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Stakeholder Synergies for Enhancing Community-based Tourism Development

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Abstract

The rise of community-based tourism has ushered in a new era of home-staying. The paper intends to demonstrate a viable model of synergistic efforts of local community-led tourism, as well as to analyze its functions in culturally significant historic sites. The necessary data were collected in the touristic environment of the historical Panauti area. Open-ended questionnaires with homestay owners and people's representative respondents were employed for the study. This essay focuses on socio-historical perspectives, settings and conditions of modernization, and the success of homestays through collaborative function. The descriptive model was employed for the analysis. Collective features of homestay are recognized as fostering factors for intimate relationship among local people, and local government is also thought to produce sustainable resource use, social relationships, cooperation, and empowerment.

Keywords: community-based tourism, homestay, social relation, stakeholders, collective relationships, historical Panauti

Introduction

Homestay is another type of community-based tourism that is done in collaboration with a community and is legally supported by the local government. This represents an opportunity for socio-economic development in a sustainable way, helping local people to emerge from lower living conditions (Usmonova et al., 2022), which ensures an enriched quality of life and the quality of the environment. People in the tourism sector have a connection with the local government, particularly homestay tourism, which is connected with the government and people's representatives at the grassroots level. The role of government and nongovernment organizations (including philanthropic organizations) is to create happy, healthy, and successful social phenomena. Every social practice is subject to verification and falsification; this entire text is based on the descriptive phenomenon of homestays based on the historical location of Panauti.

Every stakeholder in the society bears equal responsibility for balancing progress and quality of life. Tourism has an important part in the local community, where all stakeholders play an

equal role in tourism management. Host communities have seen a positive impact on intercultural interaction (culture learning and exchange), business transactions, entrepreneurial development (skill building) and economic empowerment to eradicate poverty in the host communities (Geoffrey et al., 2020). Nepal's unique landscape and aesthetic qualities, its socio-cultural richness possess one of the most valuable tangible and cultural heritage values in the world (Kaini et al., 2022). Synergistic efforts can control social dysfunction in society by fostering effective practices among the many agencies that exist. A collaborative partnership between different organs in homestay is a unique design as their features of operation have received a large number of tourists (Ma et al., 2022).

Figure 1

Panauti's main attraction, 12 years' Makar Mela in Tribenighat



Note: Sahadev Gautam

The aim of collaborative and essential duties is discovered after researching various stakeholder participations. The research, discourse, and analysis in tourism are about what is done, and what should be done in the interest of tourism (Gautam et al., 2023). The primary study and collected data presented here to form a final conclusion is to assess synergic efforts in community-based tourism-homestay. This article focuses on stakeholder participation and makes conclusion of the study.

The research is based on social phenomena. Homestay is used as a research domain in communities where community-based tourism is practiced. In a narrow definition, homestay tourism is local tourism run in a local context, although it covers a larger area. From the critical standpoint, analysis of stakeholder synergy is identifying key users and managers in a homestay program, assessing their interest in the homestay, and the extent to which the interest can affect the successful program in local touristic activities (Yuliani et al. 2019). Local culture, local governance, national, and worldwide visitor attractions are all included. As per the context various research methods are accepts to study social happening. A focus on what Lawal (2019) has called the 'social science research is a method to uncover social happenings in human societies' as a way to understand how different stakeholders are functioning within the same framework. Collecting data and doing research in social happening is also the process to 'build social relationships with the community' (Rai, 2022). Due to its ethnographic nature, the entire field-work for the research is based on personal communication between January 2022 and August 2022 to collect primary data.

The first author collected the data and information under the MPhil research project (Gautam,

2022). Field observation was one of the principal methods of collecting primary data (Khattri & Pandey, 2023). Open-ended questionnaires with homestay owners, local history narrators, historians, and people's representative respondents were employed for the study. The selection of the study area was based on 33 homestays. The semi-structured checklist was developed to collect primary data through Key Informant Interviews (KII). In-depth interviews with 6 people's representatives included the current mayor and deputy mayor, the ward chairman from 3 wards, along with the former mayor. The researchers conducted interviews with the presidents of two homestays and 1 vice president, 1 historian, and 2 local history narrators' Samudayek Homestay, and 1 historian. Panauti, a sacred and famous historical place, is taken for the research site. Based on 7 months of participatory work conducted between January 2022 and August 2022 in Panauti, one of the heritage hubs of Nepal, is the core point of the study. Panauti Community Homestay is a wholly women-led homestay that demonstrates women's potential, while Namaste Samudayek Homestay is used as a research domain. People's representatives and local people are used as respondents through an analysis of the perception of key stakeholders (Adenike & Jim, 2022). For the analysis, descriptive model is used.

