



Sustainability of Homestay Tourism in Poverty Alleviation Programs in Nepal

Jeevan Tiwari, PhD Scholar 

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Pokhara University, Nepal

Article History:

Submitted 22 December 2024

Reviewed 26 February 2025

Revised 28 February 2025

Accepted 21 March 2025

Corresponding Author:

Jeevan Tiwari

atlas.jeevan@gmail.com

Article DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.3126/ajhss.v2i1.77163>

Copyright Information:

Copyright 2025 © The author/s of each article. However, the publisher may reuse the published articles with prior permission of the authors.

This journal is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) License.



ScanToAccess
eCopy

ABSTRACT

Homestay tourism has emerged as a significant strategy for rural development and poverty alleviation in Nepal. Unlike traditional tourism, it provides a sustainable model by allowing tourists to stay with local families, promoting cultural exchange while directly contributing to the livelihoods of host communities. This model is particularly beneficial for rural areas, where tourism can foster economic, social, and cultural growth. The objective of this paper is to explore the potential of homestay tourism to reduce poverty in the rural areas of Nepal. It seeks to assess the economic, social, and cultural benefits of this tourism model while identifying its challenges and examining how it contributes to the rural development. This study adopts an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach. The primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), and field observations. The secondary data were gathered from the existing reports and case studies. The purposive and convenience sampling methods were used to ensure the representative insights into the impacts and challenges faced by the homestay tourism operators. The findings of the study suggest that homestay tourism plays a significant role in empowering the marginalized communities,

preserving cultural heritage, and promoting inclusive development. It creates jobs, improves living conditions, and reduces poverty by encouraging community participation, fair resource distribution, and sustainable policies. However, the challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of training, and insufficient government support hinder its potential. Other issues include seasonal fluctuations, gender and social inequalities, and infrastructure limitations. Homestay tourism has the potential to be a

powerful tool for rural development and poverty alleviation in Nepal. To maximize its benefits, targeted interventions are needed, including improved policies, infrastructure development, and capacity-building efforts. The paper underscores the importance of community participation and sustainable practices to ensure a long-term success of homestay tourism and equitable distribution of benefits.

KEYWORDS: Homestay tourism, poverty alleviation, sustainable development, rural empowerment

INTRODUCTION

As the word ‘homestay’ reveals that in this type of tourism there is not a separate structure built for the tourists remain in the host house as the guests. In rural houses, one or some rooms are allocated to accommodate the tourists. These tourists dine with the family members in their kitchen. It enables local households to earn an additional income by utilizing their existing resources, such as unused rooms and cultural heritage, while fostering cross-cultural exchange. Homestay tourism helps reduce poverty by giving the rural communities a means to earn money through their culture, traditions, and homes. It supports sustainable development by creating jobs, preserving local culture, and protecting the environment. This approach is important to promote better living standards, especially in the poor and remote areas. Homestay tourism is relevant to rural and underdeveloped areas as a form of community-based tourism (CBT) that offers cultural experiences to the visitors to stay with the local families and host communities, encouraging a mutual exchange of culture and knowledge. It has emerged as a popular alternative to traditional hospitality, offering visitors an authentic cultural experience by staying with the local families. This form of community-based tourism plays a vital role in promoting sustainable development by empowering the rural and marginalized communities, particularly in developing countries. In the context of poverty alleviation, homestays have proven effective in addressing unemployment, diversifying livelihoods, and improving living standards. Despite its growing significance, limited research is available to address the issue of how homestay tourism can sustainably reduce poverty while balancing economic, social, and environmental goals. This paper seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the potential of homestay tourism as a tool for poverty alleviation and sustainable development. This evolution reflects a growing demand for authentic travel experiences that allow tourists to connect deeply with local cultures while providing the economic benefits to the host communities.

The movement of people from one place to another started since the beginning of human civilization. The people traveled from one place to another in search of food and required materials when they were hunters and gathers (Boukas, 2008). This highlights the fundamental connection between human mobility and survival needs, emphasizing how travel was initially driven by a search for resources, which later evolved into more complex purposes as the civilizations developed. Sustainable rural tourism is defined as activities that contribute to the positive economic and social development of rural areas and do not violate the social and natural environment (Jovanović & Manic, 2012). At the same time, managing rural tourism is a complex issue that requires active engagement of rural tourism stakeholders and tourism associations. Most importantly, it is essential that they understand the significance and acceptance of sustainable practices and benefits. Dolezall (2015) suggests that homestays enable the tourists to experience a region's cultural traditions while contributing directly to local economies. This model of tourism is particularly suited to rural and underdeveloped regions, where a large-scale tourism infrastructure is often absent. Zhang and Cheng

(2021) argue that homestays require minimal capital investment, making them an accessible option for the low-income communities to enter the tourism market. However, successful homestay tourism requires a strong local participation and ownership. Tolkach and King (2015) emphasize that active involvement of the local communities in planning and managing homestays is crucial to their sustainability. The main attraction of rural tourism in Nepal is the taste of local flavor at homestays together with its natural beauty where the tourists can experience the local culture and interact with the community. The program's preliminary positive impact is on local economy, environment, and woman empowerment for sharing the local benefits and its ownership (Adhikari, 2016). The study measures the level of income and expenditure of home-stays and females were found more dynamic as compared to males in the homestays. Income is relatively higher than the expenditure as the correlation test shows the positive relation between the income and expenditure which indicates the increment of saving and credit activities. It shows that the economic status of homestays was in increasing order and women are found directly involved in the economic activities. The workload of women and the tourist flow is highly correlated. Similarly, the distribution pattern of working hour and frequency distribution of male and female is differed as compared to both shapes (Banjade, 2018).

