



A community-based tourism strategy: Homestays towards sustainable development

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Abstract

Purpose – This study explores sustainable resource management through community-based tourism, focusing on Panauti Community Homestay as a model for integrating hospitality, cultural preservation, and local participation.

Methodology/Desing/Approach – A qualitative approach was applied using ethnographic observations and checklist-based interviews, supported by both primary and secondary data.

Findings – Homestays offer authentic experiences for travelers while enhancing community well-being. Collective decision-making and local engagement play key roles in sustaining tourism and preserving cultural and ecological values.

Originality/Value – This research presents community homestays as grassroots models for sustainable tourism, highlighting their potential to empower local communities and promote responsible travel practices.

Keywords: Environment, Homestay, Panauti, Sustainable Development, Tourism Resource

Introduction

Tourism being an industry that puts little strain on natural resources, is a particularly powerful economic generator for long-term growth in nations such as Nepal. The key components of tourism are modest financial outlay, use of local resources, and minimal stress on the environment. Homestay as part of community-based or community-led is affiliated with local cultural values and meanings in the local setting and led by a local group of people (Gautam, 2023).

Where the local people are leading community-based Tourism is innovative and participatory, where local communities are put at the core (Jackson, 2025). Every resource has a value in the contemporary market-based economic system. The main obstacle to sustainable development is the deterioration of resource sustainability in the guise of economic exchange. A significant part of the scientists has concentrated on the research of sustainable tourism development (Bunakov, et, al, 2015). There isn't a specific component in the sustainable development objectives for tourism, although all goals consciously or unconsciously discuss humanity, participation, employment, natural resources, cultural themes, etc. Ecological issues for both humans and the natural world are at the heart of tourism. Tourism cannot continue in its current form. As mentioned by Gautam and Kaini (2022) "tourism is not an isolated area of study. Many formal and informal institutions and organizations and their collaborative actions matter in tourism management". Homestay now enters the analytical picture. Homestays are not particularly sophisticated forms of travel. Every action taken during a homestay is directed by the idea of sustainable development. The similarities between homestay and sustainable development may be seen in their use of local indigenous resources, mobilization of local food, local empowerment, clean and healthy local environments, and preservation along with the protection

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136-143



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(Gautam, 2022). Homestay tourism has developed into one of the most vital subjects to study for everyone since locals of the location are major stakeholders for sustainable resource mobilization. Tourism is becoming a more important and popular field of study on a global scale.

At the same time, the core practices of tourism are aligned with the core principles of sustainable development. Homestay is a fairly new and useful form of tourism that promotes local engagement and local resource mobilization for sustainable resource management. Conducting homestays shows community engagement and empowerment. The community managed homestay tourism, as driven by sustainable development approach is expected to benefit especially, the local grassroots and isolated but culturally and naturally rich community economically with simultaneous protection of environment and traditional culture (Acharya, 2021). The two fundamental tenets of sustainable development are long-term resource mobilization and resource management. Tourism has contributed significantly to the long-term sustainability of the resources, both directly and indirectly. Homestay is a new tourism potential sector based on community engagement.

Tourism developers and local communities should include an understanding of what directions and what kind of opportunities the upcoming generations will have to continue sustainable development (Chatkaewnapanon & Kelly, 2019). The community based homestay tourism industry has come-up-with to the development of the tourism as an industry. And it has revitalized tourism product and boosted the tourism economy (Long, et al, 2018). Tourism is one of the means of global-local interactions (Shrestha, 2022). Sustainable developments are being pulled to promote synergies. Homestay tourism practice is synergized as a mover of local communities' development in a sustainable way, there is few of scientific researchers of Nepali community based tourism for sustainability. The knowledge of a community in its pre-tourism state as well as tourism development periods will impact the future of sustainable tourism development (Chatkaewnapanon & Kelly, 2019). The concept and practice of 'sustainable tourism development', identifies and describes the main factors affecting the management of sustainable development of tourism and hospitality in the region (Bunakov, et al, 2015). Homestay concept is particularly found in rural areas that include both cultural and natural sites (Magar, 2021).

