

# **An Overview of Home Stay at Antu Tourism Area of Ilam District**

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## **Abstract**

The tourism of Nepal is based on three main aspects (service, facility and attraction). Home stay tourism is an emerging tourism concept evolved lately in the tourism industry. 'Guest is god' is the belief of typical Nepalese society which has been carrying out the concept of homestay tourism in Nepal. For its multifaceted potentiality, Nepal can become a model homestay. Homestay activities provide clients with a wealth of natural resources, man-made heritages, ethno-cultural wealth, innocent environments, and pleasant hospitality, among many other unexplored resources. Based on the primary and secondary sources of data, the article is assessing the home stay tourism in Antu area. The objective of this article is to find out the major motivational factors, available accommodation services and challenges of homestay activities. The article is used for exploratory and descriptive research designs on the basis of its objectives. The

study attempts to explore the assessment of home stay tourism in Antu area and it concludes that income and employment is a main motivating factor for operation of home stay service. The accommodation services are different in nature and capacity, and the study also identifies the major challenging factors for home stay in the Antu area.

**Key Words:** Home Stay, Tourism, Accommodation, Challenge.

## 1. Introduction

Tourism as a smokeless industry has attracted people throughout the world. Travel and tourism will be one of the world's highest growth sectors in the 21st century. Tourism, according to experts, would capture the global market and become the largest industry in the world. It has wide implications encompassing not only economic benefits but also socio - cultural and environmental benefits. It encompasses economic, social, cultural, environmental, educational and political significance (Bhatia, 2004).

Nepal is a naturally and culturally rich country in the world. The mix of nature, culture and adventure possesses an immense potential in a wide range of tourism products in Nepal. Natural gifts and manmade heritage are found across the country diversely. 'Naturally Nepal, once is not enough' presents the glimpses of beauty of Nepal. These available natural gifts, man made heritage, ethno- cultural richness, innocent social setting, hospitality and many more unexplored treasures are dreams for connoisseurs of tourism in Nepal (Sharma, 2012).

*As a country with a rich cultural heritage, stunning natural resources, the highest mountains in the world, and friendly citizens, Nepal has earned many accolades. The country has over 125 ethnic groups and 123 languages spoken, with a wide range of customs and traditions (CBS, 2011). Despite its highly stratified social system, the Nepalese social system binds people together through their diversity. These factors have been crucial in promoting community based tourism at an extremely low cost, contributing to the nation's socioeconomic development.*

Since 1950s, Nepalese tourism has developed with adventurous tourism like Mountaineering, trekking and gradually it has been diversifying in many tourism activities such as holiday activities, eco-tourism and village tourism, pro-poor tourism. Recently, home stay program appears as a major tourism destination of village tourism and pro-poor tourism in Nepal (Devkota, 2008).

Actually, home stay tourism is that concept in the Nepalese tourism industry which is for community development and it is not merely a rural tourism program, it is also a strategy for rural development too. This provides accommodation to visitors by offering local cultural hospitality and receives financial benefit in returns. It is acknowledged as a potential economic activity in the tourism industry. Home stay program has been popular among those tourists who desire to be a part of local traditions by interacting with the community and have experience of local culture, local cuisine and the natural attraction. Home stay is an alternative name for village tourism, which means staying in someone's home and providing an opportunity for the visitors to experience a place in an authentic, comfortable and homely environment.

Homestay tourism in Nepal carries the concept of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' (Guest is god), which is the belief of the typical Nepali society. The people of Nepal welcome their guests as a god and treat them with a warm hospitable manner according to their own lifestyle. (Devkota , 2008). Nepal introduced the home stay program as village tourism in 1997. For the first time in Sirubari (Syangja District, west Nepal) and Ghalegaun (Lamjung District, north central Nepal) were the first two villages to implement the concept of community homestay as the first effort of the government's developing village tourism (Thapa, 2010). It became more popular when the government of Nepal, officially introduced the home stay tourism program with the 'Home-stay Regulation 2067' on 17th August 2010.

‘Antu Tourism Area’ has been popular as a major tourist destination of Ilam. This area is a special tourist destination for viewing sunrise. Antu area is possible in several perspectives too. Among the various tourism areas in Ilam, Antu area has also one of the village tourism area by the views of Sunrise, Sunset and majestic Himalayas, Historical tribe Lepcha their culture and Museum, Antu Pond (Pokhari) and its surrounding tea gardens, boating,

sightseeing, Scenic beauty, cultural diversity, etc. The overall greenery of Antu region plays a vital role in attracting tourists. The flow of tourists has made the locals of Antu more conscious about keeping their environment clean, green and healthy. Having many attractions, this place is located 15 K.M. eastern part from Fikkal Bazar and linked with Mechi Highway, where most of the tourists visit respectively (Ghimire, 2015).