Historically, Scheyvens (1999) first introduced the concept of "tourism for poverty reduction," noting that tourism can generate employment, stimulate local entrepreneurship, and redistribute wealth within the communities. Homestay tourism, in particular, is viewed as an ideal means to achieve this because it integrates local populations into the tourism economy directly. A study by the Poverty Alleviation through Tourism (PAT) has shown that homestays help diversify income sources for poor households, reducing their dependence on agriculture or other low-paying industries. Lucchetti and Font (2013) demonstrate that households involved in homestay tourism benefit from improved livelihoods through increased income, education opportunities for children, and access to better healthcare services. In this way, the objective of the rural tourism is to attract the tourists to the natural areas and use the revenues generated for local conservation and economic activities (Bhandari et al., 2022). A different member of the group may oversee the village community homestay program; however, in order to conduct homestay in a given community, there must be a minimum of five host families (Badal & Adhikari, 2024). Nepal, a country with a predominantly rural population, Gandaki Province is especially famous for tourism. Mainly rural and hilly areas of Kaski District are focused on community-based tourism and homestay programs have emerged as the important tools for rural development and poverty alleviation. This study seeks to explore how these programs have impacted rural livelihoods and culture, and contributed to sustainable poverty reduction in the rural areas of Kaski District.

Homestay tourism helps the rural communities grow by giving the local people a way to earn money through tourism. It reduces poverty by creating jobs, improving the living conditions, and providing a better access to education and healthcare. These programs focus on community involvement, fair distribution of benefits, and long-term development. Good policies, strong local leadership, and skill-building are important for making homestay tourism successful over time. This study looks at the challenges and benefits of homestay tourism to understand how it can support sustainable development and reduce poverty in the rural areas.

In summary, homestay tourism has emerged as a transformative model of community-based tourism, particularly suited to the rural and underdeveloped areas

where the traditional tourism infrastructure is limited. By integrating the local populations into the tourism economy, homestays provide direct economic benefits, foster cultural exchange, and contribute to sustainable rural development. The evolution of homestay tourism from informal hospitality to structured initiatives highlights its potential for poverty alleviation, as demonstrated by its success in the countries like Nepal. The involvement of local communities in planning and managing these programs is critical for ensuring long-term sustainability and equitable distribution of benefits. As a tool for rural development, homestay tourism not only diversifies the income sources but also enhances an access to education, healthcare, and improved livelihoods, making it a vital approach to reducing poverty in the areas such as Madi Rural Municipality of Kaski District.

Despite the increasing popularity of homestay tourism in the rural areas, there is limited research on its long-term impact on poverty alleviation and sustainable development. The scalability, sustainability, and challenges of homestay programs in the underdeveloped regions also remain underexplored. This study aims to address these gaps by examining the effectiveness of homestay tourism in reducing rural poverty from a sustainable development perspective. Further, this study attempts to answer the question of how community-based tourism and homestay programs contribute to poverty alleviation, the critical factors influencing their success, and the role of governance, policies, and capacity-building efforts. The main objective of the study was to analyze the role of homestay tourism in poverty reduction and to propose strategies and policy recommendations for enhancing its effectiveness as a sustainable tool for poverty alleviation.

This study is organized into several sections. Firstly, the introduction outlines the research background, gap, objectives, and research questions. Secondly, the literature review explores relevant theories and studies. Thirdly, the methodology section describes the research design, data collection techniques and data analysis methods. Finally, the results and discussion section presented the results and analyzed the findings followed by the conclusion section which offered recommendations and implications for policies and practices of homestay tourism.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study aimed to examine how homestay tourism alleviates rural poverty and promotes sustainable development. It focused on identifying challenges and success factors, and providing policy recommendations to enhance its effectiveness. For this study, explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, was adopted for the collection and analysis of data effectively to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of homestay tourism on poverty alleviation and sustainable development. Qualitative approach was useful in understanding the lived experiences, perceptions, and cultural dimensions of homestay tourism. Quantitative approach quantifies the economic and social impacts, such as income levels, employment rates, and community participation.

The primary data are collected through the homestay operators, local residents, tourists, and local community leaders through interviews and survey questionnaires that reflect on income changes, employment opportunities, local participation, and tourist satisfaction. Some semi-structured interviews from the local community members, government officials, tourism stakeholders, and NGOs involved in tourism and development were conducted to gain the in-depth qualitative insights into the benefits, challenges, and social impacts of homestay tourism. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

with the homestay operators, local community members, and tourism experts were conducted to explore community-level dynamics, the collective perception of tourism's impact, and challenges of equitable benefit-sharing. Field Observations were also done to observe the infrastructures, operational aspects of homestays, tourist-host interactions, cultural practices, and environmental practices to assess sustainability in real-time.

The secondary data through the review of government policies, NGO reports, tourism statistics, and development agency publications related to community-based tourism, poverty alleviation, and sustainability are used to explore the concept of homestay tourism. Some case studies were also conducted to have the in-depth analysis of existing homestay models in different countries or regions to draw parallels and learn best practices. A purposive sampling method is used to select a representative sample of homestay operators and local residents from the communities that have implemented the homestay tourism programs. Convenience sampling is used to select the tourists who have participated in the homestay programs in the study area.

The study adopts a mixed-methods data analysis approach, combining the qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of homestay tourism. The primary data were collected through the interviews, surveys, and FGDs with the homestay operators, local community members, and guests. Quantitative data, such as occupancy rates, income distribution, and seasonal trends were analyzed using the statistical tools and visualized through charts, tables, and diagrams. Qualitative data, including interviews and case studies, were analyzed thematically to identify the patterns, challenges, and opportunities in homestay tourism. This holistic analysis captures the socioeconomic impact, operational challenges, and sustainability practices of rural homestays.