Materials and Methods

The research article used Panauti Community Homestay as its research location. The checklist-based questionnaires were constructed to collect data from the field. There were two phases of data collection. The first phase was in 2022 for the research for my MPhil degree (2022), and the second phase is what I am currently conducting for the PhD in Public Administration under Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal. Panauti is a historical place with natural beauty and scenic views, experience Ancient Newari Culture which is close to the capital of federal Nepal, Kathmandu. The administration of the qualitative research method was done for the purpose of justification. On the other hand, a descriptive research design was used to complete the piece. The main method was qualitative. For primary data, ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews were conducted (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013), and secondary data was used through the review. All 17 registered homestays that were used as the study's sample from the Panauti Community Homestay. The historical region of Panauti belonged to the study area. Both primary and secondary data were employed in the investigation. In addition to using surveys with a community-based approach to gather primary data, text analysis and literature reviews were also employed to gather secondary data. Frequency tables, and charts were used to present the data.

Results

Poverty and Community Based Tourism

Lack of property and financial stability is one of the difficult situations to deal with, from very fundamental rights to extremely sophisticated lifestyles. The primary market for employment is tourism. Numerous industries associated to tourism have the potential to generate new employment opportunities, which can be crucial in reducing poverty. Tourism can play a significant part in balanced development and generate benefits for the poor (World Tourism Organization, 2002). The extent of contribution of homestay in economic sector

indicated that homestay contributed more to increase the income of local people (Karki, et al, 2019). The notion that tourism can contribute significantly to poverty reduction strategies is attracting great interest from multilateral institutions, tourism bodies, donors and other organizations around the globe (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008). This research insists on mass production but focuses on small-scale and regional travel products in the research area.

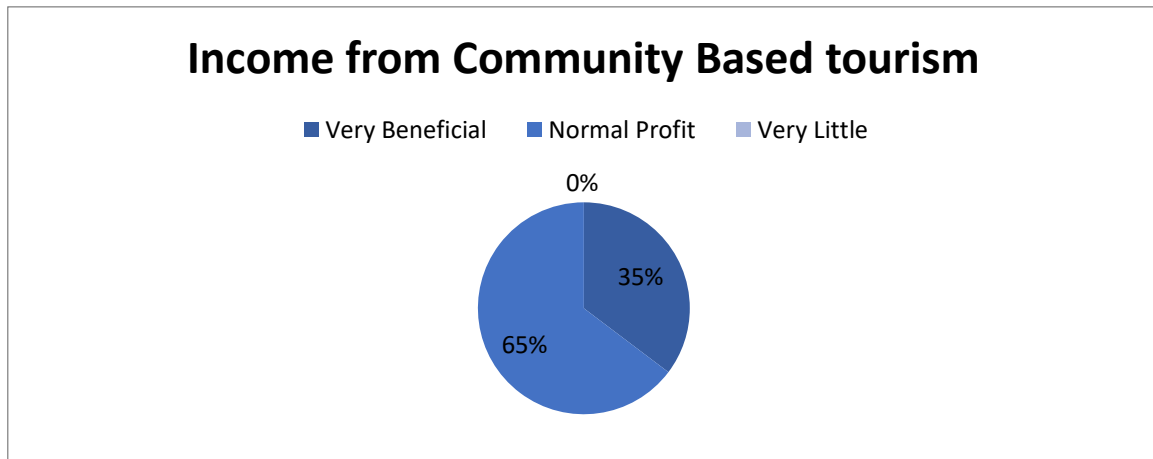


Figure 1. Income from Community Based Tourism. Source: Author field work, 2025.

In terms of tourism and income, Figure 1 shows that the community-based homestay sector of Panauti Community Homestay provides very good economic benefits for 35.29% (6) with very good benefits. Majority 64.70% (11) responded that it is a normal profit making process where a regular household expense is managed. They were fully engaged in homestay and they also were getting handsome amount of income. Those who were getting normal profit means their regular household expenses were managed by income of homestay tourism. Who were making a regular profit did not benefit from homestay profits. All 17 respondents agreed that community based tourism like homestay may be the best weapon to fights against the poverty. Ending poverty is the first goal of sustainable development goals. If locals are selling their goods through homestays at the neighborhood level, it is a sign that they are escaping poverty and moving toward a prosperous society. The best solution for ending poverty and mobilizing local resources is community-based tourism with homestays. According to data from Panauti Community Homestay, homestay is a positive and progressive strategy to reduce poverty. Regarding poverty and tourism, the World Tourism Organization states that "tourism creates tremendous opportunity to diversify the local economy." With few other export and diversification opportunities, it can frequently be created in underdeveloped and marginalized places. Remote places frequently draw tourists due to their high cultural, wildlife and landscapes. One of the assists of the poor is their cultural and wildlife heritage; and tourism presents opportunities to capitalize on those assets' (World Tourism Organization, 2002).

