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Remoteness as a Resource: The Tourist Experience, Perception, Entrepreneurship Triad in Extreme Himalayan Tourism Through the Lens of Dolpa, Nepal

Dipak Prasad Oli¹, Gangaram Biswakarma^{2*} 
Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal^{1,2}
olidipak@gmail.com¹, drgrbiswa@gmail.com²
Corresponding Author: drgrbiswa@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of remoteness as a strategic tourism asset in Dolpa, Nepal, a highly isolated, culturally unique Himalayan destination characterized. It investigates how remoteness shapes tourist experience, destination perception, and local entrepreneurship. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was employed. A conceptual framework was developed to examine the interaction among tourist experience, destination perception, and local entrepreneurship, framing remoteness as an experiential commodity, perceptual differentiator, and entrepreneurial enabler. Tourists attribute high experiential value to natural scenery, perceiving physical hardship, cultural authenticity, and local hospitality, while transportation, sanitation, and communication infrastructure emerge as critical deficiencies; entrepreneurial responses among local communities reflect adaptive bricolage in the absence of institutional support. The findings offer actionable insights for destination managers, policymakers, and community entrepreneurs in similar Himalayan and peripheral tourism contexts. Emphasis is placed on developing governance frameworks that protect cultural authenticity while simultaneously supporting sustainable enterprise development and community-based tourism models.

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1. Introduction

The tourism landscape is transforming as consumers increasingly seek authentic, immersive experiences in remote destinations. Once the preserve of intrepid adventurers, remote tourism has entered the mainstream, driven by digital nomadism, hybrid work arrangements, and post-pandemic travel shifts (Koll et al., 2025; World Economic Forum, 2025). Mountain tourism, a significant component of this trend, accounts for 9–16% of global tourist arrivals, approximately 195–375 million visitors in 2019, contributing 20% to the global tourism economy and supporting 25–47 million livelihoods (FAO & UNWTO, 2023; Ghimire et al., 2025).

Yet sustainability pressure climate change-induced glacier retreat, overtourism-driven ecological degradation, and fragile high-altitude ecosystems, increasingly threaten the

viability of mountain destinations, underscoring the need for context-sensitive management strategies (FAO & UNWTO, 2023; World Economic Forum, 2025).

Nepal exemplifies these tensions. Home to eight of the world's fourteen peaks exceeding 8,000 meters, it draws trekkers and mountaineers, with 74% of 2012 arrivals motivated by these activities (Upadhayaya, 2015). Mechanized infrastructure contributes 75% of tourism-related CO₂ emissions, worsening glacier retreat and air quality degradation (Ghimire et al., 2025). At the micro-destination level, however, tourism generates over 40% net positive impacts with 94.7% economic benefits in managed contexts (Baral & Rijal, 2022), while unmanaged growth produces ecological and social costs (Sun & Watanabe, 2021). These contrasts highlight the need for nuanced, destination-specific strategies, particularly in underexplored districts like Dolpa.

Inaccessibility has emerged as a distinctive tourism motivation, with travelers increasingly prioritizing isolation and immersion in untouched environments over convenience (Jangra et al., 2021; Sicroff et al., 2003; Averill, 2024). Evidence from India's Kinnaur district demonstrates that the absence of pollution and overcrowding constitutes a primary visitor appeal (Jangra et al., 2021), while research in Nepal's Rolwaling Valley confirms that independent travelers actively seek environments where roughing it is the norm (Sicroff et al., 2003). Scholars argue that maintaining inaccessibility functions as a conservation strategy, preventing the homogenization characteristic of overtourism (Croissant, 2024; Senigaglia et al., 2025). This reframes inaccessibility not as a deficit but as a defensible management choice with significant implications for destination strategy and ecological sustainability.

Theoretically, this study is anchored in Pine and Gilmore's (1998) experience economy framework, which traces the evolution of economic value from commodities to experiences, wherein memorable, emotionally resonant engagements command premium pricing. In remote contexts, remoteness itself becomes an experiential commodity (Sufrauj, 2011; Chambers, 2009), with extreme isolation evoking profound affective states, awe, humility, and transformative growth, distinct from accessible destinations (Powell et al., 2012; Buckley, 2022). Pre-visit perceptions shape expectations that, when fulfilled, produce vivid experiential memories and strong advocacy behavior, the primary marketing channel for remote destinations where visitor word-of-mouth replaces formal promotion (Guo & Pesonen, 2022; Fu et al., 2015).

The entrepreneurial dimensions of remote tourism reveal how resource scarcity and isolation drive innovation, bricolage, and resilience, as local entrepreneurs leverage knowledge, networks, and agency to overcome institutional and infrastructure deficits (Freitas, 2024; Korsgaard et al., 2021; Linna, 2013). This dynamism is complicated, however, by the preservation–commercialization tension inherent in fragile ecosystems, where over-commercialization weakens ecological resilience and market-oriented conservation risks accelerating degradation (McAfee, 2012; Cumming et al., 2015). Despite the richness of these converging streams, experiential demand, perception formation, and peripheral entrepreneurship, their integration remains underdeveloped. Existing tourism entrepreneurship studies are predominantly supply-side oriented, neglecting the reciprocal relationships between entrepreneurial activity and tourists' experiential demands (Booth et al., 2020; Antunes et al., 2023), while holistic frameworks addressing demand- and supply-side dynamics in extreme remote contexts remain absent (Light, 2017; Muñoz et al., 2025).

Dolpa district in Nepal's Karnali Province exemplifies this integrated triad. Nepal's largest district at 7,889 km², Dolpa encompasses the Trans-Himalayan landscape, Shey Phoksundo National Park, Nepal's deepest lake, and the ancient Bon Buddhist cultural heartland. Its restricted-area permit system limits visitor numbers to preserve ecological and cultural integrity, while its accessibility, only via trekking or costly flights, renders

inaccessibility simultaneously a key tourist motivation and an entrepreneurial constraint. Dolpa's institutional voids, ecological fragility, and emerging tourism economy make it an ideal empirical site for studying the intersection of tourist experience, perception formation, and entrepreneurial opportunity emergence.

This study therefore aims to: (1) investigate the experiential dimensions and perception formation of tourists visiting Dolpa; (2) identify entrepreneurial opportunities arising from these experiences; and (3) explore how local stakeholders recognize and exploit these opportunities despite institutional and infrastructure constraints. Theoretically, the study extends experience economy theory to extreme remote contexts, advances entrepreneurial opportunity recognition theory in institutional void settings, and establishes a transferable analytical triad applicable to comparable destinations globally, from Bhutan's Himalayan districts and Svalbard to remote Pacific islands and sub-Saharan Africa's ecotourism frontiers (Grafton et al., 2025; Lemecha-Sim, 2024; Sufrauj, 2011).

