



KMC Journal

[A Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access Multidisciplinary Journal]

ISSN 2961-1709 (Print)

Published by the Research Management Cell

Kailali Multiple Campus, Dhangadhi

Far Western University, Nepal

Impact of Homestays on Socio-economic Opportunities of the Local Community

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/kmcj.v4i2.47779>

Abstract

Homestays have settled current encouraging tourism becoming an important source of income for many families in rural areas of Nepal. Homestay has supported the local and external visitors to learn about the local culture, custom, traditions, and diversity among others. The objective of this study was to find out the socio-economic opportunities and its impact on local community of Dallagaon, Bardiya. This study further observed the cultural impact of homestays on the host community. Concurrent mixed-methods research design was used to understand the situation of homestay at the destination by using the questionnaire, interview and key informant information as the tools. Data were analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics. The result shows that homestays plays the vital role to conserve the culture by increasing local product and to empower in the education by increasing the economic conditions. It helps to improve communication skills as well as reduce migration problems and hence supportive for local employment. There is no significant difference between the economic and socio-cultural impact of homestays on the host community as perceived by homestay operators in the sample according to the t-test analysis. Dallagaon may be the best destination for those tourists who seek rich, unique and firsthand Tharu culture. The local communities are becoming more aware of their cultural identity, preservation, and the creation of new local infrastructure. It will contribute the creation of more job opportunities, infrastructure development, and essentially poverty reduction.

Keywords: socio-cultural impact, community empowerment, tourism promotion, income

Introduction

The “Khata Biological Corridor Homestay” programme, referred to locals as Dallagaon homestay, was launched in March 2011 by the Shiva Community Forest Consumers’ Committee. Shiva Community Forest is a Tharu community-owned area

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in the Madhuwan Municipality's Ward No. 1, Suryapatuwa, Bardiya, located inside the Khata Corridor. Out of Dallagaon's 105 households, 11 households joined up to participate immediately (Nepal Rastra Bank, 2015). Then, with early conceptual and technical support from Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) Nepal, the homestay programme was launched. Since December 2013, there have been 22 houses taking part in the homestay. The Eco-Tourism Development Sub-Committee was established by the Shiva Community Forest Consumers' Committee to serve as the homestay management committee. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in Bardiya aids the committee in the early stages of managing all of the village's homestay activities. The Dalla Homestay in Bardiya has been recognized as the best by the Taragaon Development Committee of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Nepal Rastra Bank, 2015).

Nepal is a developing nation with a wide range of geographical circumstances. It consists of more rural areas rather than cities. In this sense, a rural area's living standard must be significantly improved (Strasser, 2003). Nepal is rich in tradition, religion, and culture in addition to natural resources. These things are the key draws for tourists all around the world. Nepal's economic and socio-cultural development depends heavily on tourism (Joshi & Dahal, 2019; Upadhyay, 2020). In rural areas with a variety of cultures and stunning landscape, the homestay concept is well-liked (Munyoro et al., 2017). It promotes tourism and attracts visitors who are interested in supporting the local economy while understanding and experiencing the culture of off-the-beaten-path areas. Tourists that travel to villages and stay in or near them are referred to as "village visitors" (Nugroho et al., 2021). Many activities have demonstrated that in order to attract tourists, the community needs to have unique traits that are also linked to tourist behaviour when visitors remain in a settlement and observe the local tradition and culture. The tourists become a part of the community for the duration of their stay, which makes this type of tourism unique called green tourism (Yfantidou & Matarazzo, 2017).

Homestay tourism is concerned with the river, the sun, the rural environment, and the household. It represents conservation, lifestyle, experience, adventure and above all the nature adventure-oriented benefits to the local people (Shrestha, 2020). The objective of such type of tourism includes helping tourist to plan a trip, choose a tour and minimize ecological impact. Homestay tourism is a planned, well-balanced enterprise with a huge scope (Shrestha, 2020). Benefits are shared by all in an equitable distribution pattern. Homestay tourism must address innovative transfers of technology, economic development and the socio-cultural environment with homestay accommodation facilities (Magar, 2021). So, without a doubt, homestay tourism is the best form of travel available, providing visitors with a variety of

lodging options. Rural tourism growth and community development are being supported through homestay tourism. It enriches the visitor's experience with real socio-cultural diversity (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013). It may be a miracle to raise the standard of life for rural residents and strengthen the rural economy if appropriate and important policies are established to develop, promote, and monitor homestay tourism in more potential villages (Pasa, 2020). Homestay activities are held to encourage the local tourism by preserving and protecting the local art, culture, custom, tradition, and atmosphere while also empowering the locals by providing the income and local employment opportunities (Magar, 2021). Local art, culture, custom, tradition, and atmosphere exhibition set up for visitors to the homestay, and different traditional dances performed in front of them. Together with the analysis of their socio-economic impact and sustainability, these programmes can be helpful in improving overall tourism sector in the national economy (Poudel, 2017).

