

## **Agglomeration in Tourism Governance and Community Based Tourism in Nepal: An Ethnographic Reflection from Panauti Historical Area**

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### **Abstract**

*Etymologically, tourism is an industry and part of recreation and the way for sustainable resource management at the local level through community participation. Community-based tourism in Nepal is famously known as homestay tourism. It is an agglomeration of much authentic cultural and ecological richness within diversity to the tourist's experience at the exact moment to the local's participation and empowerment. Homestay is a very potential rural and historical site-based tourism enterprise. Tourism governance is not isolated discourse; it has many tangible and intangible transactions. It has been a positive backbone for the growth of environmental tourism around the globe by utilizing and empowering the local community. The primary data was collected for my research work for my MPhil thesis. The article aims to assess the socioeconomic, cultural, and participation contribution of community-based tourism in Nepal, based on the ethnographic narration analysis design. Moreover, community-based tourism is not an isolated subject so tourism is highly accountable to income elasticity and local empowerment with local resource marketing and distribution. Findings show that homestays should have an eco-friendly infrastructure for sustainable resource*

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*mobilization and homestay as community-based tourism is community lead activities for the sake of empowerment of the local, especially women.*

**Key Words:** *Tourism governance, Homestay, Panauti, Community, Ethnography, Quilt making*

## Introduction

Basically, the study, research, and discourse on tourism mean the cross-cultural context on the ground, between guests, hosts, and local administration. Every object is the subject of debate. The debate on agglomeration in tourism governance is the combination of perspectives and the practices to link up the phenomena. Tangible, intangible tourism destinations and tourism products then and now are part of a dynamic culture. Governance in tourism and community-based tourism is affiliated with local cultural values and meanings. Legacy to the current practices of culture and its constructed meaning for tourism are the elementary forms of cultural dynamism then connect with the tourism industry for the historical destination like the Panauti. Cultural changes occur due to many other factors, actors, agencies, and processes (Shrestha, 2022). Theoretically, homestay tourism in Nepal is part of social empowerment. Such community-based tourist activities are crucial to achieve a fairer and more equitable society (Naranjo, 2022). The idea of homestay is paramount in community-based tourism, in this context; it is about social justice, empowerment, equity of benefits, redistributive measures, ownership of the tourism sector, and holistic community development (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). The main focus of the community is to conduct homestay tourism is a crucial sector for Nepal. It has great hopes for the homestay as export human resources that can replace brain drain and labor migration future role.

Homestay programs are a popular attraction for tourists who are interested in experiencing local culture, cuisine, and natural surroundings and participating in local customs (Lama, 2013). Multiple themes are there in homestay management. Policy formulations to implementation in tourism governance there are active agencies working for. The agglomeration of the homestay site has an important carrying effect on the development of regional rural areas and the growth of the income of the community's people (Long, et al, 2018). From the root's reflection, there are multiple actors, factors, and conditions of tourism and governance in community-based tourism practices, especially in the homestay. Functional and policy relations are interrelated to each other in their everyday life in tourism destinations (Shrestha, 2022). In the historically valuable place both by artifacts and the environment, Panauti has contributed to the multi sectors. The application of

analytical lenses in studying tourism governance and community-based tourism is important for exploring and analyzing cultural, social, personal, institutional, and administrative relationships. Tourism economy and development efficiency should be pursued in a reasonable manner, but resilience should be strengthened (Zhang et al, 2023).

## Methods and Research Design

Based on 7 months of participatory ethnographic work conducted between January 2022 and August 2022 (2078 Paush Masanta to 2079 Srawan Masanta of Bikram Calendar) in Panauti, one of the heritage hubs of Nepal is the core point of the study. For the study 25 registered homestays in the core Panauti area and a few people's representatives as concerned authorities were taken. Seventeen from Panauti Community Homestay (PCH hereafter) and eight from Namaste Samudayik Homestay (NSH hereafter) were taken as the prime study site. The numerous strategic exercises of qualitative exploration may be audited as tender science, ethnography, bricolage, quilt making, or montage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). By using ethnographic models, this research article's objective is to study homestay agglomeration tourism in historically meaningful places like Panauti.

The ontology of present tourism is more linked with economic transactions, empowerment, participation, social justice, and sustainable way of resource mobilization (Gautam, 2021). Panauti is a national and international destination working for new as well as traditional evidence and capacity building in community-based tourism. Panauti (Lakoju, 2078 BS) is the sacred religious place to the Hindu followers and the place of religious acts like Makar Mela at twelve years intervals. Panauti with cultural heritage sites has many significant meanings. The study on the basis of phenomenological scenarios and symbolic interpretation has been collected. For live world analysis, symbolic interactionism is considered as primary social reciprocity to enroll the meanings, insights, practices, and values of a community (Crotty, 1998). The homestay process emphasized encouraging the local economic sector in the peri-urban or in the rural area; preserving the environmental balance; generate local employment opportunities through small-scale production in the local mass.