An additional research method that can strengthen the link between homestay tourism and development studies is Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). PRA is a process of engaging local communities directly in the research process through the interactive techniques such as community mapping, seasonal calendars, and resource flow diagrams. This method allows the researchers to understand the local perspectives on poverty, tourism development, and sustainability from the viewpoint of those directly affected. By involving the community members in identifying the key challenges, priorities, and potential solutions, PRA ensures that the study aligns with the grassroots development needs. Additionally, this method fosters the local ownership of findings, making policy recommendations more relevant and effective for sustainable rural development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the results obtained from the field survey conducted in Madi Rural Municipality, Kaski District. The aim of the study is to examine the benefits of homestay tourism in the study area.

Table 1

Details of Homestay Facilities in Madi Rural Municipality

Location	No. of Homestay Households	Capacity (Single Bed)	Type	Rate (NPR)	Distance from Pokhara (km)
Madi 1 Sikles	35	280	Community	1100	22
Madi 2 Tanting	15	120	Community	1200	18

Sustainability of Homestay Tourism in Poverty Alleviation Programs in Nepal

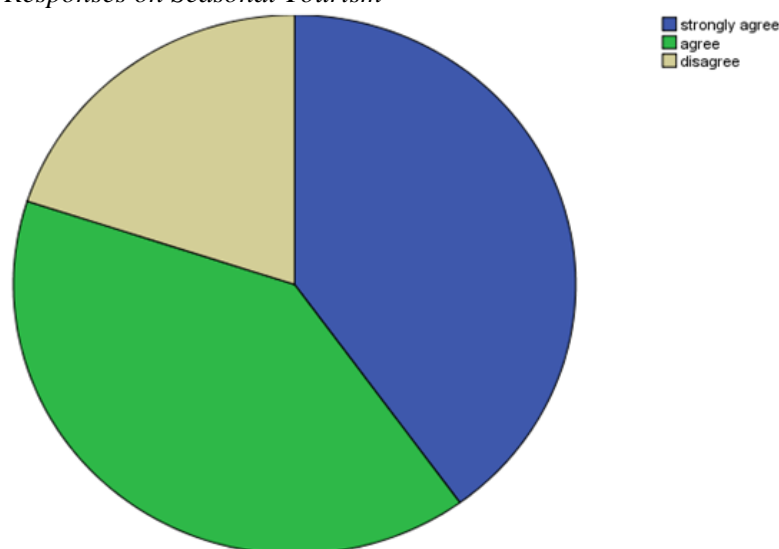
Madi 3 Yangjakot	9	100	Community	1200	20
Madi 5 Thulswara	11	60	Community	1100	9
Madi 11 Bhachowk	8	32	Community	1150	21
Madi 6 Chipli	6	40	Community	1100	16

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 illustrates an overview of homestay facilities in Madi Rural Municipality, specifically in Sikles, Tantiing, Yangjakot, Thulswara, Bhachowk, and Chipli. Data reveal that Madi-1, Sikles has 35 homestay households with a capacity of 280 single beds, Madi-2, Tantiing offers 15 households with 120 beds, Madi-3, Yangjakot has 9 households with 100 beds, and Madi-5, Thulswara has 11 homestay households with 60 single beds, Madi-11, Bhachowk has 8 homestay households with 32 single beds while Madi-6, Chipli has 6 households with 40 single beds. All the homestays operate as the community-based accommodations. The rates range from NPR 1100 to 1200 per night. Sikles was the farthest located with a distance of 22 km and Thulaswara was the nearest homestay from the Pokhara city, providing diverse and affordable options for the travelers seeking the community-based tourism experiences near Pokhara.

Figure 1

Responses on Seasonal Tourism



Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure 1 reveals the response of impact of seasonal variation of tourism arrival for homestays. As illustrated in the pie diagram homestay tourism is highly influenced by the seasonal variations, with a noticeable decline during the summer, rainy, and extremely cold seasons. In the summer months, the heavy rainfall often renders the rural roads, challenging to navigate, thereby discouraging the travelers from visiting the homestay destinations. Similarly, the adverse weather conditions during excessive cold further limit accessibility and comfort, contributing to the reduced tourist influx during these periods. These seasonal challenges highlight the need for the improved infrastructure and alternative strategies to sustain homestay tourism throughout the year.

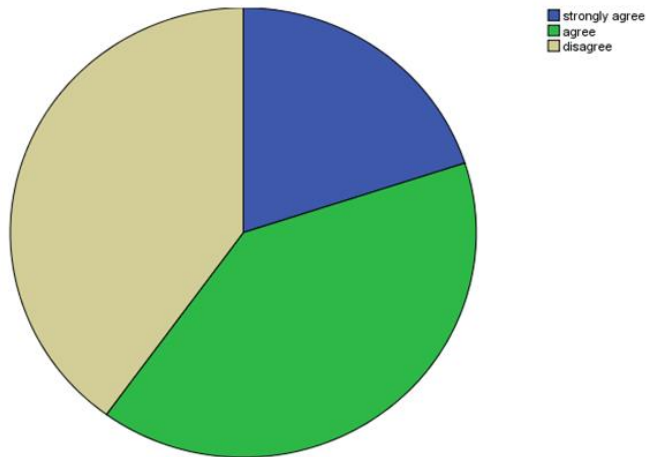
Figure 2*Responses on Low Investment and Less Manpower**Source:* Field Survey, 2024

Figure 2 shows that homestay tourism is a cost-effective alternative to the traditional hospitality services like hotels, restaurants, and resorts. The data explore that unlike these larger establishments, homestays require minimal investment as they utilize the existing residential infrastructure, reducing the need for the substantial capital to build or furnish facilities. Additionally, homestays typically operate on a smaller scale, relying on the fewer staff members, mostly involving the family members as hosts. This reduces the operational costs and the need for extensive manpower. By focusing on the personalized services and authentic local experiences, homestays offer a sustainable and economically viable tourism model that benefits both hosts and guests. But the homestay owner does not accept this concept because their effort is fully contributed to establish and run the homestay.