Homestays in Nepal have the potential to evolve into a new tourism development paradigm. The idea of homestay has captured the interest of both public and commercial stakeholders due to the obvious opportunities it brings in the region's economic growth (Dahal et al., 2020). According to a study done by Ngah et al. (2010), the homestay programme in Malaysia shows how it helped rural communities progress and how its expansion created options for employment and additional revenue. The value of homestay programmes as a mechanism for fostering community growth has been recognized for a long time (Chaiyatorn et al., 2010). Bhuiyan et al. (2011) cleared on their study homestays enhance local communities' access to employment prospects and raise standard of living. To showcase the distinctive qualities of rural communities, homestays are a new kind of rural tourism. They provided a lodging and food service by locals in their own homes or in a natural setting. Homestay activity is a type of rural tourism that promotes the local tourism by protecting local culture, tradition, and environment while also empowering locals by providing income and employment opportunities significantly to the local economy (Yfantidou & Matarazzo, 2017). Homestay is a type of tourism in which the economically marginalized local communities invite the visitors to visit their community in exchange of cultural activities, and related activities have been promoted as an needed factor of tourism development (Dong, 2020). Guests (tourists) can stay with a host family and learn about their traditions and culture by participating in a homestay. Nepalese homestay tourism ought to think about emphasizing living people, undergrowth, and geographical make-up in order to win the hearts of tourists effortlessly (Adhikari, 2020). Tourists with spiritual interests, cultural investigators, scholars, students, and professors can all benefit from homestay tourism. Tourism is the most common human activity in today's world. It is

also, after oil, the second-largest export-oriented industry. Countries in this industry do not export real wealth, but rather sell their dream in order to attract more visitors (Adhikari, 2020). It functions as a stimulus for economic development, eliminating economic disparities between rich and poor countries and promoting social harmony by educating people about each other's cultures. The most prevalent human activity in the modern world is tourism. It promotes social harmony by bridging cultural divides and acting as a catalyst for economic growth (Zhuang et al., 2019).

The homestay system is a concept for living in harmony with the environment, and its long-term viability is dependent on conservation progress. Only if local people profit from tourism will it be sustainable. The sustainability of homestays depends on the dedication, teamwork, and efforts of all of its stakeholders, including the homestay operator, the local community, visitors, and the committee in charge of its management (Nepal Rastra Bank, 2015). In the COVID-19 pandemic, all sectors are closed long time. During this time, tourism sector also suffered. Hotels cannot give facility for tourists. Tourist services that contemporary hotels might not be able to offer; however, homestays are able to offer (Koiwanit & Filimonau, 2021). Dallagaon in the Bardiya district is credited with being the first settlement in the district to open a homestay facility for tourists. The concept has provided a haven for nature lovers, and scholars of various disciplines in other parts of the district. It suggests the idea of environmental protection and preservation, both natural and sociocultural.

Homestays are contributing to the expansion of ecotourism; it becomes a popular tourist attraction in recent years. One of the defining characteristics of this culture is hospitality (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013). The sociocultural attitudes are patriarchal in Nepal; men define the roles of women. However, Dalla community homestays are run by women. Rural women have benefited from these homestays because they have been able to obtain financial resources while caring for their families, particularly their children and their education. This is a significant step toward increasing women's economic participation in rural areas. The gender gap has narrowed as a result of women's increased self-worth, economic emancipation, and equity (UNWTO, 2021). The homestay sector, by its very nature, enables the passing on of traditional expertise to upcoming generations. Women and men can equally share responsibilities and benefit from social, cultural, and economic benefits if progressive values are passed down. In Dallagaon, we can find unique socio-cultural way of life. Homestay tourism has changed the Dalla community in many ways socially, culturally, and economically. It has given the improvement to local economic activities and has helped build a unique brand of Dallagaon tourism around the world. It is a component of Community Based Tourism, conducting the cultural

programme, different seminar, and training for easy to seminar hall economic support the community home stay. However, it has also given rise to some environmental issues and environmental protection. Assistant and Administration (2021) reported that the homestay operators stated on a somewhat good note about the economic, socioeconomic, and cultural impact of homestays on the local community. However, there were some worries expressed in their comments on the environmental impact. Therefore, the objective of this study was to find the socio-economic opportunities and its impact on local community of Dallagaon, Bardiya. This study further observed the cultural impact of homestays on the host community. To fulfill the objective, the researcher set the following research questions:

1. What are the socio-economic opportunities of the homestay owners after homestay launched in their community?
2. How is the socio-economic and cultural impact of homestays on the local community of Dallagaon?