2. Literature Reviews

2.1. Theoretical Foundations

Destination image, defined as the collective beliefs and impressions tourists hold about a destination (Crompton, 1979), encompasses cognitive, affective, and conative components that together influence decision-making, satisfaction, and loyalty (Gartner, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Image formation is inherently subjective, blending knowledge, imagination, and emotion (Lawson & Baud-Bovy, 1977; Bigné et al., 2001), with organic agents, particularly word-of-mouth and visitor advocacy, exerting stronger formative influence than promotional materials (Gartner, 1993), a dynamic especially pronounced in remote destinations like Dolpa where formal marketing infrastructure is absent. In peripheral contexts, destination image mitigates perceived risk through nostalgia-driven attachment (Wei et al., 2024), promotes pro-environmental behavior (Zheng et al., 2022), and sustains organic image formation through visitor advocacy (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999).

Entrepreneurial opportunity recognition theory complements this demand-side framework by examining how individuals identify and exploit business opportunities through cognitive alertness, prior knowledge, and social capital (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Baron, 2006; Ardichvili et al., 2003). In rural and remote settings, entrepreneurs leverage local natural and cultural assets to establish viable enterprises despite geographic isolation and limited markets (Morrison, 2006; Stathopoulou et al., 2004), with opportunities emerging through agri-tourism resources (Peiris et al., 2015), family-driven diversification (Fuller-Love, 2006), and cultural niche identification (Freitas, 2024).

The theoretical integration of these frameworks reveals a bidirectional structure: tourists' perceptions generate destination image signals, satisfaction, loyalty, and word-of-mouth, that entrepreneurially alert locals interpret as indicators of viable ventures, which in turn enhance destination image and stimulate further tourism development (Ogunmokun and Timur, 2022). Zhang et al. (2017) confirm that memorable tourist experiences mediate between destination image and behavioral loyalty, providing cues for experiential innovation, while entrepreneurial responses to destination image signals demonstrate the supply-side operationalization of this feedback loop (Cristache et al., 2022). This integrated framework positions remoteness, cultural distinctiveness, and ecological fragility as both perception-formation stimuli and entrepreneurial opportunity inputs, an empirically testable architecture that this study operationalizes in Dolpa.

2.2. Tourist Experience, Authenticity, and Satisfaction in Remote and Extreme Contexts

Pine and Gilmore's (1998) experience economy framework identifies a shift toward memorable, emotionally resonant experiences commanding premium value. In remote tourism, this manifests through adventure, escapism, and transformative encounters that transcend conventional service delivery (Wolf et al., 2017). Nature-based adventure tourism, mountaineering, polar expeditions, high-altitude trekking, aligns with the escapism and esthetic experiential realms, wherein value resides in physical challenge, ecological grandeur, and cultural immersion rather than comfort (Lebrun et al., 2021). Tourism value increasingly encompasses emotions, co-created experiences, and sensory engagement, with a documented shift from company-focused to customer-focused value creation in mountain tourism contexts (Flores-Gómez et al., 2025; Marciszewska & Wanagos, 2024). Authenticity constitutes a defining dimension of remote adventure tourism, involving wilderness immersion, risk, and encounters with otherness that resist modern commodification (Duffy & Overholt, 2013). Fletcher (2014) demonstrates that authenticity in extreme contexts attracts precisely through danger and genuine encounters with harsh environments, where myths of distinction persist despite commercialization pressures.

Adventure tourists pursue authenticity through risk and isolation, seeking self-actualization and distinction unavailable in accessible destinations (Giddy & Webb, 2018). In Dolpa, the restricted-area permit system institutionalizes this authenticity by limiting visitor numbers and preserving the ecological and cultural conditions that generate it.

Satisfaction in extreme remote contexts derives from adventure, personal growth, and authentic engagement rather than conventional service quality benchmarks. Antarctic tourism research demonstrates high satisfaction through motivations of learning, social bonding, and transformative personal growth, with Powell et al. (2012) documenting profound emotional responses, awe, humility, and spiritual connection, amplified by isolation and distinct from accessible destinations. McIntosh and Wright (2017) describe a three-stage emotional arc in Canada's Rocky Mountains: pre-encounter anticipation, encounter intimacy and awe, and post-encounter reflective deepening of nature connectedness. Buckley's (2022) research across Australia, Kenya, and Nepal identifies over 20 distinct emotions in wildlife encounter memories, confirming the emotional complexity and memory intensity that extreme remote environments generate, complexity Dolpa's visitor narratives vividly exemplify.

2.3. Destination Image and Perception Formation in Remote Contexts

In remote destinations, organic and autonomous agents, word-of-mouth, visitation experiences, and online reviews, exert stronger image-forming influence than promotional materials, particularly where formal marketing infrastructure is minimal (Gartner, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Online travel reviews shape both cognitive and affective destination images, reducing information asymmetry and aligning expectations with outcomes, while biases or information overload can generate dissatisfaction in high-uncertainty niches (Guo & Pesonen, 2022; Watson & Wu, 2022). The unique image component, driven by inherent destination characteristics and visitor experiences rather than promotion, plays a decisive role in shaping overall destination image (Huete-Alcocer et al., 2019), making visitor experience quality the primary determinant of both Dolpa's image formation and its entrepreneurial strategy.

The gap between imagined and actual experiences constitutes a theoretically significant dimension of remote destination tourism. Tourists' perceptions of rural elements shape anticipatory emotions that mediate memory vividness, with positive surprises generating the strongest memorability effects (Chen et al., 2023). For Dolpa, unfamiliarity

and inaccessibility amplify imaginative appeal and heighten pre-visit expectations (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017), while the congruence between projected destination image and experiential reality determines satisfaction, loyalty, and word-of-mouth behavior (Stylos et al., 2017). Critically, Dolpa's experiential intensity, cultural immersion, and ecological grandeur frequently exceed rather than disappoint visitor expectations, generating the powerful positive surprise effects that Chen et al. (2023) identify as primary drivers of memory vividness, advocacy behavior, and self-reinforcing organic image enhancement.

2.4. Tourism Entrepreneurship, Community Empowerment, and Sustainable Development in Remote Contexts

In resource-scarce, isolated contexts, constraints drive innovation, bricolage, and entrepreneurial resilience. Local entrepreneurs leverage knowledge, networks, and agency to convert institutional voids and weak governance systems into competitive assets (Freitas, 2024; Linna, 2013; Busch & Barkema, 2021). Luiz et al. (2021), identify three strategic responses to institutional voids: rationalization, adapting existing models to constraints; aggression, actively shaping the institutional environment; and defensiveness, protecting established advantages. Evidence across comparable contexts supports these dynamics: Morrar et al. (2025) demonstrate social capital-enabled adventure tourism entrepreneurship in politically unstable regions; Saleh (2026) finds informal norms substituting for absent institutions in North African social enterprises; and Korsgaard et al.'s (2021) spatial bricolage concept highlights the use of place-specific resources, directly applicable to Dolpa, where, landscape functions simultaneously as asset and constraint.