## Homestay as Way towards Sustainable Development

Natural resource is the preliminary for existence. Nature and human existence are closely interrelated, where nature influences humans and human manage/mismanage the nature, humans, and nature are functionally reciprocal.

Humans as cultural animals, food habits, dressing patterns, cultural performances, and other activities are based on the ecology under which we are born (Shrestha, 2022). For sustainable development environment is a prime and key social value that results in environmental improvement, it is strongly related to the conservation of natural resources (Mendoza, et al, 2021) historical resources, and cultural resources. From this homestay, a community-based tourism practice is the main pillar of sustainability.

The engagement time scale in homestay makes demarcation and affiliation in sustainable governance of homestay. In the mass sector, tourism provides wider opportunities for overall development (2022). The degree of benefits from homestay as sustainable practices gives new directions in tourism development. Hitherto, encouraging factors, concerned stakeholders, the satisfaction of the homestay owners, and how they are getting sustainable development into reality are the main concerns of tourism governance in community-led homestay. Homestay culture utilizes local resources which have changed the local economy and spirit of development positively. The former mayor narrated 'Homestays create a harmonious relationship between the citizens of the country and abroad. Homestays and agriculture increase the income of the locals, which emphasizes the empowerment of social cohesion.' For sustainability, local people and cultural institutions are significant to manage available resources in an ideal manner. Structure and the nature of our ecological and socio-historical practices and social institutions are working as doctrine among the people of Panauti. Social and cultural institutions are like 'watchdogs' for resource mobilization and resource protection within the local setting. Tourism directly or indirectly gives pressure on the preservation of resources with the arrival of visitors in turn; new opportunities are created for preservation (Gautam, 2021).

The important aspect of tourism is the protection of the natural ecosystem and the preservation of climate change (Ozkaya & Demirhan, 2022). The Chairperson of Panauti municipality 4 said about their activities and engagement in the tourism sector 'we are making our education oriented towards hospitality. Directly or indirectly, we are working on tourism-oriented education in local behavior'. Sustainable Development Goal 1,2,3,5,6 is directly promoted by homestay as a community lead governance in Panauti. The individuals of PCH and NSH in Panauti are getting benefits and imperative for families. All homestay owners are very living their life without poverty with sufficient food, availability, and affordability of health systems and in the Panauti area spring drinking water is supplied, all respondents like to say their status is middle class. This indicates also addresses the increasing importance of homestay as a sustainable rural tourism

product (Janjua, et al, 2021). Even Panauti supplies the water to Dhulikhel municipality (nearby municipality) and organic vegetables to the national capital city Kathmandu. This portion attempted to discover the benefits of homestay tourism among proprietors.

Space and people is the core of sustainable resource management in community-based tourism. People and their rights to utilize the local natural resource and their link in decision-making always matter in the community. The case of Panauti is a melting point of caste and ethnicity with diverse identities. Much more concerned with the destination is local indigenous people and their link with resources. Identity and people's space to utilize materials and resources should be focused on the governance system if the government wants to run tourism in a sustainable way. Abundant potential, as well as capacities, can be a way in the context of Nepal to meet the targets and dream of sustainable development goals. Government is the apex body to manage all activities in tourism governance, but all other stakeholders are equally responsible for it. 'Tourism has a direct influence on the social identity of the indigenous people' (Shrestha, 2022).

### Homestay as Way towards Empowerment

In the case of Nepal, women are considered the second gender. Through political participation, administrative records, assessment in bureaucracy, and all decision-making process there is a comparatively low number of women are represented. Tourism activities create alternative opportunities for women to be more independent economically (Wardhani & Susilowati, 2021). Empirical data from the Panauti area almost more than ninety percentage homestays are run by women. Here in the Panauti area, all homestay-related activities are managed by women; they have real legal and practical identities. 'Tourism has economically benefitted the locals' (Shrestha, 2022). Homestay is the mainstay to minimize gender disparity, even in other branches of tourism. Getting involved in tourism is difficult for women because only men have real say in economic matters and how tourism-related income is distributed (Mahwish & Nawaz, 2022). Meanwhile, a society without proper participation shows a lack of democracy such societies never move forward with prosperity but make for retrospective ways. The prosperity of democracy and practices of participatory governance at the ground level can find out from homestay practices in Panauti. It is an aesthetic of good governance.

Homestay in Panauti gives much more things to empower women but not only economical benefits. All historical setting and local resource management is the hallmark of tourism governance and community-based tourism. From the collected

data from PCH and NSH local engagement and women, empowerment had clearly shown. Gender empowerment and tourism are closely connected, and both terms must be developed side by side for a bright future (Shivakoti, 2022). From the study, all homestays of PCH are officially registered in women's ownership. All homestay owners are the decision-makers in their industries. Participation of women in tourism activities has a positive impact on them socially (Wardhani & Susilowati, 2021). From observation tourism around Panauti historical site is guided by goal number 5 of the sustainable development goal 'gender equality'.