This study was limited to homestays in Madhuwan Municipalities Ward No. 1 Dallagaon. The Sample size cannot represent the whole population because there were only 22 households operating homestay.

Methods and Procedures

This study was carried out on the basis of concurrent mixed methods research design. The study focused to understand the socio-economic opportunities of the homestay owners after homestay launched in their community. This study is based on primary data collection. The primary data was gathered from the field visit by using the questionnaire, interview and key information from observation. Exploratory research design was adopted to meet the objectives and extent of activity as well as the descriptive analysis. The sampling population was taken from Dallagaon which lies on the Madhuwan Municipalities Ward No.1 of Bardiya District. The total households in Ward No.1 are 1220 in which 22 households run the homestays. As a sample, all 22 households were taken. Total population of Ward No. 1 is 6420 in which 3264 are male and 3164 are female (Madhuwan Municipality Ward Profile, 2021). In this study, the selected field was 22 households' homestay owners of Dallagaon. The total population of these households is 143, out of them males are 69 and female 74. The data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics percentage, mean, standard deviation as well as inferential statistics t-test.

Results and Discussion

Homestay is a term used to describe a cultural exchange programme where a visitor or temporary foreign resident stays with a local family. Both short-term and

long-term homestays are available. Homestay programmes have been suggested as a way to accommodate the massive number of tourists planned to come to Nepal during Nepal Tourism Year 2011. On the other hand, a key objective of homestay is to promote the involvement of rural residents in the tourism industry. Homestays will be available in two types: community and private. Homestay initiatives in rural areas are also expected to provide additional money to residents. Homestay is possible occupational action for the local inhabitants. It contributes to the local community's economic development and job opportunities. This initiative can assist local communities in terms of economics, culture, and the environment. The rustic lifestyle of the area is one of the key attractions for homestay tourism. The peaceful atmosphere around the rural community, as well as the culture of the tourism region, might entice visitors. Physical, cultural, religious, and natural elements all draw travelers.

Dalla Homestay has now changed its identity to Bardiya. Due to this, Nepali and foreign tourists are now enjoying Dalla Homestay. The Yogi Tharu people make up the majority of Dalla's inhabitants. They speak their own language and have their own customs and traditions (Panta & Thapa, 2018). A homestay is a cultural exchange programme in which a visitor or temporary resident of another country stays with a local family. Home stays are available for both short and lengthy periods of time. On the other hand, the primary goal of a homestay is to encourage rural residents to participate in the tourist industry. Homestay guests are shown cultural programmes based on Tharu culture, including for entertainment. The tharu community presents the different cultural programs and dances, i.e., Sakhiya dance, Paiya dance, Jhumra dance, Hurduguwa dance, Lathi dance, Maghauta dance, and Barkimara dance, among others (Nepal Rastra Bank, 2015). More interaction with other cultures and beliefs provides more opportunities to comprehend other cultures and religions, which leads to greater respect for each other's cultures and religions, increasing global harmony. Today, we are globally facing the numerous challenges as a result of a lack of understanding of one another's trust; tourism can contribute to connection these gaps by carrying people of various cultures and religions together in one area. Guests can sample tharu food, including crabs, shellfish, local hen, ghungi and mice, local liquor as well as breakfast dhikri, egg-potch, anadi rice cake, and pickle. A homestay model to adopt as hospitality and "Athithidevobhava" are deeply established in the community's culture.

For the study, a sample of 22 homestays was selected where 100 % of them were managed by women. 9.09% of the respondents were in the age group of 26-35 years, 31.81% of people aged 36 to 45 and 46 to 55, and 27.27% of people aged 56 to 65. More than half of the respondents are literate.