Community-based tourism (CBT) represents the prevailing entrepreneurial model in remote, resource-limited destinations, merging local enterprise with community empowerment while managing tensions between anticipated benefits and actual disparities in participation and distribution. Ramaano (2025) highlights indigenous knowledge application for ecotourism development in South Africa's rural Musina Municipality, advocating capacity building as the primary alignment strategy, while Ngoasong (2018) illustrates how geographic isolation shapes every stage of the entrepreneurial process, from idea generation to scaling, with entrepreneurs utilizing place-based narratives, collective action, and digital skills to establish viable enterprises despite labor shortages and logistical challenges. Dolpa's emerging CBT ecosystem, teahouse networks, local guiding services, and community-managed cultural experiences, represents an early-stage manifestation of entrepreneurial patterns documented across comparable remote contexts globally.

Sustainable entrepreneurship in remote tourism applies the triple bottom line framework to generate economic value from natural and cultural assets while preserving their ecological and cultural integrity. Over-commercialization weakens ecological resilience through pollution and biodiversity loss, while market-oriented conservation risks accelerating degradation where governance is weak (McAfee, 2012; Cumming et al., 2015). Polycentric governance, combining state regulation, community management, and market mechanisms, offers the most viable balance between preservation and commercialization, though it requires sustained institutional investment and cross-scale coordination (Cumming et al., 2015; Dempsey & Suarez, 2016). Vergara-Romero et al. (2025) demonstrate that sustainable destination management generates entrepreneurial opportunities, creating employment and diversifying economies in tourism regions.

2.5. Integrated Conceptual Framework

Building on the preceding review, this study proposes a framework linking tourist perceptions, experiences, and entrepreneurial opportunities in remote destinations. Tourist

perceptions encompassing destination image, natural authenticity, and cultural distinctiveness shape engagement and perceived value (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Kanwel et al., 2019). These perceptions generate experiential outcomes emotional engagement, transformative encounters, and sensory immersion, which memorable tourism experiences mediate into loyalty, revisit intentions, and eWOM advocacy (Elshaer et al., 2022; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). Positive experiential outcomes signal entrepreneurial opportunities, enabling local entrepreneurs to design transformative products integrating tourism with economic growth (Vergara-Romero et al., 2025; Cristache et al., 2022). The framework operates as a self-reinforcing loop: enhanced experiences bolster destination image, signaling further entrepreneurial opportunities and driving innovations that deepen the destination's appeal, a cycle especially critical for remote destinations like Dolpa, where organic visitor advocacy replaces formal promotion and entrepreneurial constraints stimulate bricolage-driven innovation (Fu et al., 2015; Jiang et al., 2022). The integrated conceptual framework synthesizing these theoretical constructs and their interrelationships is presented in Annexure I (Figure A1).

3. Research Methods

This study employs a convergent parallel mixed-methods design grounded in pragmatism (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), with quantitative findings as the primary strand and qualitative narratives providing contextual depth (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Bryman, 2016).

As described above, Dolpa's restricted-area permit system and charter-only access render inaccessibility simultaneously its primary tourism asset and principal entrepreneurial constraint. Purposive sampling targeted tourists who had spent at least one day trekking or engaging in cultural activities within Dolpa. Questionnaires were administered at Juphal Airport, Dunai, Ringmo village, and Shey Phoksundo National Park entry points to capture experiences at both arrival and departure stages. Of 200 targeted respondents, 157 valid responses were obtained, yielding a 78.5% response rate. This study received approval from the IRC, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, Nepal, on 2020). Participation was voluntary, written informed consent was obtained from all participants, and anonymity was strictly maintained throughout. No personally identifiable data were collected or disclosed. Sensitivity to local customs and community norms of remote Himalayan communities was observed at all stages of the research process. The detailed demographic and travel profile of respondents is presented in Annexure II.

Quantitative data were collected via a structured self-administered questionnaire administered during 2024–25. The instrument comprised two sections: (i) demographic and travel profile, including gender, age, nationality, travel style, visit frequency, and trip duration; and (ii) an experience rating section comprising 16 items on a five-point Likert scale (1 = very poor; 5 = excellent), covering dimensions including food quality, accommodation, pricing, safety, hospitality, cultural authenticity, natural scenery, adventure activities, and overall satisfaction, adapted from Ap and Crompton (1998) and Godovykh et al. (2024) for remote Himalayan contexts. The qualitative instrument comprised four open-ended questions, reasons for non-return, friend recommendations, experience narratives, and additional comments, designed to minimise framing effects and allow experiential dimensions to emerge organically. Content validity was established through expert review, and pilot testing (n=12) refined wording for cultural appropriateness.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations, in SPSS version 26. Qualitative responses were transcribed using a denaturalized technique prioritising conceptual accuracy (Oliver et al., 2005; Bucholtz, 2000). Reflexive thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's

(2006, 2013) six-phase framework within an inductive, constructivist orientation (Thomas, 2006; Byrne, 2022). Manual coding in Microsoft Word was tracked in Excel to maintain an analytical audit trail. LLM-assisted coding provided an independent analytical layer; convergences were confirmatory and divergences resolved through researcher consensus (Braun & Clarke, 2013, 2020).

4. Result

4.1. Tourist experience regarding tourism in Dolpa

This section presents quantitative findings first, drawing on descriptive statistics from the structured survey to measure tourist satisfaction across key experience dimensions, followed by qualitative narratives derived from open-ended responses that provide contextual depth and interpretive richness. Together, these findings reveal what visitors valued, how they perceived encounters with people, culture, landscape, and infrastructure, and where gaps in service and accessibility persist. Comments present Dolpa as a place of natural beauty and cultural depth alongside physical and logistical challenges. The thematic analysis begins with tourists' appreciation of natural beauty and scenic appeal, the most frequent and emotionally resonant theme.

The result shows that Dolpa excels in nature and experience-oriented value but underperforms in accessibility and services. Natural scenery received the highest rating (mean = 4.78, SD = 0.443), reflecting near-universal consensus on Dolpa's core comparative advantage, followed closely by food quality (mean = 4.60, SD = 0.517) and adventure activities (mean = 4.59, SD = 0.609). Cultural authenticity and novelty were also strongly perceived (both mean = 4.28), confirming visitors' sense of Dolpa as a distinctive destination. Service-related dimensions were satisfactory but variable: room service (mean = 4.03, SD = 0.707), pricing/value (mean = 4.03, SD = 0.582), and hospitality (mean = 4.01, SD = 0.599) met expectations, while safety and security scored upper-mid level (mean = 3.70, SD = 0.537). Three dimensions emerged as clear weaknesses, that is, transportation and accessibility (mean = 2.06, SD = 0.915), internet/communication (mean = 2.22, SD = 0.570), and shopping/handicrafts (mean = 2.96, SD = 0.823). Cleanliness and hygiene (mean = 3.13, SD = 0.717) and local guides (mean = 3.36, SD = 0.726) were middling with high dispersion, indicating inconsistent service delivery. Despite these deficits, overall satisfaction remained high (mean = 4.32, SD = 0.496), confirming that natural and experiential strengths compensate for infrastructure gaps. The experience of the tourist towards their visit is presented in Table I.