Figure 2

Panauti Community Homestay



Note: Panauti Community Homestay has its own community hall to welcome guests during field work. Namaste Samudayik Homestay's community hall is currently under construction. Namaste Samudayik Homestay welcomes and manages guests from Sangita Shrestha's home on a temporary basis.

A reflection of historian

The people's representatives are 'playing a fundamentally serving function' (Thamas et al., 2021). People's representatives are public agents who help to revitalize democracy. These representatives support the locals in terms of suggesting and fostering ideas and information to carry out small-scale entrepreneurial activities for their economic sustainability. In Panauti too such supports are available to run home stays.

There are a large number of tourists staying in community-based homestays in Nepal (Dahal, KC, & Sapkota, 2020) homestays in Panauti is not an exception. Now, to manage tourists in the destinations from local people to government and then international agencies are equally responsible.

Bhim Neupane, former mayor, reflecting from his tenure, tried to explain his efforts to initiate to get Panauti recognized from historical perspectives.

A major boost to religious tourism is the process of listing Panauti as a World Heritage Site. The appeal file is kept pending in the cabinet. The overall development of Panauti is only possible through agriculture and tourism. (B. Neupane, Personal Communication, Feb, 2022)

During his term, he oversaw tourism development in Panauti, with aid ranging from three lakh to ten lakh accessible for the upkeep of old properties in Panauti. Panauti's identity can be found in such an antique edifice. Managed homestays are inexpensive, sanitary, and environmentally beneficial. Homestays foster a peaceful relationship between citizens of the country and those from other countries. Panauti has its unique meaning and practices in terms of culture, architecture, food sovereignty, and guest respect. The traditional identity attracts visitors to Panauti's homestays. Rural homestays urgently need to transform and upgrade from their traditional style to the modernize service model which can provide a new balance between standardized services and customized experience (Xing, Li, & Xie, 2022). There is no need of radical reforms in Panauti, everything has its aesthetic meaning within its traditional setting, and 71 houses are more than 100 years old which have rich architectural and cultural values. All forms of sacred ceremonies are carried out in traditional houses (Andiani et al., 2020). Social organizations like local government, local peoples, and Guthi like philanthropic organizations are functioning together to have built a community building in Panauti and other social organizations have developed a spirit of cooperation. To improve the quality of service provided to tourists, relying on a single individual or institution may not produce the desired results.

Present mayor Ramsharn Bhandari shared some experiences. From the remarks, his experiences represented formal legal and politico-administrative conditions surrounding homestay in Panauti. He explained:

It is the role of the local government to offer the appropriate training in the homestay, to hygienize the items brought by tourists, and to regulate the homestay company. The municipality's primary role is to ensure that the administration of the homestay does not deteriorate. (R. Bhandari, Personal Communication, Feb, 2022)

Mayor Bhandari acknowledges that the homestay here has become infamous owing to bad management, which has a negative impact on the entire tourism administration inside Panauti town. As mentioned by Yusriadi et al. (2019), achievement of tourist satisfaction, serves to tourists as consumers, regulating body to quality of service provided by local governments. It can only be achieved by tourist satisfaction and locals' desire for additional tourist-related activities, as well as local people's representatives' obligations towards tourism. The municipality maintains the resources so that they are accessible to everyone. Gita Banjara, the current deputy mayor, spoke on the role of all stake holders in the homestays:

Local organic production should also be emphasized by homestay operators. The municipality and the local administration have now prioritized small companies. The municipality works hard to promote product marketing and gender equality. Homestays contribute significantly to income production. However, genuine female participation should be ensured and should not be regarded as mere tokens. (G. Banjara, Personal Communication, March, 2022)

Chairperson of Ward 7, Sabin Tamrakar narrated that:

'We are all responsible for sustainable tourism management in Panauti through homestay tourism, not just I, but our collective actions are a very significant element of tourism. However, collaboration among all locals and representatives is at the heart of tourist administration in the Panauti'. (S. Tamrakar, Personal Communication, March, 2022)

Ward chairman of ward 4 Dipak Pd. Dahal reported that:

We also have operating standards for municipal governments. There are additional difficulties concerning infrastructure construction, cleanliness, and history conservation for the development of local tourism; here is 'We' not 'I,' we are for Panauti's people and their development, tourism is not an exception. (D. P. Dahal, Personal Communication, March, 2022)

Poet and historian Surya Prasad Lakaju narrated:

Tangibly and intangibly, after Kathmandu, Panauti has tourism potential, but we have not been able to attract tourists due to a lack of marketing. (S.P. Lakaru, Personal Communication, March, 2022)