Table 2*Responses on Impact on Local Community*

Impact on Local Community	Percentage (Approx.)	Description
Generation of Income for Families	60%	Families benefit financially by hosting tourists, improving their livelihood and stability.
Boost Local Businesses	30%	Tourists purchase local goods, crafts, and services, creating economic growth.
Increases Job Opportunities	10%	Employment opportunities in guiding, maintenance, and other support services.

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 demonstrates that homestay tourism has a positive socioeconomic impact, with its primary advantage being the generation of income for families, followed by a support for the local businesses and job creation. The data illustrate that homestay tourism has a positive impact on the rural communities. The biggest benefit is helping families earn money, which makes up about 60% of the impact. The hosting tourists improve their financial stability and overall livelihood. Around 30% of the benefit comes from boosting the local businesses, as the tourists buy local goods and services, helping the community grow economically. The smallest impact, about 10%, is creating jobs like guiding and maintenance, which still provide an extra income for the locals. Overall,

homestay tourism strengthens the community by supporting the families, encouraging the local businesses, and offering the new job opportunities, making it valuable for rural development.

Table 3

Responses on Sustainability Practices for Local Economy

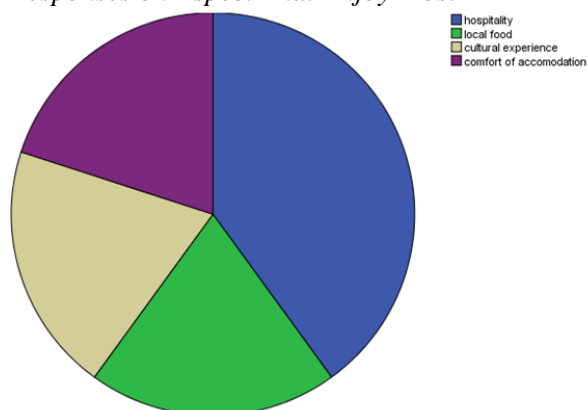
Sustainability Practices	Approx. Percentage	Description
Waste Management	40%	Emphasis on reducing waste locally, recycling, and composting to support agriculture.
Use of Local Products	20%	Focus on offering locally sourced food to enhance authenticity and reduce carbon footprint.
Energy Efficient	20%	Adoption of eco-friendly energy solutions like biogas from organic waste.
Community Involvement	20%	Active participation in sustainable practices, benefiting both environment and economy.

Source: Field Survey, 2024

In homestay tourism, as shown in Table 3, communities actively manage waste products locally, emphasizing sustainable practices that reduce environmental impact while fostering a circular economy. This approach transforms waste into resources like biogas and organic fertilizers, which support agricultural activities and reduce reliance on external energy sources. For example, in rural areas of Nepal, such as Kaski District, the use of biogas from organic waste exemplifies energy efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Sustainability in homestay tourism is further enhanced by prioritizing locally sourced food, which not only minimizes carbon footprints but also strengthens the local economy by creating direct markets for farmers. Homestay tourism contributes to sustainability through waste management (40%), local food use (20%), energy efficiency (20%), and community involvement (20%). These integrated practices, rooted in community-driven efforts, create a model of sustainable development that benefits both the environment and rural communities, offering an eco-friendly and culturally rich experience for visitors.