Homestay as a Tool for Empowerment

The distribution of power and resources in Nepali society is based on a hierarchical structure. The main lines of separation in the hierarchy are based on caste and gender. Homestay appears to be the best alternative for empowerment, according to the most rigorous study. In Nepal's rural environment, homestay is dismantling obstacles. According to the president of Panauti Community Homestay, this is the first homestay in Nepal and maybe all of South Asia that is run by a woman. Tourism helps promote gender equality, employing a relatively high proportion of women than other sectors (World Tourism Organization, 2002). Because of what we built, the underdeveloped people are unable to conduct business. Our common stories about business have changed as a result of the homestay. Homestay is the primary means of empowerment since it was developed and is maintained in a local cultural and environmental context. Homestay tourism emerged as a substitute for traditional tourism. In the rural homestay, tourists stay and enjoy with host family, get chance to enjoy and experience host family culture and life ways in purely local setting (Acharya, 2021). While all homestay-

related tasks are carried out in accordance with the family's collective will, women only make all external relationships and decisions at the Panauti Community Homestay. To identify their concerns regarding the role of homestays in empowering people, the research site's homestay proprietors were questioned.

Table 1. Empowerment and the Importance of Homestay

Descriptions	Frequency (N=17)	Percentage
Participate in only tourism related activities	2	11.76
Participate in local level organizations/institutions' functions	7	41.18
Participate in social works	4	23.53
Participate in all socio-political activities	4	23.53
Participations only in household decisions	0	0
Total	17	100

Source: Author field work, 2025.

The acquired data showed that every respondent was raising their interests in different places. The Panauti Community Homestay is exceptional since women solely own it, and their opinions are carefully weighed in all decisions involving the homestay. Distribution of respondents according to the importance of homestay for empowerment. The following graph indicates responses from the field (Fig. 2):

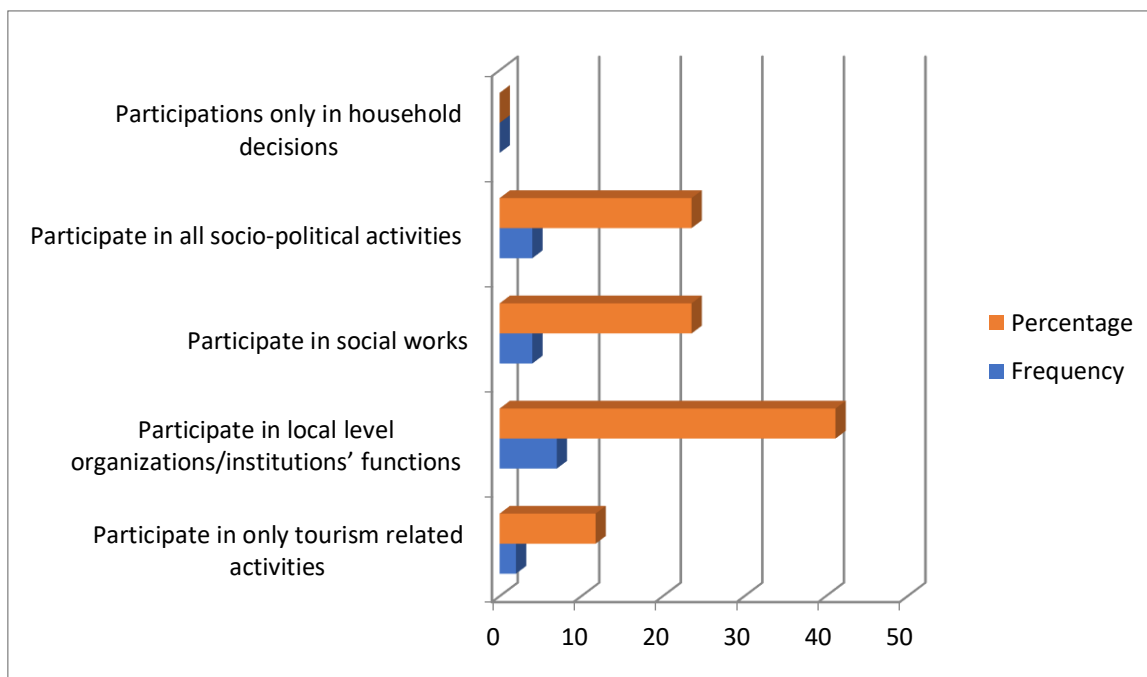


Figure 2. Distribution of respondents according to the importance of homestay for empowerment. Source: Author field work, 2025.