The tangible or intangible needs of the tourists can be met by new products (Albayrak et al. 2011). We might infer from his narration that there is still much work to be done. Tourism in Panauti is less reliant on its rich socio-cultural and historical significance. Homestays contribute significantly to the prosperity of tourism by supplying local products with a distinct local identity. Dilya Maya Deula, who is seventy-five years old, interprets the historical Panauti solely from a religious standpoint, she narrated:

The people of Panauti believe that when people fight or dispute in Panauti, it is often mentioned that Panauti is a holy area, but the people of Panauti are said to be impure. (D.M. Deula, Personal Communication, March, 2022)

Study of an individual's lived experience within (Neubauer et al., 2019) their own setting analysis of all stakeholders is not working together for the sake of preservation, it will late for every activity related to Panauti. If Panauti turns to be unholy, that will be one of the main threats in the next days. If Panauti loses its original identity, tourism in this area would be jeopardized. Mechhe Narayan Jhwaal, 73, interpreted tourism in Panauti:

The entire tourism of Panauti is due to Makar Mela and the religious beliefs and historical characteristics of Panauti. Because of the COVID-19 outbreak, everything in Panauti has lost its charm. (M. N. Jhwaal, Personal Communication, March, 2022)

He believed that the tourism business, such as homestays in Panauti, could only exist through joint functions between local people and government organizations. He also asserted that there are numerous flaws in tourist collective management. The remedy to such deficiencies is the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders; he expressed this at the end of the conversation.

Over here, the people's representatives and those with historical knowledge are reflected; when we talk about representatives, we are referring to the authority associated with the governing body and its connection in the public consciousness. People with socio-cultural awareness of Panauti prefer it as a culturally significant place of *Vagawan*; yet, administration is a huge concern here.

Modernization in homestay: a class reflection

Rural setting and indigenous identity is the key for the successful operation of rural homestay in the new era of consumption (Ma et al., 2022). It has been a strong support for fostering eco-friendly tourism around the globe by uplifting the local community (Dahal et al., 2020). Panauti, as a peri-urban (urbanized) area, is suffering some identity issues despite its historic identity. Modern pattern of constructions is causing sufferings to Panauti's indigenous housing pattern. Traditional houses have been used as homestays, as a new type of rural tourism accommodation (Ramel & Wongso, 2021) but this is not happening in Panauti. Modernization in homestay in Panauti is conducting tourism in newly constructed structure. In both talking and doing, the prospect and the hindsight are distinct. One saying is popular in Nepali society, 'houses with traditional identity created by mud/soil are good for health and for identity preservation'. However, the vast majority of Nepalese people (even in rural areas) support RCC construction (building made by rod, cement and concrete). The study sample for this study consisted of 33 homestays. There are just 2 buildings made of soil in the Panauti region, out of 25 (17 from Panauti Community Homestay and 8 from Namaste Samudayik Homestay). Traditional dwellings constructed of dirt are good for health, and this article based on the phenomenon debunks this claim. People may appreciate historic houses intangibly, yet in tangible form, people desire to build modern residences. Biju Saiju, a member of Panauti Community Homestay, discussed her bitter experience as a widow in our culture. She runs her homestay from a typical earthen hut. Owners of ancient structural houses, according to her experience, are poor. Directly most people stand for and say that historic houses with traditional identity are beautiful things, however, in reality, this is the sign of 'being poor'. Majority of our direct and indirect communication consists of social topics which is supported by scholars like Jolly & Chang (2021) in their studies as well. In order to comprehend reality, indirect gossip and symbolic meaning are necessary. Rajendra Mahaju, a 28-year-old graduate and member of Namaste Samudayik Homestay with an old structure house performing homestays, has the same experience as the previous respondent (Biju Saiju). Mahaju works as a contract employee at Panauti Museum; he has a plan to build *Pakki Ghar* (RCC building), but he is unable to do so owing to economic constraints. He also stated that '*possessing a typical old house is an indication of poverty* (R. Mahaju, Personal Communication, August, 2022).'

Panauti is supposed to be an earthquake proof land. Even the 2015 super earthquake had only a little impact on the Panauti area. '*In this holy spot, earthquakes hit and aftershocks are felt, but actual damage has never been felt,*' said Dil Maya Deula. She further added, '*as you can see, no single structure has been harmed or cracked* (D. M. Deula, Personal Communication, March, 2022)'. Despite this, the locals in Panauti and the homestay owners wish to build a modern residence. Traditional houses in Panauti have a longer lifespan than other areas.