Table 1. Experience of the tourist towards their Dolpa visit

SN	Dimensions	Mean	SD
1	Food taste and quality	4.60	0.517
2	Room service	4.03	0.707
3	Room arrangement and comfort	3.86	0.635
4	Pricing and value for money	4.03	0.582
5	Novelty and uniqueness of experience	4.28	0.629
6	Cleanliness and hygiene	3.13	0.717
7	Safety and security	3.70	0.537
8	Hospitality and friendliness of local people	4.01	0.599
9	Transportation and accessibility	2.06	0.915
10	Availability and quality of local guides	3.36	0.726
11	Cultural programs and authenticity of local traditions	4.28	0.587

12	Natural scenery and environment	4.78	0.443
13	Adventure and recreational activities (e.g., trekking, camping)	4.59	0.609
14	Shopping and availability of local handicrafts	2.96	0.823
15	Internet and communication facilities	2.22	0.570
16	Overall satisfaction	4.32	0.496

Similarly, the dominant sentiment across qualitative responses centres on Dolpa's breathtaking natural landscape. Phrases like *"natural beauty," "stunning scenery,"* and *"peaceful environment"* reflect tourists' awe at the region's ecological purity, with Ringmo Lake (Shey Phoksundo), mountains, and waterfalls consistently cited as emotionally resonant highlights. Dolpa's untouched environment functions as both an attraction and an emotional anchor, offering serenity and spiritual calm that visitors associate with wellness, eco-tourism, and nature-based recreation. Trekking routes reinforced this appeal, described as *"natural," "beautiful,"* and *"serene,"* with many visitors emphasizing a strong sense of adventure and exploration. A parallel narrative, however, emerged from those who found the terrain physically demanding, with comments such as *"tough to walk," "slippery uphill track,"* and *"bad road"* signalling the need for safer trail infrastructure without compromising the destination's raw authenticity.

Beyond landscape and adventure, tourists viewed Dolpa's people and culture as equally central to its appeal. Remarks such as *"good culture and good people," "Himali lifestyle,"* and *"people, culture and food"* reveal deep admiration for local hospitality, kindness, and simplicity. The mention of monasteries like Shey and Luri highlights Dolpa's Tibetan-Buddhist heritage and spiritual ambiance, reinforcing its identity as a destination where natural beauty and cultural richness converge. Specific sites, Ringmo Lake, Shey Monastery, Luri, Saldang, Karang, Tinje, and Dho-Tarap, stood out as particularly memorable, with Ringmo Lake and Shey Monastery functioning as iconic focal points that symbolize both natural splendour and spiritual significance. Food and interpersonal interaction further deepened visitor satisfaction: comments like *"food, people, wonderful trekking experience"* and *"scene, Ringmo lake and food"* indicate that local cuisine and warm hospitality are inseparable from the overall experience, suggesting that gastronomy and homestay offerings represent underexploited avenues for cultural immersion and community income generation.

At a deeper level, the emotional tone of most responses was profoundly positive and reflective. Tourists described Dolpa using expressions such as *"everything is special," "wonderful place to visit,"* and *"peaceful environment,"* revealing wonder, spiritual fulfilment, and emotional connection that transcend conventional tourism satisfaction. Dolpa offers more than a physical journey, it provides a transformative experience connecting visitors with nature, spirituality, and inner peace, positioning it as a destination with strong potential for mindful and introspective tourism.

Collectively, these findings confirm that Dolpa's strengths lie in its natural beauty, cultural authenticity, and hospitable people, while concerns centre on accessibility, infrastructure, and physical difficulty. Dolpa holds significant potential for sustainable eco-trekking and spiritual tourism, provided that infrastructure, guiding services, and hospitality standards improve in ways that preserve rather than erode its foundational appeal. The thematic analysis of tourist responses is presented in Table II.

Table II. Thematic Analysis of Tourist Responses: Dolpa Visitors (n=157)

Main Theme	Subthemes	Representative Statements	Saliency (n / %)	Interpretation
Natural Landscape and Ecological Appeal	Ringmo Lake; Biodiversity; Pollution-free Environment; Spiritual Scenery	"Ringmo Lake and nature," "Stunning landscapes," "No pollution," "Nature and tranquility"	112 / 71.3%	Dolpa's pristine ecology, its lake, mountains, and unspoiled environment, forms the primary attraction, with strong potential for eco-tourism and wellness tourism.
Trekking, Adventure, and Physical Experience	Trail Quality; Physical Challenge; Exploration	"Good trail for trekking," "Tough to walk," "Slippery uphill track," "Serene trekking routes"	52 / 33.1%	Trekking is both Dolpa's defining draw and its key vulnerability, thrilling yet physically demanding, requiring trail safety improvements without compromising authenticity.
Cultural Immersion and Human Connection	Local People; Hospitality; Tibetan-Buddhist Heritage; Food and Cuisine	"Good culture and good people," "Enjoy Himali lifestyle," "Food, people, wonderful trekking experience," "Yak, Sukuti and local alcohol"	40 / 25.5%	Cultural authenticity and human warmth, people, food, monasteries, and lifestyle, are inseparable from visitor satisfaction, underpinning strong potential for community-based and culinary tourism.
Infrastructure, Accessibility, and Safety	Roads; Trail Conditions; Sanitation; Institutional Gaps	"Bad road," "Uphill risky path," "No toilet in some places," "No government presence"	6 / 3.8%*	Physical and logistical barriers, poor roads, unsafe trails, hygiene deficits, and absent institutional support, represent the most critical constraints on inclusive and sustainable tourism growth.
Emotional and Transformative Experience	Spiritual Fulfillment; Inner Peace; Collective Joy; Awe	"Everything is special," "Peaceful environment," "Wonderful place to visit," "Fun among team members"	18 / 11.5%	Beyond scenery and culture, Dolpa evokes profound emotional and spiritual responses, positioning it as a transformative destination for mindful, introspective, and adventure-seeking travelers.
* Infrastructure concerns were predominantly expressed in the recommendations column; their policy significance exceeds their saliency score. Note: Saliency percentages may exceed 100% as respondents could mention multiple themes.				

Tourists visiting Dolpa shared overwhelmingly positive experiences, describing it as a space of adventure, tranquility, and emotional connection where natural beauty, cultural authenticity, and human warmth converge.

Qualitative narratives reveal the multidimensional character of visitor satisfaction. Ringmo Lake (Shey Phoksundo) emerged as the most emotionally resonant attraction, described as "majestic," "amazing," and "peaceful," with surrounding features, waterfalls, Shey Monastery, and Ringmo village, consistently mentioned together as the symbolic heart of Dolpa's tourism identity.

Tourists consistently emphasized the friendliness of local residents, describing people as "nice," "caring," and "amazing," with statements such as "people, culture and

"care of tourist" and "children, culture, language" underscoring the strong human dimension of the visit, where interpersonal warmth and cultural authenticity form the foundation of visitor satisfaction.