Figure 3

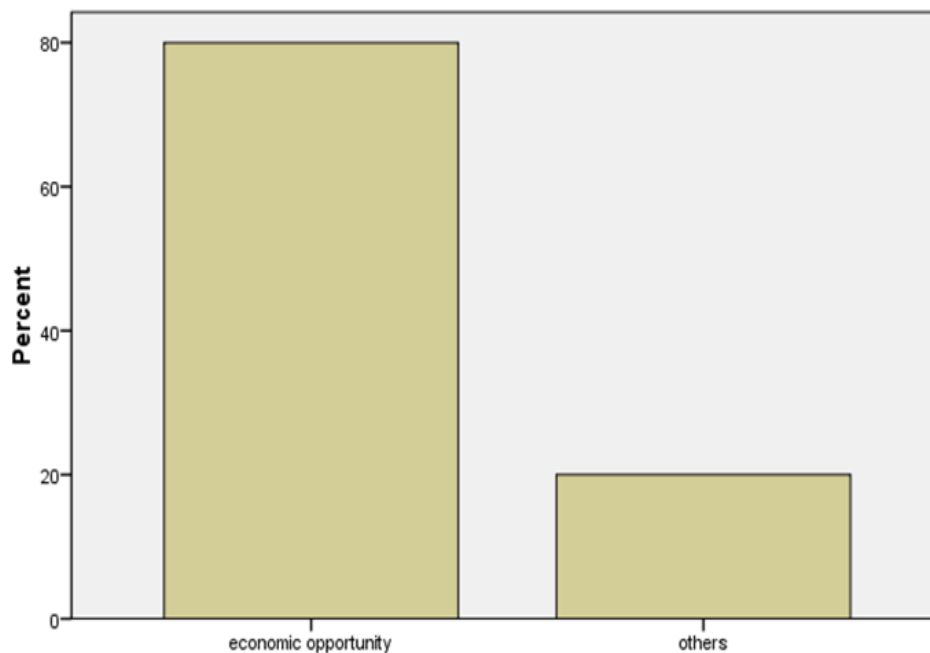
Responses on Aspect That Enjoy Most



Source: Field Survey, 2024

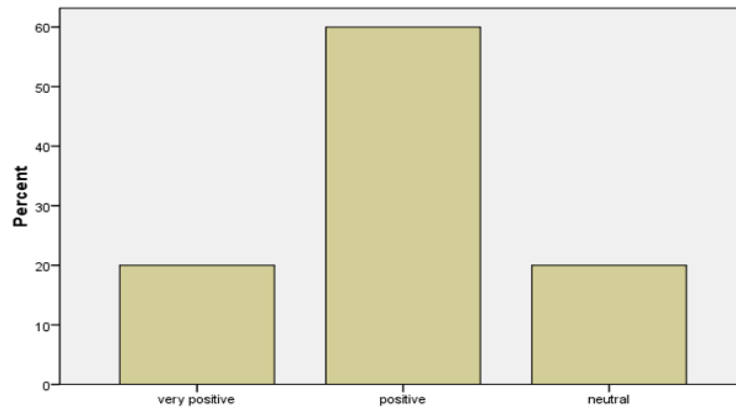
In Figure 3, the analysis of data emphasizes the most valued aspects of homestay tourism: hospitality, local food, cultural experiences, and accommodation comfort. Hospitality stands out as the key factor, with hosts providing the personalized interactions that create a welcoming atmosphere and encourage repeat visits, as seen in the regions like Nepal's Kaski District. Local food, prepared using fresh, locally sourced ingredients, enriches the guest experience while boosting the local economy by supporting farmers, particularly in the areas such as Madi Rural Municipality. The cultural experiences, including a participation in the traditional activities and festivals, offer the travelers an authentic glimpse into the local life, especially in the culturally rich regions like Gandaki Province. Additionally, the comfort, cleanliness, and eco-friendly nature of accommodations enhance the guest satisfaction. Addressing these factors collectively can help the homestay operators improve the tourist experiences and ensure sustainable development in the sector.

Figure 4
Responses on Causes of Inspiration for Owner



Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure 4 demonstrates the main cause of inspiration for the homestay owner is an economic opportunity. The hosting guests provide a reliable source of income that can supplement or even replace the traditional livelihoods, particularly in the rural or economically disadvantaged areas. By leveraging their existing resources, such as spare rooms, cultural knowledge, and local expertise, the homestay owners can generate a steady revenue with minimal initial investment. However, beyond the economic benefits, there are several other motivational factors that inspire the individuals to become the homestay operators. Some other inspiring factors are community development, cultural exchange, personal growth and skills development, social connection and networking, and the promotion of regional tourism.

Figure 5*Responses on Guest Feedback to Homestay Operator**Source: Field Survey, 2024*

In Figure 5, the bar diagram reveals that most guests provide positive feedback about the homestay operators, indicating a high level of satisfaction with homestay tourism, particularly in the locations such as Nepal's Kaski District and Madi Rural Municipality. This positive response reflects the key factors like exceptional hospitality, comfortable accommodations, authentic cultural experiences, and high-quality local food, all of which enhance the overall guest experience. Some feedback is notably very positive, suggesting that certain homestays excel in the areas like the personalized service, unique cultural activities, or memorable host interactions. Identifying these standout elements could guide the operators in replicating their success across other homestays. Segmenting feedback into categories such as cleanliness, food quality, and cultural engagement, along with analyzing demographic details (age, nationality, and stay duration), can help pinpoint the trends and preferences. Furthermore, exploring the correlation between the high satisfaction levels and repeated bookings, alongside the influence of positive feedback on the reputation of homestay operators, could provide the actionable insights. By tracking the changes in the guest satisfaction over time, the operators can assess the impact of improvements, marketing strategies, and seasonal variations on the guest experiences, ensuring the consistent growth and success of homestay tourism in these regions.

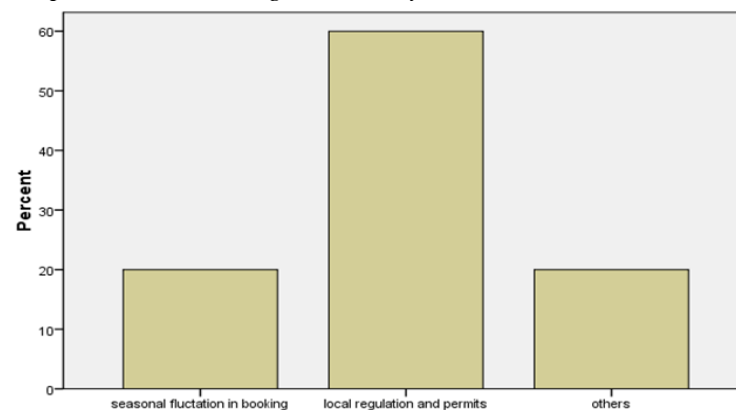
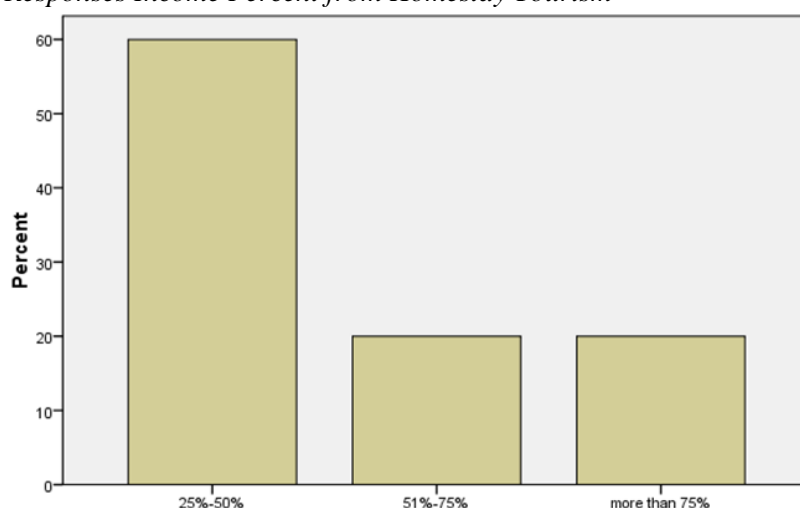
Figure 6*Responses on Challenges Faced by Owner**Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Figure 6 highlights that the local regulations and permits are the most significant challenge for the homestay owners, affecting nearly 60% of respondents, while the seasonal fluctuations in booking impact about 20%. These findings underscore the administrative and compliance hurdles faced by the homestay operators, alongside the financial instability caused by reliance on the peak tourism seasons. The additional challenges include a competition from the larger hotels offering more amenities, the difficulty of balancing diverse guest preferences, and maintaining consistency in the service quality through a regular upkeep and training. Furthermore, the impact of online reviews cannot be overstated, as the negative feedback can significantly influence the guest decisions. Addressing these challenges through the policy interventions, the off-season marketing strategies, enhanced guest experience, and better review management can help homestays improve revenue, guest satisfaction, and operational efficiency.