Working together: homestay is the path to prosperity

We, as a member of governance, are an integral component of tourism. Despite the fact that tourist governance is an under-researched topic in Nepal, it is a growing and important matter for policymakers, legislators, and local residents (Gautam et al., 2023). The inquiry led to the people's representative of Panauti Municipality, Bed Prasad Banjar, narrated about working together in homestay:

Many people were conducting research in Panauti at the time in order to achieve a breakthrough for the tourism industry by preserving culture, resources, and customs.

Homestay is seen as an example of a link between underdeveloped and developed global civilizations in Panauti. (B. P. Banjar, Personal Communication, May, 2022)

Such an outcome may occur through the adoption of collaborative working 'in the tourism sector has impacted on the economic, social and environmental conditions of the tourism destination area' (Geoffrey et al., 2020).

Vice chairperson of Namaste Samudayek Homestay of Panauti Bhawanath Wagle, said:

'Panauti's tourism prosperity and tourism-related activities are beneficial in some ways and poor in others. There are numerous advantages to homestay tourism in Panauti. The emergence of new social structures bodes well for tourism governance. Research and study are crucial to find out fresh potentiality in the locality. (B. Wagle, Personal Communication, May, 2022)

Wagle is lecturer of sociology in nearby Tej Ganga Multiple Campus; from his sociological perspective isolation degrade the use of homestay tourism. He also discussed sustainable development and resource management during the conversation. He shared that, '*Sustainable development in Panauti homestay tourism involves sustainability in resources and sustainable development in tourism means focusing on policies* (B. Wagle, Personal Communication, May, 2022)'. The assessment to improve sustainability in the tourism industry has been widely recognized and redistributed (Graci, 2013).

Shila Amatya, President of Panauti Community Homestay, has first hand knowledge of stakeholder collaboration for community-based tourism such as homestay. She reports:

'In Panauti, homestays have generated several chances for cultural exchange. Collaboration between diverse industries is required. Work has been done in collaboration with the local administration, Guthi, and mother groups. When tourists visit the home stay, we invite local mothers' organizations to display their artwork. We also offer money to these organizations in order for them to show the art culture to the visitors. (S. Amatya, Personal Communication, May, 2022)

According to her, the most common route for homestay is through personal and community bonds. Sangita Shrestha, President-Namaste Homestay narrate her reflection about homestay as:

Homestay tourism is the crucial for community's development in terms of individuals, socioeconomics, and languages. With the assistance of the state government, Homestay has constructed a community hall. Apart from that, we have a lot of other things to do. Moral support has been supplied by the local administration and affiliated parties. (S. Shrestha, Personal Communication, May, 2022)

Individualistic techniques are ineffective in the tourism industry, particularly in homestays. For the smooth operation of homestay tourism, conglomeration is the primary road. Artificial settings are unsuitable for community-level tourism; instead, visitors come to enjoy a real experience. In order to fulfill travelers' desires, it is important that tourists enjoy an authentic tourism experience while contributing to the local community's well-being (Usmonova et al., 2022). Using a minimal budget for tourism in a local environment is a symbolic process of community participation and upliftment through empowerment. Local people's empowerment is essential to ensure local community members benefits from tourism development (Adenike & Jim, 2022). The community is there for community sake through social innovation. In the very gross level social innovations provides a useful framework to conduct comprehensive

research on innovations in tourism (Wirth et al., 2022).

Conclusion

This study was undertaken in two homestays, and the interesting thing is that both homestays are thoroughly supervised and managed by female chairpersons. They are role models for all women and are determined to break down all social and cultural boundaries. They are not tokenized here as they have played active roles in the homestay administration. According to the findings, the core tourism locations represented by Panauti have a high level of synergistic interactions between homestay owners and local government. Synergistic efforts in community-led tourism have resolved local problems and fostered community cohesion by fostering healthy relationships in the local production system. Tourism in the local region is impossible without the participation of multiple stakeholders; this study observed the collective assessment of community-based tourism on the functions. Homestay is a communal activity and a massive family-based tourism company with significant implications for Nepali tourism.

Since community-based tourism is a significant component of the tourism sector, it is imperative to emphasize the participation of all level of modernization and management. But many things are falling apart. Traditional identity is being lost day by day in the name of progress; it is the most difficult aspect of the tourism sector. Fancy practices have an impact on homestay tourism as well; there are fewer traditional residences. A person with traditional dwellings is considered impoverished in the community. At this point the people's representatives are much needed to educate the concerned ones to rethink on such unworthy ideas of old house and poverty concept. Collaboration with all responsible players is at the heart of sustainable tourist development. Homestays in Panauti will not survive without synergistic functions amongst all stakeholders.

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Conflict of interest

The author/s declared no conflict of interests.

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