Food featured prominently as a memorable highlight that visitors cited the authenticity of local meals and drinks, Tongba, Sukuti, and yak-based dishes, with comments like "Yak, Sukuti and local alcohol" and "food, people, wonderful trekking experience" reflecting gastronomy's integral role in shaping positive impressions and its potential for deeper cultural immersion through homestays and culinary treks.

Adventure and trekking were equally defining, with comments such as "Laini cliff trekking is real challenge," "Dolpa trek is amazing," and "trekking route from Ringmo Lake to Shey Monastery is amazing" reflecting a destination perceived as thrilling yet deeply rewarding, where physical challenge, camaraderie, and pristine nature converge into meaningful experience.

Visitors also expressed fascination with Dolpa's mountain ecology, recurring references to "Yaks," "blue-cow," and "pollution-free environment," with phrases like "in love with Yaks," illustrate how local fauna and lifestyle merge into the cultural landscape, reinforcing Dolpa's identity as a living Himalayan ecosystem ideal for biodiversity-integrated eco-tourism.

At a deeper level, several visitors reported transformative moments, one notably describing "naked meditation on the edge of Ringmo Lake," alongside references to "shooting stars," "serene trekking," and group bonding expressed through "fun among team members" and "loads of fun and trekking," revealing Dolpa's capacity to inspire mindfulness, spiritual renewal, and collective memory-making that distinguishes it as a destination blending adventure with introspection.

4.3. Negative Experiences

Despite the overwhelmingly positive impressions, visitors also identified several recurring challenges that tempered their overall experience. Physical exhaustion from demanding terrain was the most frequently cited negative experience, with visitors reporting "body ache due to long walk," "leg pain," and "knee problem while returning downward," indicating a need for improved trail management, designated resting spots, and pre-trip health briefings to better prepare visitors for Dolpa's physical demands.

Safety hazards compounded this strain: reports of "slippery uphill path," "fell down by slipping," and "uphill paths are really scary" point to poorly maintained tracks that caused minor injuries and reduced trekking confidence, suggesting that regular trail maintenance, handrails at critical sections, and certified guides with first-aid capacity could substantially reduce such risks.

Hygiene and sanitation deficiencies, "no toilet in some places," "poor hygiene," and "improper hygiene," undermined both health safety and visitor comfort, particularly in remote settlements and trekking camps, where investment in eco-friendly toilets, waste management systems, and hygiene training for local homestays would strengthen Dolpa's credentials as a responsible destination.

Poor road conditions and unreliable transport infrastructure, described as "bad road," "rough roadways to Dunai," and calls for a "bus route up to Dunai," created fatigue and reduced overall trip enjoyment, with improved road connectivity and regulated transport services needed to enhance accessibility without compromising ecological integrity.

Altitude- and climate-related ailments, "fever disturbed my trip," "got headache," and "sleep issues," indicate insufficient pre-travel orientation and limited on-route medical support, pointing to the need for acclimatization schedules and altitude preparedness information provided by tour operators before departure.

A minority of tourists expressed moral unease upon witnessing local animal slaughter, with remarks such as "killing animal is such a cruel" reflecting cross-cultural differences in ethical perception that interpretive communication materials explaining cultural contexts and livelihood systems could address.

Finally, several tourists noted "no government presence," "lack of toilets," and "inadequate facilities" along trekking routes, suggesting that institutional involvement in tourism management remains limited despite Dolpa's growing popularity, and that stronger coordination among local governments, conservation authorities, and community tourism committees is essential to deliver basic infrastructure and monitoring across key trekking corridors. The Table III summarizes the positive and negative tourist experiences in Dolpa.

Table III. Summary of Positive and Negative Tourist Experiences in Dolpa (n=157)

Main Theme	Subthemes / Dimensions	Representative Expressions	Interpretation / Key Insights	Experience Type	Salience (n / %)
Natural Beauty and Landscape	Ringmo Lake, Shey Monastery, Waterfalls, Biodiversity	"Ringmo Lake and natural beauty," "Shey Monastery," "Falls near Ringmo," "Stunning landscapes"	Visitors were captivated by Dolpa's pristine scenery and serene atmosphere, viewing it as a pollution-free, peaceful, and spiritually uplifting environment.	Positive	80 / 51.0%
Trekking and Adventure	Trekking routes, Physical challenge, Scenic trails	"Trekking route from Ringmo Lake to Shey Monastery is amazing," "Dolpa trek is amazing," "Fun during trekking"	Trekkers appreciated the adventure, team bonding, and scenic challenges; the physical journey was seen as rewarding and memorable.	Positive	47 / 29.9%
People and Local Hospitality	Warmth, Friendliness, Care, Cultural interaction	"People and food are great," "Good guide and amazing Ringmo village," "People, culture and care of tourist"	The hospitality and kindness of local residents enhanced visitor satisfaction and fostered cultural connection, central to Dolpa's identity.	Positive	65 / 41.4%
Food and Local Cuisine	Traditional food, Local alcohol (Tongba), Yak meat	"Food and Tongba," "Yak, Sukuti and Tongba," "Food, people, and Ringmo Lake"	Local cuisine and beverages added authenticity and joy, making dining a cultural and sensory highlight of the trip.	Positive	59 / 37.6%
Unique Mountain Life and Ecology	Yaks, Blue cows, Wildlife, Himali lifestyle	"In love with Yaks," "Saw blue-cow on the way," "Himali animals are amazing"	Encounters with mountain animals and traditional livelihoods fascinated visitors, reinforcing Dolpa's eco-cultural distinctiveness.	Positive	24 / 15.3%

Cultural and Spiritual Experience	Monasteries, Traditions, Meditation, Local customs	"She-Monastery and Ringmo Lake are amazing," "Naked meditation by Ringmo Lake," "Culture and language"	Dolpa offered spiritual and introspective experiences, where natural beauty and culture merged into personal transformation.	Positive	9 / 5.7%
Fun and Companionship	Group bonding, Shared memories	"Fun among team members and pictures I captured," "Loads of fun and trekking"	Visitors found joy in social connection, teamwork, and shared exploration, enhancing emotional satisfaction.	Positive	11 / 7.0%
Physical Strain and Fatigue	Long walking hours, Uphill climbs, Body pain	"Tough walking," "Body ache due to long walk," "Leg pain," "Knee problem while returning"	The demanding treks caused exhaustion and discomfort, especially for inexperienced hikers, indicating need for rest points and preparedness.	Negative	43 / 27.4%
Slippery and Unsafe Trails	Slippery paths, Falls, Steep routes	"Slippery uphill path," "Fell down by slipping," "Rough and steepy path"	Unsafe and unstable trails posed physical risk and reduced comfort; safety measures and maintenance are required.	Negative	24 / 15.3%
Hygiene and Sanitation Issues	Toilets, Cleanliness, Food hygiene	"Poor hygiene," "No toilet in some places," "Toilet, uphill path," "Rice they serve is not good"	Inadequate sanitation facilities and hygiene standards weakened the visitor experience, especially for long stays or camping treks.	Negative	23 / 14.6%
Road and Accessibility Problems	Transport routes, Road condition	"Bad road," "Bus route up to Dunai," "Rough and steepy path"	Difficult access reduced comfort and convenience; infrastructure improvement is needed without harming the natural environment.	Negative	9 / 5.7%
Weather and Health Problems	Cold, Altitude sickness, Sleep issues	"Fever disturbed my trip," "Got headache," "Difficult to sleep," "Bad weather and uphill path"	Climatic and altitude challenges caused health discomforts, suggesting the need for acclimatization support and medical preparedness.	Negative	16 / 10.2%