An active member of PHC Biju Saiju said about here the role of homestay in her life. Homestay is interesting and now she runs a small glossary and pottery shop in her free time. She also was doing something in her free time, crafting handicrafts. Confidence, courage, and social relation are only possible by the homestay. On her trajectory and painful time how society saw her and how society treats her now is very different. She is the main (*Ghar Muli* in Nepali) of the house. Old age in-laws and their care, small business, and homestay are her engagement. She said 'I am a part-timer in Homestay'. Being a single woman is the hardest thing in our society. This is a case that can make reflections of women's participation through empowerment. Evidence of this empowerment is positively connected between female participation and female empowerment (Mendoza, et al, 2021).

My fieldwork led me to the conclusion that men never interfere with women in homestay matters. Out of 8 registered homestays of NSH, there are 3 male and 5 female-led homestays. This is characterized by the participation of women in that decision which affects their lives (Mahwish & Nawaz, 2022). The indicator of empowerment in the homestay in the study area, the chairpersons of both homestays are women. This indicates that the real practice of empowerment is there where all major decisions are taken as well as implemented by women; here males are only supportive factors. As tourism and hospitality develop, women are able to uplift their socioeconomic status; in return, tourism and hospitality benefit the nations as well (Shivakoti, 2022) it provides significant opportunities for women internationally (Alshareef & AlGassim, 2021). Women's empowerment means getting the opportunity and permission from their families to participate in tourism activities (Wardhani & Susilowati, 2021). Mina Koirala a member of PCH shared 'her experiences and good results from homestay she said homestay tourism is very beneficial for the local economic transaction, and local household-level quality of life'. Males are considered superior in every decision-making process in Nepal and women are the followers of the decisions made by males. From the study about homestays around Panuti, the perspective has changed. The notions of women's

empowerment can be paradigm by the practice of homestay.

## Community Lead Activities in Tourism as Synergic Work and Social Cohesion

All homestay owners treat people very softly; high hospitality and morale can show. Even though I entered as a researcher all of them treat me very comfortably, they offered me tea, snacks, and dinner, and they spend their time despite their busy schedule. The tourism industry provides a social impact, especially on the host community and their hospitality (Sari et al, 2014). Panauti is a sacred place and place of god so all people here is the gift of god. There is no inter and intra hostility between members and another homestay. Community lead homestay tourism in Panauti has profited the community through social conservation, social concordance, and foundation advancement for community life such as mutual understanding, water distribution, utilities, and conflict resolution (Mendoza, et al, 2021).

The lion's share of community families sees that tourism has made a difference in bringing alter and advance within the community. The neighborhood individuals have advanced their conventional standards and traditions. This tangible and intangible culture has been depicted as social involution by the homestay proprietors. Ward representative of Panauti municipality 7 shared that 'we all are responsible for the sustainable tourism management through the homestay tourism in Panauti, not only me but our collective actions are a very important part for tourism.' Synergy is the major indicator of social cohesion and homestay in Panauti crystallizes it into reality. In his tenderness and with the Newar tone he shares, Panauti is the synonyms' identity for Newar. But agglomeration between all local people and all representatives are core of the tourism management in the Panauti. Multi-stakeholder exploration identifies the common, connections, and particular issues to synthesize the synergy (Surasak & Nitivattananon, 2023). He mentions that the first and foremost for homestay tourism in Panauti are local culture, local products, local identity, and local history. A male member from the NSH narrated 'homestay in this locality is the very way for the cultural exchange. All members are concerned and sharing culture with the host through organic food and local products. All of our members are doing such work in a together manner. Local production systems, residents, investor markets, and tourism-related human resources, private and governmental agencies, tourists, cultural groups, and institutions like Guthi, mother groups, and ad hoc arrangements in Panauti's context all are the stakeholders of homestay. Efforts in mobilizing the community to undertake community lead tourism activities promote tourism cooperatives

within certain areas to manage functions between multi-stakeholders to ensure effective and sustainable participation by the members (Sai Priyanka & Devarani, 2022).

## Conclusion

Homestay is the best example of community lead tourism in Panauti. This research is conducted according to the collected data from Panauti Community Homestay and Namaste Samudayak Homestay. From the ethnographic work, homestay is not only about tourism-related activities but is the process of sustainable resource management, organic production, resource preservation, and women empowerment. From the field based research 'a sustainable travel and tourism sector policy and investments are needed to ensure sustainable quality of life' (Ozkaya & Demirhan, 2022). In touristic activities, the majority of activities are run by women and they are aware to use healthy and organic products. Seems easy, small, and low-cost to run a homestay but it is a highly hospitality-based industry. Hospitality is not a good and service it is germinated from nurturing and the local environment. People in the study area are very hospitable; this is an indicator of homestay. Panauti is a place for tourism having its unique socio-religious and natural beauty.

The analysis of content and the context of both homestays are locally useful ideas for sustainable development, even though tourism is considered an industry. 'Tourism has been identified as a powerful tool for empowering women in today's global economy' (Ayuningsasi, et al, 2022). Women have much capacity to make decisions and run houses this may be the lesson for another part of the world where women are treated as the second gender. In the end, homestay is the synergic work from the various agencies, where every function has meaning and relationships with others.

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