As a result of data collected from the Panauti Community Homestay, there is an opportunity for women to enhance their daily activities, and eco-friendly resource mobilization is also practiced. All significant decisions, homestay operations, and heavy oversight are made by women. Above table shows that, 11.76% (2) respondents were enjoying participation in only tourism related activities. 41.18% (7) respondents were engaged in the local level organizations/institutions' functions. Taking part in social work such as, local social work clubs and groups represents significant part of the empowerment, there were 23.253% (4) engaging in social works. 23.53 % (4) respondents were engaged in socio-political activities and institutional movement.

The statistical data from the fieldwork demonstrates that, if given the chance, so-called "backwards" can improve their state of backwardness by mobilizing local resources. The finest way to empower the disadvantaged is through homestays during studies. Local grassroots communities generate their income directly and indirectly through homestay which also empowers local by providing local job opportunities, poverty alleviation, attracting tourists, and enriching the experience of tourists by showcasing the natural and cultural, tangible and intangible heritage of the local destination (Agyeiwaah, 2013; Magar, 2021).

Homestay as an Environmental Concerns

All members of Panauti Community Homestay are very concerned with the environmental balance and sustainable development. Discourages natural destruction to organic production, members are directly concerned to eco-friendly behavior. With a very little pressure over natural resources and optimum use of the local ecological setting are the primary tenets of homestay in the study region. Community-based tourism is the outcome of Rio-De-Jenerio, Brazil, Sumimit in 1992 for its sustainable development (Magar, 2021). From 1992 till date, homestay as a community based tourism there are many formal and informal programs functioning for the sake of it. 'While homestay approach to local ecotourism management has received recognition in conservation front' (Karki, et al, 2019). The questionnaires were asked about homestay activity and environmental concerns, the following figure shows the responses.

Table 2. Homestay as an Environmental Concerns

Descriptions	Frequency (N=17)	Percentage
As a means for protecting the resources	4	23.53
Low pressure in both tangible and intangible resources	6	35.29
Absence of scripted environment, all environments are natural	3	17.64
Focus on sustainability through local cultural practices	4	23.53
Total	17	100

Source: Author field work, 2025

Different techniques were used by the respondents to convey their satisfaction with the relationship between eco-friendly practices and the homestay. The following graph indicates responses from the field about environmental concerns of homestay tourism:

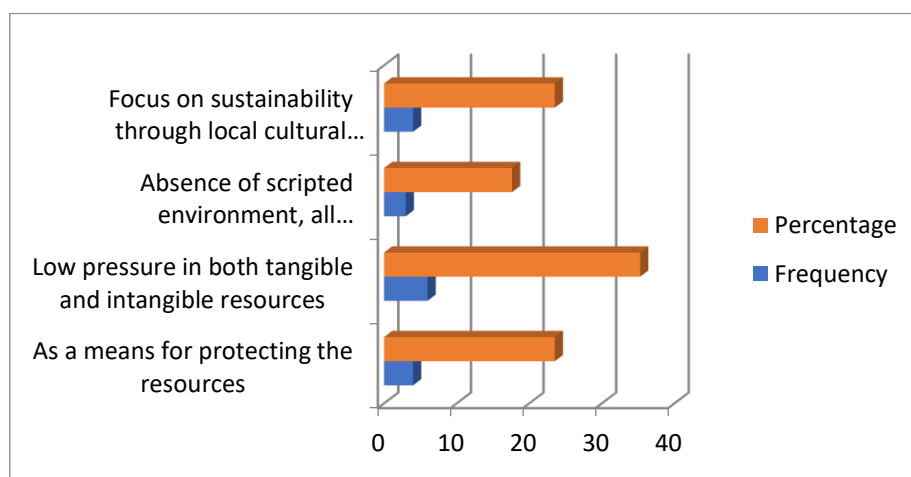


Figure 3. Respondents' satisfaction with environmental aspects of homestay. Source: Author field work, 2025.

The fact that all respondents were using their local agro products in a sustainable way made them all pleased. Totally unique type of tourism products has been discovered completely through cultivation of farmer's tourism management capacity and compilation of rural idle space, agro-products and surplus labour (Long, et al, 2018). The host should be able to provide organic food with local culture and tradition (Magar, 2021). It has potential to become a large chunk of all rural development which is why Nepal must think about sustainability of homestay (Adhikari, 2020).

