

Vulnerability to Climate Change of Nature-Based Tourism in the Nepalese Himalayas

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Abstract:

Given their unique natural attractions, including the highest mountain range in the world, the Nepalese Himalayas have long been a Mecca for trekkers and mountaineers. Nature-based tourism in the Nepalese Himalayas, however, is highly vulnerable to change in climatic conditions. This paper proposes a conceptual framework based on Jodha's mountain specificities, which include inaccessibility, fragility, marginality, diversity and niche, to examine the impacts and vulnerability of climate change on tourism in the Himalayas, with the cases of the three most popular protected areas of Nepal - Mt Everest National Park, Annapurna Conservation Area and Chitwan National Park - located in three physiographic zones. Each physiographic zone differs greatly and hence presents potentially different impacts and vulnerability to climate change. Avalanches and glacial lake outburst floods are the major hazards in high mountains; landslides, debris flows and flash floods are common in the hills; and floods are rampant in lowland Terai. The effects of these climate-related hazards on tourism are further exacerbated by mountain characteristics.

Keywords: Himalayas; climate change; Nepal; nature-based tourism; vulnerability; impacts

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