Ethical and Cultural Discomfort	Animal killing, Cultural misunderstanding	"Killing animal is cruel," "Saw killing Yak with such cruelty"	Some tourists were disturbed by local practices due to cultural differences; need for visitor orientation and cultural interpretation.	Negative	7 / 4.5%
Institutional and Infrastructure Gaps	Government absence, Facility shortage	"No government presence," "No toilet," "Improper hygiene"	Lack of visible management and infrastructure reduced perceptions of organized tourism; better coordination among authorities is needed.	Negative	3 / 1.9%

Note: Salience counts are based on keyword matching of open-ended 'Good Experience' and 'Bad Experience' responses (n=157). Percentages may not sum to 100% as respondents could mention multiple themes. Negative salience reflects frequency of complaint mentions in the 'Bad Experience' column.

5. Discussion

This study examined tourist experiences, perception formation, and entrepreneurial opportunity emergence in Dolpa, Nepal, one of the world's most extreme remote tourism destinations, through a sequential mixed-methods design integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative thematic analysis of visitor narratives. The findings collectively advance understanding of how remoteness, institutional voids, and experiential intensity intersect to generate both distinctive tourism value and distinctive entrepreneurial challenges.

The study revealed that visitors to Dolpa represent a market structure dominated by young, physically active, first-time domestic travelers, confirming the destination's positioning as an adventure and trekking destination aligned with Pine and Gilmore's (1998) escapism and esthetic experiential realms, wherein value resides in physical challenge, ecological grandeur, and cultural immersion rather than comfort or convenience. This is consistent with Jangra et al. (2021), who document that the absence of pollution and overcrowding, rather than service quality, constitutes the primary motivation in comparable cold desert destinations, and with Sicroff et al. (2003), whose evidence from Nepal's Rolwaling Valley confirms that independent travelers actively seek environments where roughing it is the norm. The high proportion of first-time visitors signals strong organic destination curiosity, consistent with Gartner (1993) and Baloglu and McCleary (1999), whereby word-of-mouth and peer advocacy drive visitation to remote destinations with minimal promotional infrastructure, a dynamic that is simultaneously a strength and a fragility, since organic image formation is inherently slow, uncontrolled, and vulnerable to negative experiential amplification (Guo & Pesonen, 2022).

Critically, however, the overwhelming domestic dominance and brevity of stays expose a structural fragility consistently flagged in the remote destination entrepreneurship literature: dependence on a single, low-expenditure market segment constrains the revenue generation necessary to fund urgently needed infrastructure investments (Ngoasong, 2018; Bertrand & Hamilton, 2024). This contrasts with the international visitor segment, concentrated in high-income markets, which, consistent with Freitas's (2024) findings in Madeira's remote tourism context, signals significant willingness-to-pay premiums for quality-assured, culturally immersive experiences that local entrepreneurial capacity has yet to systematically capture. The gender imbalance further signals an

underserved market, resonating with Saleh's (2026) finding that patriarchal structures and the absence of gender-sensitive infrastructure disproportionately constrain both women entrepreneurs and women visitors in remote tourism contexts. Collectively, these patterns indicate that entrepreneurial actors and destination managers must move beyond undifferentiated product offerings toward deliberate market segmentation strategies, the critical inflection point between subsistence-level and growth-oriented remote tourism economies (Priatmoko et al., 2025; Kenebayeva, 2017).

Dolpa emerges as a destination of striking experiential contrasts, excelling in dimensions that are inherently non-manufacturable, natural scenery, adventure activities, and food quality, while underperforming severely in infrastructural dimensions that determine accessibility and basic comfort, namely transportation, internet connectivity, and shopping. This pattern is theoretically consistent with Pine and Gilmore's (1998) experience economy framework, wherein Dolpa's comparative advantage resides in the esthetic and escapism realms, the grandeur of Shey Phoksundo, the spiritual resonance of Bon Buddhist monasteries, and the ecological distinctiveness of Trans-Himalayan fauna, rather than in the entertainment or education realms that require deliberate service staging. The high overall tourist satisfaction despite severe infrastructural deficits confirms that, in extreme remote contexts, remoteness itself functions as an experiential commodity commanding premium affective value (Sufrauj, 2011; Powell et al., 2012).

Similarly, the findings reveal that Dolpa's experiential power derives from the simultaneous convergence of cultural authenticity, Himali lifestyle, Tibetan-Buddhist monasteries, and traditional gastronomy including Tongba and Sukuti, social bonding through group trekking, and moments of profound spiritual transformation, most vividly encapsulated in one visitor's testimony of naked meditation on the edge of Ringmo Lake in sub-zero temperatures. These accounts align with Powell et al.'s (2012) documentation of awe, humility, and transformative personal growth in Antarctic tourism, and with McIntosh and Wright's (2017) three-stage emotional arc of pre-encounter anticipation, actual encounter intimacy, and post-encounter reflective deepening. Buckley's (2022) identification of over 20 distinct emotions in wildlife encounter memories across remote ecosystems in Australia, Kenya, and Nepal further corroborates the emotional complexity and memory intensity that extreme remote environments generate, a complexity that Dolpa's visitor narratives vividly exemplify.

Critically, the same infrastructural deficits flagged as weaknesses in quantitative ratings are simultaneously reframed by many visitors as constitutive elements of the authentic adventure experience: tough walking, slippery uphill tracks, and the absence of digital connectivity are not merely tolerated but actively valorized as markers of genuine remoteness and personal distinction. This authenticity paradox resonates with Fletcher (2014) argument that in extreme adventure contexts, authenticity attracts precisely through danger and genuine encounters with harsh environments, and with Duffy and Overholt's (2013) observation that commercialization challenges perceived genuineness in mountaineering and polar expeditions. It further aligns with Croissant's (2024) and Senigaglia et al.'s (2025) proposition that maintaining inaccessibility is itself a conservation strategy, preventing the homogenization that characterizes overtourism in previously remote destinations. The governance implication is profound: interventions designed to improve satisfaction by reducing infrastructural deficits may inadvertently erode the very qualities that generate it, a dilemma that polycentric governance frameworks must explicitly address rather than assume away (Cumming et al., 2015; Dempsey & Suarez, 2016).