Figure 7

Responses Income Percent from Homestay Tourism



Source: Field Survey, 2024

Note: A case study on the role of homestay tourism in boosting the rural economy – ROCKON Homestay, Yanjakot, Madi Rural Municipality-3, Kaski

Figure 7 highlights the percentage of income from homestay tourism. The bar diagram illustrates that 60% of homestay operators earn between 25% and 50% of their income from homestay tourism, indicating that for most, it serves as a supplementary income source alongside other economic activities like agriculture or retail. In contrast, 40% of operators generate over 50% of their income from homestays, with some earning more than 75%, suggesting that for this group, homestay tourism is their primary livelihood. These operators are likely more invested in enhancing their facilities, marketing efforts, and guest services to sustain their business. Understanding the factors influencing income distribution, such as location, operational size, and service diversity, could provide the insights into what drives success. Additionally, analyzing the seasonal trends and income variations over time would help assess the stability and sustainability of homestay tourism as either a primary or secondary income source.

Homestay tourism is an increasingly popular approach to promoting rural development, particularly in Nepal, where it provides the locals with a sustainable source of income while preserving and showcasing their cultural heritage. This case study focuses on ROCKON Homestay, located in Yanjakot, Madi Rural Municipality-3, Kaski,

and run by Roshan Gurung, a dedicated proprietor who started the homestay 16 years ago to improve his family's financial situation. Homestay tourism has not only become the primary source of income for his household but also contributed to the local economy by creating numerous opportunities for the local farmers and suppliers. This study aims to explore the role of ROCKON Homestay in enhancing the rural economy, to analyze its impact on the cultural preservation and employment generation, and to identify the challenges and opportunities associated with running a homestay in a rural setting. By examining the story of ROCKON Homestay, this paper highlights the transformative potential of homestay tourism in addressing unemployment, boosting household incomes, and promoting sustainable rural development

Roshan Gurung, a 38-year-old unmarried male, has been running ROCKON Homestay for the past 16 years. With a Grade 10 education, he found an inspiration within himself to start his homestay business, motivated by a desire to improve his household's economic condition. Roshan's family consists of seven members, including his father, a former ward chairman and social worker, who donated his land to the local government, and his mother, who manages household chores. His elder brothers are employed abroad, while his mother and daughter-in-law assist him in managing his business.

Roshan started ROCKON Homestay to improve his financial situation. His business offers the visitors a place to stay and meals made from organic, locally grown ingredients. In addition to hosting the tourists, he also serves meals and fast-food to employees and clients of Madi Rural Municipality, local ward office and bank offices.

What makes ROCKON Homestay unique is that it relies entirely on the local resources and family labor. Roshan personally handles all tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, and welcoming the guests. This business has become the primary source of income for his family, solving his unemployment problem and reducing financial dependency on his brothers working abroad.

The income from ROCKON Homestay has greatly improved the financial condition of Roshan's family. Most of their earnings come from the homestay, and it has also created opportunities for the local farmers and suppliers who provide fresh and organic food. Homestay tourism has helped not just Roshan's family but also the broader community. It attracts the visitors to the village, boosting the local economy by encouraging spending on food, transport, and cultural experiences.

Running a homestay comes with numerous challenges. Roshan finds it hard to get the government subsidies because of complicated paperwork and administrative hurdles. He also notes that running a successful homestay requires a lot of effort and manpower. Despite these difficulties, he believes that the homestay business is growing steadily and has a great potential.

Roshan plans to expand ROCKON Homestay to accommodate more visitors and improve the facilities offered. He also wants the government to improve the transportation facilities to the rural areas like Yanjakot so that the tourists can visit more easily throughout the year.

The success of ROCKON Homestay shows how rural tourism can drive the economic growth and create jobs. By using the local resources and involving the family members, Roshan has turned his homestay into a sustainable source of income. This case highlights the importance of government support, such as subsidies and better infrastructure, to help homestays thrive. The rural homestays like Rock On not only boost the economy but also preserve a culture and promote sustainable tourism in the rural area.

The case study of ROCKON Homestay highlights its significant role in boosting the rural economy and alleviating poverty in Yanjakot, Madi Rural Municipality-3, Kaski. By providing a stable source of income for Roshan's family, the homestay has reduced financial dependency on the family members working abroad and addressed the unemployment issues. It has also created the economic opportunities for the local farmers and suppliers by sourcing organic, locally produced food, thus supporting the broader rural economy. Homestay tourism has proven to be a sustainable and community-based model that not only uplifts the household income but also fosters the cultural preservation and exchange. Additionally, the influx of tourists has encouraged spending on the local goods and services, stimulating the rural economy further. However, the challenges such as limited access to the government subsidies and high manpower demands highlight the need for a policy support and improved infrastructure. Overall, the success of ROCKON Homestay demonstrates how rural tourism can serve as an effective tool for poverty alleviation and sustainable economic growth in the rural areas.