Home-stay provides opportunities to the communities located in rural areas. This can also be initiated in urban areas with a high cultural lifestyle. Various communities can utilize the adaptive and diverse nature of this concept. In a country like Nepal local culture and innovation can be advertised through this concept to increase the tourist arrival on the national level as well. The development of tourism at a particular place has positively influenced the livelihood of people and creates different opportunities. But on the other hand it has also had some negative impacts on the lifestyle of the local people and creates various challenges. In Antu Tourism Area, the local people have operated homestays programs from last one decade. The data shows that the numbers of internal and international tourists are visiting and people getting various opportunities through the tourism activities.

## **2. Objectives**

The objective of this paper is to assess the motivational factors, available accommodation services and main challenges of home stay in Antu tourism area.

## **3. Methods and Materials**

The article is based on primary as well as secondary sources of data. The total registered 125 households for operation of homestay service, only 40% households were selected as a sample size through purposive sampling method. The respondents from homestay are the primary sources of information. The primary data were obtained by the help of personal interview, field survey questionnaires and observation checklist. For collecting secondary data and information for the study, relevant news on different newspapers have been studied. Similarly, articles & books published by different researchers, authors and

agencies have been studied. Besides these, the information is also collected from the key informant's interview and other related documents. This article is based on the exploratory and descriptive research design. Based on the field survey, the article is mainly concerned with homestay related issues in the Antu tourism area of Ilam.

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1 Motivational Factor of Home Stay

The motivational factors behind tourism activities are different. During the study the homestay households were asked to mention about the factor that primarily motivated their family to adopt homestay business. Table no. 4.1 presents the major motivating factors to start homestay activities in the Antu tourism area.

**Table No. 4.1 Motivational Factors**

S.N.	Motivated Factors	No of Respondents	Percent
1.	Income and Self Employment	27	54
2.	Public Relation/ Network with People	8	16
3.	Part time work/ Secondary work	11	22
4.	Others	4	8
	Total	50	100.00

Source: Field Study, Nov. 2020

The above table no.4.1 shows that income and self-employment are the main motivating factor to start homestay activity. 54 percent of respondents are involved in adopting homestay business by this factor. Similarly, network with people (public relation) is another factor where 16 percent of respondents are operating homestay. Likewise, 22 percent sampled populations are motivated by part time or secondary work and only 8 percent motivated by other factors. The data clearly present the main motivating factor behind operating homestay service is self-employment and income generation.

## 4.2 Homestay Accommodation Capacities

The number of rooms and bed capacity available for guests' stay in the homestay are given in the following table no 4.2.

**Table no. 4. 2: Room & Bed Capacity of Homestay**

S.N.	Room Types	No of Rooms Available in a House	No of Respondents	Percent
1	Single Bed Room	2	4	8
2	Double Bed Rooms	2	30	60
3	Triple Bed Rooms	1	9	18
4	More than Three Bed Rooms	1	7	14
	Total		50	100

Source: Field Study, Nov.2020.

The table no 4.2 shows the different accommodation capacity of sampled households for guest's stay. As mentioned in the table, the homestay households have arranged different types of rooms for guests. The data clearly presents 30 households (70%) have a double bed room and total 2 separate rooms available for guests. Likewise, in 9 sampled houses (18%) have three beds of a single room and other 7 houses (14%) also have more than three beds of a single room available in their house. Only 4 households (8%) respondents have 2 rooms of a single bed with an attached bathroom facility. With this capacity the total sampled homestay can accommodate an average of 150 guests per night. However, there are seasonal fluctuations in flow of guests especially in sunrise observation time and rainy season. In the time of September to December (peak period), households have also managed more than 176 guests in a night. Chairperson of ATDC said that the committee has managed to add more rooms and beds in the existing or other households.

Homestay activities in Antu have created an alternative source of income for the concerned families and others. However, the problems, which the families face during the operation,

have made the entire homestay activity full of challenges. The respondents from homestay households and Antu Tourism Development Community (ATDC) have pointed out following challenging issues (problems) relating homestay tourism in Antu area.

**A. Road Network:** Accessibility is a main component of tourism in any destination. Transportation facilities are crucial to develop the areas from the perspective of tourism. The road links Antu tourism area with Mechi highway from Fikkal. The place can be reached from Chhibitar to drive left from Mechi highway and crossing the Siddhi River. Antu tourism area is located 15 K.M. east from Fikkal Bazar and linked with Mechi Highway. The Fikkal via Bhanjyang road is now black paved. Nowadays, the means of transportations seem more comfortable in comparison with the last one decade to reach Shree Antu by Fikkal via Chhiruwa road. But, the whole part of the road condition and transportation service does not seem to be satisfactory due to the single lane . Similarly, another road from Chhabissee (Indian border) to Chhiruuwa via Bhanayang is a main entry point for especially Indian tourists. But this road also needed to be repaired and pitched. Indian tourists might be the potential users of this road. So, one of the main problems of tourism in Antu region seems to be irregular transportation services and narrow black topped or graveled roads on the whole road area. So, during the monsoon period it is difficult to reach the Antu area that affects the flow of tourists easily.

**B. Lack of Sufficient Public Transportation Service:** Due to lack of sufficient public means of transportation the visitors have to either use their own vehicles or hire high-cost transportation means from Fikkal to Antu. This makes travelling to this area difficult.