The study found that Dolpa operates within a positive perception-reality congruence dynamic, wherein the destination's actual experiential intensity exceeds rather than disappoints the expectations of visitors who arrive with informationally limited but

emotionally heightened pre-visit images. The near-universal admiration for natural scenery, the repeated emotional language of wonder and spiritual fulfillment in qualitative narratives, and the high overall satisfaction despite infrastructural deficits collectively indicate that Dolpa delivers positive surprise, the primary driver of memory vividness and advocacy behavior (Chen et al., 2023), consistent with Jeuring and Haartsen's (2017) demonstration that the anticipation of escape and novelty generates heightened expectations that, when fulfilled, produce exceptionally powerful experiential memories. This dynamic is self-reinforcing: visitors who experience positive surprise become organic image ambassadors, generating the word-of-mouth and eWOM advocacy that constitutes Dolpa's primary marketing channel in the absence of formal promotional infrastructure (Gartner, 1993; Fu et al., 2015).

A critical caveat, however, is that the positive congruence dynamic is contingent on visitor self-selection, those who reach Dolpa have already demonstrated the physical fitness, financial capacity, and motivational alignment necessary to navigate its extreme accessibility barriers, systematically inflating satisfaction scores relative to an unselected visitor population. This contrasts with Wei et al.'s (2024) finding that positive destination image can buffer perceived risk in rural contexts, suggesting that for less self-selected segments, the absence of risk-buffering infrastructure could generate negative congruence dynamics. Furthermore, the high first-time visitation rate combined with brevity of stays raises the question of whether positive congruence translates into repeat visitation, or whether physical demands and infrastructural deficits ultimately outweigh experiential rewards for a significant proportion of visitors. Negative experiences with hygiene, safety, and accessibility, if amplified through online reviews, carry disproportionate reputational damage potential, consistent with Guo and Pesonen's (2022) finding that low ratings generate asymmetrically negative perceptual impacts in remote destination contexts, threatening the organic image formation cycle that Dolpa's entire marketing architecture depends upon.

The findings further provide a coherent and actionable map of entrepreneurial opportunity in Dolpa, structured around the four-phase integrated framework proposed in this study. The demand signals are unambiguous: tourists consistently valorize natural scenery, cultural authenticity, adventure trekking, and local gastronomy while expressing acute dissatisfaction with transportation, sanitation, digital connectivity, and guide quality. These satisfaction gaps constitute precisely the institutional voids that entrepreneurially alert local actors can exploit through bricolage, intermediary networks, and adaptive business models (Korsgaard et al., 2021; Mair et al., 2012; Linna, 2013). Immediate opportunities include last-mile transport solutions such as mule-based logistics and porter cooperatives, eco-sanitation enterprises, guide training and certification programs, curated gastronomy treks featuring Tongba and Sukuti, monastery interpretation services, and quality-assured local handicraft retail, a portfolio consistent with community-based tourism entrepreneurship patterns documented across comparable remote contexts globally (Ngoasong, 2018; Bertrand & Hamilton, 2024; Priatmoko et al., 2025).

Comparing these findings with broader literature reveals instructive convergences and divergences. The convergence with Morrar's (2025) documentation of social capital-enabled adventure tourism entrepreneurship in politically unstable regions suggests that Dolpa's strong community cohesion and cultural identity, evidenced by tourists' repeated admiration for local hospitality, constitutes an underutilized entrepreneurial asset that formal capacity-building programs could systematically leverage. The divergence, however, is equally instructive: unlike Bertrand and Hamilton's (2024) Fiji and Jamaica cases, where public-private-community partnerships have generated measurable revenue increases through digital inclusion platforms, Dolpa's institutional landscape is

characterized by the "no government presence" explicitly noted by visitors. This resonates with Matus-Ruiz et al.'s (2025) identification of rationalization, aggression, and defensiveness as strategic responses to institutional voids, suggesting that Dolpa's entrepreneurs currently operate predominantly in rationalization mode, adapting to existing configurations rather than the aggression mode that would involve actively shaping the institutional environment. The transition from rationalization to aggression, facilitated by polycentric governance architecture, represents the critical developmental threshold for Dolpa's tourism entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The entrepreneurial opportunity landscape in Dolpa is ultimately bounded by the preservation-commercialization tension that the literature identifies as the defining governance challenge of fragile remote ecosystems (McAfee, 2012; Cumming et al., 2015). The very qualities that generate tourist demand, ecological purity, cultural distinctiveness, and inaccessibility, are simultaneously the qualities most vulnerable to erosion through unmanaged commercialization. The governance vacuum created by limited government presence allows entrepreneurial activity to proceed without the regulatory oversight necessary to prevent ecological degradation and cultural commodification. The restricted-area permit system provides a partial institutional safeguard, but its effectiveness depends on enforcement capacity and adaptive management that current institutional arrangements in Dolpa do not consistently provide. Sustainable entrepreneurship in this context therefore requires not merely the identification of market opportunities but the simultaneous co-construction of the governance architecture, polycentric, community-anchored, and ecologically calibrated, within which those opportunities can be pursued without undermining the destination's foundational assets. This finding extends Vergara-Romero et al.'s (2025) proposition that sustainable destination management is a prerequisite for entrepreneurial opportunity generation, by providing empirical evidence from an extreme remote context where governance architecture is conspicuously absent rather than merely underdeveloped, a contrast with the Tourism Research Institute's (2025) analysis of Kenya's remote tourism sector and Barcoe et al.'s (2024) circular economy framework for remote island destinations, both of which presuppose a level of institutional coordination that Dolpa's governance vacuum does not currently support. In extreme institutional void contexts, the conventional sequence of entrepreneurship preceding governance must be replaced by their simultaneous co-construction, a finding with direct policy implications for Nepal's provincial and federal tourism governance frameworks.

6. Conclusion

The study concludes that extreme remote tourism destinations like Dolpa derive their tourism value from non-manufacturable aspects such as natural scenery, ecological grandeur, cultural authenticity, and adventure, rather than from service infrastructure. The experience economy framework demonstrates that the esthetic and escapism realms can create exceptional value independently of service infrastructure. Visitors perceive infrastructural deficits as indicators of genuine remoteness and uniqueness. Interventions aimed at improving satisfaction must be carefully calibrated to avoid diminishing the qualities that generate visitor satisfaction and organic advocacy. Tourists' dissatisfaction with transportation, sanitation, guides, and connectivity highlights institutional voids that local entrepreneurs can exploit through adaptive business models. In contexts characterized by extreme institutional voids, entrepreneurship and governance must be co-constructed simultaneously, advancing the literature on institutional entrepreneurship in remote tourism. This forms a transferable triad of tourist experience, perception formation, and entrepreneurial emergence at the frontier of human geography.

7. Implications

7.1. Theoretical Contributions

This study offers three main theoretical contributions. First, it extends experience economy theory to remote areas, showing that isolation and scarcity reconfigure and amplify esthetic and escapism realms, a shift not anticipated by the original framework. The finding that remoteness itself is an experiential commodity with premium value extends this theory to extreme remote destinations globally. Second, it advances entrepreneurial opportunity recognition theory in void contexts by integrating demand and supply side dynamics into a unified framework. This framework operationalizes the relationship between tourist perception and entrepreneurial emergence, addressing a gap in the literature. Third, it contributes to governance literature on sustainable entrepreneurship in fragile ecosystems by showing that in extreme void contexts, entrepreneurship and governance must co-construct, extending propositions to contexts with absent governance.