The oral interviews conducted with the community leaders, mother group leaders, and village unit leaders reveal that the Gurung community, particularly women, plays a dominant role in managing homestays in the area. Women, as leaders, actively participate in the operations of homestays, demonstrating their major role in the community-based tourism. Additional manpower, including the helpers and staff, is also sourced from within the Gurung community, ensuring that the initiative remains localized and benefits the community as a whole. A unique aspect of this setup is the strong relationship and neighborly support system. During the peak tourist seasons or when there are more guests, the neighboring families collaborate to manage the workload effectively. Although they often face the challenges in finding the part-time workers when needed. Furthermore, the cultural programs are arranged for the guests, local women participate as the leaders, they demonstrate their traditional dances and songs. Men also participate in the events, contributing to a balanced representation of the community's cultural heritage. This collective effort highlights the synergy within the community and its commitment to preserving and promoting their culture.

The local government plays a significant role in supporting homestay operations by providing an essential infrastructure, such as improved roads, water supply, and electricity, and to enhance accessibility and comfort for tourists. Additionally, the training programs are organized to build the capacity of homestay owners, focusing on hospitality, sanitation, and cultural presentation. The basic tools and equipment, such as bedding, kitchenware, and furnishings, are also distributed to support the operational needs. These efforts aim to empower the community and promote the sustainable tourism development

Discussion

The findings of the study highlight the transformative role of homestay tourism in alleviating rural poverty and promoting sustainable development in Nepal. As a community-based tourism model, it provides the direct economic benefits by diversifying the income sources, supporting the local businesses, and creating the employment opportunities. The analysis reveals that the regions like Madi Rural Municipality have successfully leveraged the homestay programs to enhance livelihoods and preserve cultural heritage, exemplifying the potential of rural tourism. However, the challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, seasonal fluctuations, and limited government support hinder scalability and sustainability. The necessity for investment in

the infrastructure, capacity-building initiatives, and policy reforms is emphasized to address these barriers. Additionally, the community participation remains crucial for maintaining the operational efficiency and equitable benefit distribution. These findings underscore the socioeconomic and cultural benefits of homestay tourism while advocating for the sustainable practices. Although some homestay operators claim that the internal rules and regulations prevent them from increasing the capacity of their homestays. During certain seasons, there is also a shortage of locally available vegetables. Overall, the study reinforces the potential of homestay tourism as a strategic tool for rural development and poverty alleviation.

From a researcher's perspective, it has been suggested that enhancing homestay tourism requires the targeted interventions. First, the infrastructure development, including the improved road connectivity and utilities, is critical to address the accessibility issues. Second, the capacity-building programs focused on hospitality, management, and sustainability should be implemented to empower the operators. Third, the government policies must prioritize the financial incentives, simplified regulations, and subsidies for the homestay operators. Finally, promoting off-season tourism through the marketing strategies can mitigate the seasonal fluctuations. Emphasizing the community participation and equitable benefit-sharing ensures long-term sustainability, making homestay tourism a robust tool for poverty alleviation and rural development.

Age plays a key role in shaping homestay tourism, as the younger and older generations contribute in different ways. The younger individuals bring the technological skills, innovative marketing strategies (such as social media promotion), and modern hospitality practices, making homestay businesses more competitive. They are more likely to adapt to the changing tourist preferences and introduce the digital booking systems. On the other hand, the older individuals hold deep knowledge of local culture, traditions, and history, which enhances the authenticity of the homestay experience. Their experience in traditional cooking, storytelling, and craftsmanship adds a value to cultural tourism. However, the older homestay operators may struggle with adopting the modern business practices, highlighting the need for the intergenerational collaboration and training programs.

The gender dynamics significantly affect homestay tourism, as women often take on the key responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, and interacting with the guests. In many rural areas, homestay tourism empowers women by providing them with the economic opportunities and financial independence. Women-run homestays contribute to gender equality by allowing the female hosts to generate income and gain a decision-making power within their households. However, the social norms and cultural restrictions may limit women's participation in the business operations, leadership roles, and financial management. Addressing the gender disparities through the skill development programs, microfinance support, and gender-inclusive policies can ensure that both men and women benefit equally from homestay tourism.

The social structures and local traditions influence how homestay tourism develops within a community. In the strong and cooperative communities, the collective participation in the tourism initiatives leads to shared economic benefits and effective management. However, in the socially divided communities, inequalities based on caste, ethnicity, or wealth may prevent certain groups from fully participating in or benefiting from homestay tourism. Ensuring the inclusivity and equal opportunity through the community-driven policies and training programs can help overcome these barriers. Additionally, the community-led governance of homestay programs can prevent an exploitation by the external agents and ensure a long-term sustainability.

The environment plays a crucial role in the success and sustainability of homestay tourism. Rural homestay businesses depend on the natural resources for the food production, energy, and tourist attractions. The unregulated tourism growth can lead to an environmental degradation, such as deforestation, water shortages, and waste pollution. The climate conditions, such as heavy monsoons or dry seasons, can also impact a tourism demand and food availability. The sustainable tourism practices, such as eco-friendly waste management, organic farming, and responsible use of natural resources, are essential for the long-term homestay development. The government support for the sustainable infrastructure, such as solar energy, rainwater harvesting, and eco-tourism initiatives, can further strengthen the environmental sustainability of homestays.

The personal background, experiences, and education of the homestay operators influence their success in the tourism industry. The operators with a prior exposure to tourism, language skills, or business training can provide the better guest experiences and manage these operations more effectively. Those with an experience in cooking, handicrafts, or guiding tours can add a value to their homestays by offering the unique local experiences. However, the individuals with limited education or exposure to the tourism industry may struggle with marketing, customer service, and financial management. Providing a training in communication skills, entrepreneurship, and tourism management can help the homestay operators enhance their businesses and attract more visitors.