**C. Lack of Skills and Training:** The sampled households said they still lack proper cook and hospitality skills due to which some of their guests get unsatisfied with their service. Some guests are in a hurry. They demand food to be served quickly. Arranging necessary ingredients to make foods for the guests takes time for the host families. Those guests have complained about their late service. Households also realize that they need training to enhance their servicing skills. So far, the households have received different training

relating to cooking and hospitality. However, all the households have not received equal access to the training.

**D. Market:** Market is an essential and important service for tourism activities at destination. Local market fulfills the basic needs of visitors and locals as well. In the study area only small market centres are available which are located at Bhanjyang, Chhiruwa and Shanti Bazaar. These small market centers are unable to provide the all necessary goods and services for visitors and local residents. The nearest market is located at Fikkal which is 15 km away from Antu village. So, the people of Antu area have to travel 15 km to reach the market for purchasing foods, clothes and other stuff for guests' convenience. The local market centre is located at Bhanjyang but this is not sufficient for homestay owners and guests for supply of necessary goods and services. So, the standard local market should be developed in the Antu area for further smooth operation of tourism.

**E. Linguistic Problem:** Most of the household's members cannot speak in English language while communicating with the foreign guests. In the absence of bilingual guides, they cannot communicate with these guests.

**F. Lack of Local Food Items:** In homestay tourism local items of foods or products are important to attract the guests in a particular area. Guests mostly demand local food items and chicken when they visit a destination. The typical food items are not available in homestay houses at Antu Tourism area.

**G. Guests Misbehaves:** According to homestay owners, the behaviors of some guests have created problems for the households. Some guests arrive very late. They even do not order their food on time. Due to this the host family has to stick up for the orders. Some guests drink till midnight, make noise, thereby disturbing the nights of the neighboring households and even behave rudely with the host families. The households have also experienced some guests coming with sexual intentions. Due to these experiences, the female members do not present themselves while serving drinks to their guests. Besides, some guests visit with the expectation of hotel-like beds and attached bathrooms, and the result is an experience that is difficult to stay in.



**H. Additional Infrastructures/Services:** Basic additional infrastructures or services are important for tourism activities. Bank, health service, market facilities, sanitation (public toilet), street lighting, parking facility are the additional infrastructures for tourism. In the study area, those types of services are not sufficiently available which became challenges for tourism. So, the essential additional services should be developed in top priority for the sustainable operation of tourism activities in Antu region.

**I. Information System:** Visitor needs information about the destination where they are visiting. Antu Tourism Development Centre was established as a tourism information centre at Samalbung V.D.C. ward no-1 with the support of Nepal Tourism Board. But, the centre is located near Antu Danda, which is not an appropriate place and it is not providing information to all visitors in every season and time. The office is always locked and opened when the Antu Tourism Development Center calls a meeting. Therefore, regular operation of tourism information centres is a prerequisite action for further development and promotion of tourism in Antu region.

**J. Recreational Facilities:** Recreation is one of the main attractions and tourists' length of stay is an increasing factor. It includes a sports centre, museum, parks, swimming pools, cultural centre, games etc. None of these facilities are available in Antu tourism area except a simple Lepcha museum and Antu Pokhari (Dhap). So, if possible, potential recreational facilities are developed in that area. Finally, this helps to increase the visitor's length of stay and creates multiple effects on the local economy.

**K. Insufficient Advertisement and Publicity:** For the development and promotion of tourism advertisement and publicity is a key factor. These are only means to attract tourists and spread the information and tourism products all over the world. In the twenty-first century the tourism industry is totally influenced by information technology. Only information technology - based tourism can succeed in the present competitive world. Telecommunications, e-mail, internet, television, radio, newspaper, hoarding board, brochure are the main means of advertisement and publicity. In the study area, there is not enough action of advertisement and publicity for the promotion of home stay tourism. However, some temporary leaflets and pamphlets are used only during Mahotsav(festive) time. This is not sufficient to inform the visitors about the place, products and services. Therefore, for the successful operation and promotion of tourism in Antu region, there should be increased advertisement and publicity work. For this process audio-visual media can play the major role.

## 5. Conclusion

Home stay is a newly adopted accommodation practice in Nepalese tourism industry which means that the visitor enjoys the local cultural hospitality and a warm welcome from a host family in a particular area. Home-stay provides socio- economic opportunities to the host family in rural areas. It helps the family/communities to uplift their economic status and share their culture, norms and values with the guest. Guests learn the local values and norms whereas they also share their norms and values to the host families. Having natural beauty, Antu area is the one of the major tourism destinations in Ilam where thousands of national and international tourists are visited yearly. For about one decade people have been operating homestay services for providing accommodation for guests. The study concludes that self-employment and income are the most encouraging factors to operate home stay service. The study also finds out some major challenging factors to operate home stay smoothly. Most of the sampled respondents have double bedrooms accommodation service in their house and also provide in room services. Finally, the overall study assesses the operation of homestay service is going to improve and mature in terms of accommodation service, hospitality and professionalism.

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