Table 1*Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N=22) of Dallagaon Homestays*

	Characteristics	Total	Percentage
Gender	Male	0	-
	Female	22	100%
Age	20-25	-	-
	26-35	2	9.09%
	36-45	7	31.81%
	46-55	7	31.81%
	56-65	6	27.27%
	>65	-	-
Education	Literate	14	63.63%
	10 below	4	18.18%
	SLC/ SEE pass	3	13.66%
	+2 pass	1	4.54%
	1-5 yrs.	-	-
Number of years' experience in homestays business	6-10 yrs.	-	-
	11-15 yrs.	22	100%

Mean Analysis of Considered Variable on Economic Impact

The table 2 shows the mean analysis of the economic impact variable and socio-cultural impact. To understand the economic impact, there were 8 variables used. From the table we can conclude variable homestays increased income helps to empowerment of education's mean is 4.12 and its standard deviation is 0.93 which is closure to the variable homestay that increased local product. It clearly shows that homestays play a vital role to conserve the culture and to empower in the education by increasing the economic conditions.

Six factors were taken into account in order to comprehend how homestay operators perceived about the sociocultural impacts of their activity on the host community. According to the results in the table above, the mean scores on a 5-point Likert scale range from 3.4 to 3.97. One variables namely Homestays provides the opportunities to interchanges the culture have the mean value 3.97 having SD 0.79. Homestays encourages preserving traditional Tharu culture is closure to the first variable having 3.96 mean and 0.71 SD. Similarly the variable Homestays helped to

improve communication skills is closure mean to variable with Homestays help to increment of domestic food / reduce the market import food ranks and Homestays helped to reduce migration problems lead to employment is closure to Homestays helped to reduce social problems. The rich, unique Tharu culture, which tourists seek to experience firsthand from the host community, is one of the reasons why tourists select Dallagaon as a destination. Homestay tourism has a definite sociocultural impact because it not only offers opportunity to see and appreciate other cultures but is also considered as a way to preserve local culture, such as Sakhiya dance, Paiya dance, Jhumra dance, Hurduguwa dance, Lathi dance, Maghauta dance, and Barkimara dance, as well as traditions, lifestyles, cuisine, and rituals, for future generations. It inspires pride in the people of the local community, which leads to greater solidarity.

Table 2

Mean Analysis of Considered Variable on Economic Impact

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Economic Impact		
Homestays provides opportunity for their communities	3.67	0.81
Homestays helps to increased income for their family	3.58	0.97
Increased income helps to empowerment of women	3.35	0.85
Increased income helps to empowerment of education	4.12	0.93
Homestays helps to changes on their lifestyles	3.45	0.85
• Homestays have increased local product food like; crabs, shellfish, local hen, ghungi and mice, local liquor, dhikri, egg-potch, anadibhat, cake, and Chatani.	4.23	0.94
Homestays have improved public facilities like seminar hall/ communication media/and so on.	3.21	0.75
Homestays have helped to minimize poverty	3.33	0.96
Socio-Cultural Impact		
Homestays provides the opportunities to interchanges the culture	3.97	0.79
Homestays encourages to preserve traditional tharu culture	3.96	0.71
Homestays helped to improve communication skills	3.71	0.71
Homestays helped to reduce social problems	3.4	0.70

Homestays helped to reduce migration problems lead to employment	3.5	0.81
Homestays help to increment of domestic food/reduce the market import food	3.76	0.62

Independent Sample Test of Socio-economic Impact

According to the t-test analysis presented in Table 3, there seems to be no significant differences between the economic and socio-cultural impact of homestays on the host community as perceived by homestay operators in Dallagaon in the sample.

Table 3

Independent Sample Test

	N	Mean	SD	Calculation value	Tabulation value at 5% level of significance	Significance
Economic impact	22	3.6175	0.8825			C.V < T.V hence Null hypothesis accepted.
Socio-cultural impact	22	3.1857	0.62	0.932	1.721	

Conclusion

Homestay has supported the rural community's livelihood by providing local entrepreneurship and employment opportunities at local level. Despite the low number of foreign visitors and limited economic benefits of tourism, residents in the study area remain enthusiastic about the future benefits of tourism. Thus, the study is able to show that Dallagaon has basic infrastructure facilities, which must be upgraded as well as protected that will attract tourists in the future. The Dallagaon homestay community has a lot of potential for tourism growth. As a result, the government should give all residents with adequate infrastructure, facilities, education, awareness, and training and development programmes in order to empower them from the ground up. This also contributes to the country's enhanced economic growth. This type of homestay business also contributes to the government's goal of developing Nepal's tourism economy. There seems to be no significant differences between the economic and socio-cultural impact of homestays

on the host community as perceived by homestay operators in Dallagaon in the sample.

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