7.2. Practical Implications

In the immediate term, the highest-return entrepreneurial interventions address Dolpa's most acute satisfaction gaps: last-mile transport solutions including mule-based logistics, porter cooperatives, and regulated jeep services; eco-sanitation enterprises including composting toilet systems and waste management cooperatives at key trekking nodes; and guide training and certification programs that address heterogeneous service quality, all consistent with community-based tourism entrepreneurship patterns documented in comparable remote contexts globally.

In the medium term, the international visitor segment, concentrated in high-income markets with demonstrated willingness-to-pay premiums, represents the most strategically significant underexploited opportunity. Curated cultural and culinary packages featuring Tongba and Sukuti gastronomy treks, monastery interpretation services, and quality-assured handicraft retail could systematically capture this demand. Deliberate market segmentation, differentiating domestic adventure trekking from premium international cultural immersion offerings, represents the critical inflection point between subsistence-level and growth-oriented remote tourism economies. Gender-sensitive product development, female guides, safety-signaled routes, and women-focused trekking packages, could simultaneously expand the visitor base and address structural access constraints.

7.3. Policy Priorities

All entrepreneurial interventions must be embedded within a governance architecture that prevents erosion of the destination's foundational assets. Three policy priorities follow. First, governance architecture must integrate regulation, community management, and market mechanisms to balance preservation and commercialization, strengthening the restricted-area permit system with enforcement capacity and adaptive management protocols. Second, targeted infrastructure investment in trail safety, eco-sanitation, and basic digital connectivity should improve visitor comfort without eroding the inaccessibility that constitutes Dolpa's primary experiential asset. Third, capacity-building programs must equip local entrepreneurs with the skills, networks, and institutional support necessary to transition from rationalization to aggression mode, from passive adaptation to active institutional shaping.

These priorities, pursued collectively, could position Dolpa as a globally recognized model of extreme remote destination management, demonstrating how inaccessibility, ecological fragility, and cultural distinctiveness can be simultaneously preserved and

leveraged as the foundation of a sustainable, equitable, and entrepreneurially vibrant tourism economy.

8. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study has few limitations, first, the cross-sectional design precludes longitudinal assessment of how experiences evolve across repeat visits or seasons; future research can adopt longitudinal designs tracking destination loyalty and experiential deepening. Second, the purposive sampling strategy limits statistical generalizability; larger probability-based samples would strengthen quantitative robustness. Third, the predominance of domestic tourist constrains transferability to international market segments targeted studies of international trekkers in comparable Himalayan destinations could address this gap. Fourth, self-reported ratings are subject to social desirability bias and recall effects; future studies should consider in-situ methods including experience sampling and travel diaries. Finally, the analytical triad proposed here warrants testing across comparable extreme remote destinations in the Himalayas, Central Asia, and polar regions to assess its cross-contextual transferability.

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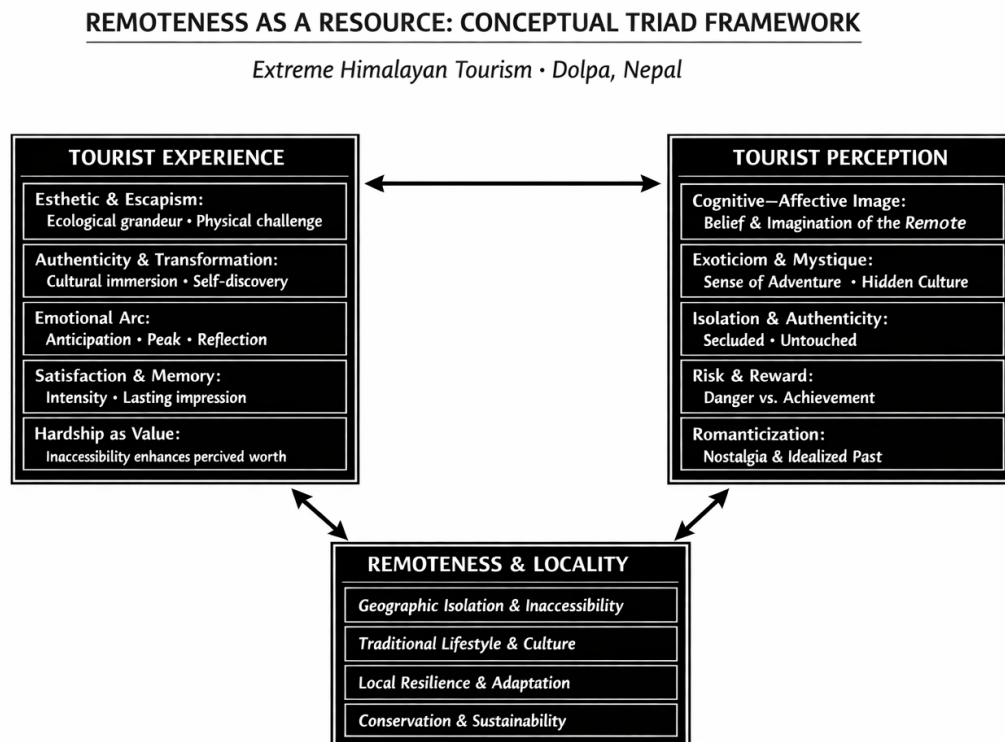
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Annexure I: Figure: Integrated Conceptual Framework: The Tourist Experience–
Perception–Entrepreneurship Triad in Extreme Remote Destinations (Dolpa, Nepal)



Annexure II: Profile of the Tourist

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	121	77.1
	Female	36	22.9
Age	Less than 20	1	0.6
	21-30	67	42.7
	31-40	66	42
	51-60	21	13.4
	61+	2	1.3
Tourist Type	Nepalese	130	82.8
	International	27	17.2
	France	4	14.81
	Germany	4	14.81
	India	4	14.81
	Japan	3	11.11
	Russia	2	7.41
	South Korea	4	14.81
	Switzerland	3	11.11
	USA	3	11.11
No. of visits to Nepal	1	11	3.2
	2	6	1.9
	3	8	3.8
	5	1	0.6

	6	1	0.6
No. of visit to Dolpa	1	113	72
	2	34	21.7
	3	4	2.5
	4	2	1.3
	5	2	1.3
	8	2	1.3
Travel Style	Solo	15	9.6
	Group	142	90.4
Total Duration of trip in Dolpa (in days)	3	39	24.8
	4	53	33.8
	5	26	16.6
	6	5	3.2
	7	9	5.7
	9	2	1.3
	10	4	2.5
	11	2	1.3
	12	2	1.3
	14	2	1.3
	15	4	2.5
	16	2	1.3
	17	2	1.3
	27	4	2.5
	30	1	0.6