'Homestay program is one of the key strategies for enhancing rural income and biodiversity conservation' (Karki, et al, 2019). The question was asked to homestay owners at research site to map their concerns about homestay's role in ecology. The figures in the above table exposed the fact that 23.53% of the respondents agreed that homestay is a means for preservation of the resources whereas 35.29% agreed that homestay created low pressure in both tangible and intangible resources. Out of the total responses, 17.64% respondents agreed that homestay is an eco-friendly practice because of lack of scripted setting-all settings are natural whereas because of the emphasis on sustainability through local cultural traditions, 23.53% of people trusted and offered their thoughts concerning eco-friendly homestay issues.

Discussion

I conducted research in homestay, which was led by the particular community. Tourism led by the community was seen as the best approach admitted to tackle for the preservation of traditional cultural values in the destination (Pham Hong, Ngo & Pham, 2021). A variety of players, organizations, and stakeholders come together in tourism, notably homestay tourism. For the purpose of managing resources sustainably, tourism serves many purposes. For the tourism study, one-way interpretation is therefore inadequate. The tourism is composed of government, non-government, private and philanthropic organizations interested in the destination development, marketing, preservation, protections and economic benefits and future sustainability (Dar & Islam, 2018).

Homestays and resource management have become very current in a worldwide environment, as has been described elsewhere in the article. Policy makers are now concerned about tourism on a worldwide scale. It needs, therefore, to be accountable in terms of sustainability at both local and global scales (Lu & Nepal, 2009). All responsible organizations must work to create an environment where people care about sustainable development and community involvement, respect nature and believe in its protection, promotion, and conservation, and can enjoy reciprocity between society and society as well as between society and nature. The primary goals of homestay are to mobilize local resources with complete local engagement. Homestay is not only center of attraction and combine part of the destination but also a significant support for the sustainable development of the tourist community (Long, et al, 2018). Homestay tourism is popular in many destinations like Nepal; it adds authentic socio-cultural richness to the tourist's experience (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013) and local daily life style preserve the natural identities of both natural and cultural resources. It is important for local people participating in community tourism development to be aware and consider the next generations' perception of sustainable development (Chatkaewnapanon & Kelly, 2019).

In Nepal, homestays are crucial for managing local tourism, generating opportunities of employment and uplifting the financial status of locals. It is also a cutting-edge technique for sustainable preservation. The objectives for sustainable development do not specifically mention tourism. However, we thoroughly examine each and every sustainable development aim, finding that they are all closely related to resource sustainability and, in turn, indirectly to the tourism industry. Tourism refers to the application of indigenous knowledge, the wise management of locally accessible resources, clean and sustainable management, cooperative activities between various parties, and resource sustainability.

Some sustainable development indicators like participation, empowerment, clean environment, and quality of life from homestay were used and collected data from the field level. Very beneficial here indicates those respondents who were making surplus from their tourism business they contribute to social and environmental protections and preservation. Rationale theme about the core concept of sustainability is defined, analyzed, interpreted and implemented differently by persons, users, stakeholders, social institutions

and groups; which is often referred to as a “balance” or “wise” use of resources (Lu & Nepal, 2009). Methodologically the study about tourism means the study the link between local and the global world’s ecology and resource mobilization. Globalization and ecology has direct interrelationships (Shrestha, 2022).

Conclusion

Homestay is a component of community-based tourism (CBT), a multifaceted undertaking that will only be functional with the involvement of the local population. In order to promote, conserve, and empower both tangible and intangible resources, it has helped raise awareness among the general population at the grassroots level about resource sustainability. Panauti as a historical place having rich in historical, cultural, natural and agricultural productions, on the basis of convenience sampling method 17 registered were selected to study. The findings from the research at the Panauti Community Homestay in Kavrepalanchowk are very noteworthy, forward-thinking, and encouraging. Increased community-based tourism promotion and widespread public participation may help to boost local visitor numbers while also encouraging more physical activity. While Nepal shows very little participation of women in decision-making processes, in the study region, women are able to actively participate in making decisions through homestays. Eco-friendly practices may be encouraged through homestays, and poverty in the community may be decreased by employing resources that are already in the area. The purpose of homestay is to make sustainable use of the available resources. The path to sustainability lies in community-based tourism, Panauti Community Homestay is the best example. This article raises questions about how locals are integrating homestay into their daily lives and how they are connecting it to the idea of sustainable development. Various techniques were employed for this. Therefore, homestay can transform the local setting into progressive and resource-conserving approaches in large.

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Declaration

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Availability of data and materials

The data supporting the findings of this study are available upon request.

Competing interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding this work.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies

During the preparation of this work the author used Grammarly in order to correct spelling mistakes and help me make better sentences. After using this tool/service, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the published article.

Author contributions

SG Conceptualization, Writing –original draft, Writing –review and editing.

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