness itineraries combining monastery visits, meditation and yoga retreat access, cultural programme participation, and festival calendar alignment would address an underserved global traveler segment and generate a distinctive product positioning. Investment in the interpretive infrastructure of these assets is equally important. Heritage signage, English-language cultural guides, audio guide technology at major sites, and partnerships with international cultural tourism platforms will ensure that the depth of wellness content available in Pokhara is accessible to a broad international audience rather than being dependent on visitors coming through unstructured exploration.

5.4 Commercially Scale Up the Adventure Portfolio

Outdoor Activities is the sub-dimension that most directly captures Pokhara's global competitive uniqueness. A comprehensive adventure tourism portfolio, anchored by paragliding, bungee, trekking gateway access, white-water rafting, and a growing diversity of complementary activities is available within a single geographic context that no comparable destination in Asia can offer. The global YAI 2025 report identifies Outdoor Activities as the third fastest-growing sub-dimension in the world, directly amplifying the strategic significance of Pokhara's existing strength in this category.

For example, a significant proportion of international visitors discover Pokhara's paragliding offer only after arriving in Nepal meaning that it functions as a satisfaction driver rather than a primary destination motivator. Transforming paragliding and other adventure activities as a broader adventure portfolio into a primary international destination draw would directly address the reputation-attractiveness gap identified in the overall analysis. Operator certification and safety standard frameworks should be strengthened in parallel with marketing investment. The adventure tourism sector's long-term reputation depends on the consistent maintenance of safety and quality standards across all licensed operators. The Nepal Tourism Board's adventure tourism regulation frameworks should be resourced and enforced to the level required to protect the sector's quality positioning.

5.5 Address Experiential Tourism Gaps

Theme Parks, Nightlife Management and Evening Economy Development are the relative underperformers and collectively indicate a product gap in Pokhara's experiential tourism offer. Addressing these gaps does not require the development of infrastructure ignoring the city's authentic character but it requires thoughtful investment in structured experiences that extend and deepen the visitor engagement beyond the daytime adventure and cultural offer.

In the Nightlife domain, the primary opportunity lies in the formalization and venue diversification of the cultural evening performance sector without compromising the quality and authenticity. A curated programme of evening cultural experiences, potentially administered through a Pokhara Tourism Council certification scheme, would provide travelers with structured alternatives to evening economy sector and directly address the mixed sentiment within the Nightlife sub-dimension.

In the Theme Parks and Attractions domain, the greatest opportunity for near-term investment is in immersive nature and culture experience centers such as structured facilities that provide weather-independent access to Pokhara's most distinctive assets. A high-quality mountain panorama and conservation interpretation center, a Gurung cultural heritage experience center, or a Himalayan adventure sports simulation facility would each address the product gap identified in this sub-dimension without diluting the city's core tourism identity.

5.6 Improve Architectural Quality and Strengthen the Built Environment

Architectural and Aesthetic Landmarks is the lowest-scoring sub-dimension, reflecting a genuine gap between the extraordinary quality of Pokhara's natural and intangible cultural assets and the uneven quality of its built environment. This gap is not irreversible but it is a planning and implementation challenge that can be systematically addressed over a five-to-ten-year urban development horizon. The strategic importance is that the built environment constitutes the visual context within which all other tourism experiences are embedded. Systematic improvements in street quality, public space design, heritage building preservation, and gateway corridor aesthetics directly affect the overall quality of the visitor experience and the tone of the social media content that experience generates.

Priority areas identified include the Lakeside walkway corridor including roadside improvement, pedestrianisation, and lakefront public space quality enhancement would enhance one of Pokhara's most iconic visitor environments. Similarly, conservation of old Bazaar heritage zone and adaptive reuse as well restoration programme would preserve and activate a historically significant urban fabric that is currently at risk of piecemeal loss to unplanned development. A Pokhara Urban Heritage and Aesthetics Plan, developed in collaboration with architecture and urban planning professionals and informed by visitor sentiment data would provide the strategic framework for this improvement.

5.7 Protect the Hospitality Advantage

Hospitality value driven by Kindness of Service Providers and Friendliness of Local Residents is Pokhara's most durable competitive advantage. The depth of this advantage is structural rooted in the multicultural composition and the long-established international traveler relationship of Pokhara's community, rather than in surface-level service training. Protecting and enhancing this advantage requires deliberate institutional investment in the conditions that sustain it.

A structured tourism workforce development programme should be established to provide professional service quality training to the accommodation, food service, adventure and cultural tourism sectors. This programme should not aim to impose a generic international service standard, which would risk eroding the authentic warmth but to enhance the professional competencies of an already hospitality-oriented workforce. A package of multi-language skills, cultural sensitivity

of international source markets, digital communication, complaint management, and safety protocol adherence programs would be crucial for global tourism competition.

Community-based tourism development initiatives in collaboration with the Nepal Tourism Board, the Hotel Association of Nepal, and the Pokhara Tourism Council which distribute tourism economic benefit directly to resident communities and create authentic interaction opportunities between visitors and local families. This should be supported and expanded as a mechanism for both sustaining community hospitality culture and providing distinctive experiential tourism content.

5.8 Regular Primary Data Collection for Annual CAI

The strategic importance of annual City Attractiveness Index (CAI) for Pokhara's tourism ecosystem is of twofold—a) as an economic engine and b) to capture visitor interaction for complete assessment. More broadly, the establishment of an annual CAI monitoring programme for Pokhara would transform the attractiveness assessment from a one-time research exercise into a continuous strategic planning tool. Annual data collection across all 17 sub-dimensions, combined with systematic tracking of year-on-year score movements, would enable destination managers to identify emerging trends. In the meantime, regular collection of primary data is essential for impact monitoring of specific policy or investment interventions on sub-dimension level and to respond to the shifts in traveler sentiment before they consolidate into structural reputation challenges.

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