Age, gender, social factors, environmental conditions, and personal experiences all shape the development and sustainability of homestay tourism. Encouraging the intergenerational knowledge-sharing, promoting the gender inclusivity, fostering the community participation, ensuring the environmental responsibility, and providing the skill development programs are essential for the long-term success of homestay tourism. Addressing these factors through the policy interventions and community-driven initiatives can make homestay tourism a more inclusive and sustainable tool for the rural development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that homestay tourism has become an important approach for rural development and reducing poverty in the rural areas. It offers a sustainable alternative to traditional tourism with the local families. This creates numerous opportunities for cultural exchange while directly supporting the income of host communities. However, homestay tourism also faces many challenges like poor infrastructure, lack of proper training, and limited government assistance. The findings of the study suggest that with better investment, training programs, and supportive policies, homestay tourism can become a strong means to fight poverty and encourage sustainable development in the rural areas. The growth of homestay tourism is influenced by the factors like age, gender, society, environment, and personal experiences. Age affects how people run homestays, with the younger individuals bringing the new ideas and technology, while the older ones help preserve the traditions and culture. Gender also plays a role, as women are often involved in the hosting guests and managing homestays but may face the challenges like a limited decision-making power. The social factors impact a participation, as the strong community support helps homestay businesses grow, while the social barriers can limit the opportunities for some groups. The environmental conditions like the weather, farming resources, and eco-friendly practices affect the sustainability of homestay tourism. Lastly, the personal experiences

and education make a difference, as people with a training in business, tourism, or language skills can offer the better services and attract more visitors. Addressing these factors through the policies and community support can make homestay tourism more successful and fairer for everyone.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations should be adopted by the government and policy makers to enhance homestay tourism:

- Infrastructure should be invested in: Road connectivity, electricity, water supply, and internet access should be improved to enhance the accessibility and quality of homestay tourism.
- Training and capacity building should be provided: The skill development programs in hospitality, management, and sustainable tourism practices should be offered to empower the homestay operators and improve the service quality.
- Financial support and incentives should be introduced: Subsidies, low-interest loans, and grants should be provided to the homestay operators to encourage investment and expansion.
- Clear and supportive policies should be developed: The business related regulations should be simplified; standardized guidelines should be created; and a monitoring system should be established to ensure the smooth operation and growth of homestay tourism.
- Off-season tourism should be promoted: Marketing strategies, cultural events, and eco-tourism activities should be organized to attract the visitors throughout the year and reduce the seasonal income fluctuations.
- Community participation and equity should be encouraged: Local communities should be actively involved in decision-making; and fair benefit-sharing should be promoted to make homestay tourism inclusive and sustainable.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

I hereby wish to declare that I do not have any conflict of interests to disclose.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

I declare that this manuscript is originally produced by me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very thankful to Professor Dr. Min Pun for his valuable guidance, insightful feedback, and continuous encouragement throughout the research journey. His expertise and contribution have been instrumental in shaping this study in its academic arrangement. Further, I am also thankful to my classmates and friends for discussion and constructive feedback during various stages of this research which have been a source of inspiration and motivation. I would like to give thanks for homestay owner Roshan Gurung for providing me with details for a case study. Additionally, I am grateful to the respondents of this study for their time and willingness to share their experiences, which were critical for the success of this research. Finally, I am profoundly thankful to my family and friends for their unwavering encouragement and understanding throughout this journey.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR(S)

Jeevan Tiwari is currently pursuing his PhD research at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Pokhara University, Nepal. His areas of research interest are homestay tourism and poverty alleviation.

REFERENCES

- Badal, B.P., & Adhikari, P. (2024). A review of village tourism in Nepal: Concept and practice. *Panauti Journal*, 2, 77-85. <https://doi.org/10.3126/panauti.v2i1.66582>
- Banjade, I. P. (2018). Home stay statistics and its outcomes in rural community-based tourism in Nepal. *The Economic Journal of Nepal*, 41(4), 57–66. <https://doi.org/10.3126/ejon.v41i4.35939>
- Bhandari, R. C., Thapa, L., & Thapa, A. (2022). Homestay tourism promoting local entrepreneurship in Nepal: A case study of Sirubari Village, Syangja. *International Journal for Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology*, 10(1), 1411–1419. <https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2022.39996>
- Dolezal, C. (2015). Homestays as a form of cultural tourism: Benefits to local economies in rural regions. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 12(4), 435–449. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2015.1013563>
- Kafle, D. R. (2023). Exploring homestay tourism in Nepal: Unveiling opportunities and challenges. *Historical Journal*, 14(2), 54–64. <https://doi.org/10.3126/hj.v14i2.59055>
- Nepal ANMD (2022). *Homestay tourism in Nepal: Opportunities and challenges*. Nepal Tourism Board (NTB)
- Shrestha, H. P., & Shrestha, P. (2012). Tourism in Nepal: A historical perspective and present trend of development. *Himalayan Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 5, 54–75. <https://doi.org/10.3126/hjsa.v5i0.7039>
- Tolkach, D., & King, B. (2015). Local community involvement in homestay management: A key to sustainability. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 23(3), 103–120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2014.943335>
- United Nations Development Programme. (n.d.). Sustainable tourism and poverty reduction: A focus on PAT initiatives. *United Nations Development Programme*. <https://www.undp.org>
- Zhang, X., & Cheng, Y. (2021). Homestays and tourism: Accessibility for low-income communities. *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 15(2), 123–135. <https://doi.org/10.xxxx/yyyy>

To cite this article [APA 7th edition style]:

Tiwari, J. (2025). Sustainability of homestay tourism in poverty alleviation programs in Nepal. *Academia Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 2, 93-109. <https://doi.org/10.3126/ajhss.v2i1.77163>