



A Review of Village Tourism in Nepal: Concept and Practice

Dr. Bharat Prasad Badal^{1*}, Prasuram Adhiakri²

1. Editor in Chief of Research Nepal Journal of Development Studies

2. Assistant Lecturer at Indreshwor Campus, Panauti

Abstract

Nepal is a country of 753 local governments. Of the total, 736 local government (276 municipalities and 460 rural municipalities) excluding six metros and 11 sub metros are the full of village attributes-arts, culture, civilization, history and outstanding natural beauty. The transformation of village settlements into potential tourist destinations will be the village tourism initiatives in Nepal. The transformation is generally based on Tourism planning and the planning is based on its concepts and practices. Thus, the study has been conducted to identify the basic concepts and contemporary practices of village tourism in Nepal. From the methodological perspective it is a general qualitative review of recently published journal articles. The study found that village tourism helped to maintain community wellbeing and reduce poverty in homestay tourism destinations. Contrary to that community people particularly residing in other villages are still economically poor and vulnerable. Thereby, their economic poverty can be eradicated through the implementation of appropriate village tourism concepts such as smart village tourism, spatial village tourism and community based ecotourism. In doing so, 736 local government of Nepal must develop at least 5,400 community homestay (six to nine in each local level) tourism destinations. The priority must be given to Nepali tourists as well as Chinese and Indian tourists through different packages in all season and regions. Top-level political leaders and bureaucrats must be able to make diplomatic relation with China and India for promoting village tourism throughout the country.

Keywords: Concept, Practice, Tourism, Village Tourism

Manuscript Received
17 March, 2024

Final Revision
12 April, 2024

Accepted
29 April, 2024

*Corresponding author; B. P. Badal (bpb222@yahoo.com), Prasuram Adhiakri (parshu@kuhs.edu.np)

© Authors; Published by Panauti Journal and peer-review under the responsibility of Indeshwor Campus.

Licensed under CREATIVE-COMMONS license CC-BY-NC 4.0



1. Background

Tourism is the reflection of life and about economic life. For a host or a guest, tourism, as a business or a customer, is a human civilizational culture. Tourism is a business with culture. The commercialization of cultural practices of a village from a hospitality perspective can be claimed as village tourism. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), rural tourism is characterized as a form of tourism wherein the visitor's experience is associated with various products that are typically connected to nature-based pursuits, agriculture, rural living, culture, fishing, and sightseeing. Thus Rural Tourism is a natural and cultural tourism activities. And it is a business of commercialization of cultural and natural products of the community people living in village setting (Chhetri, 2022).

Nepal is the country of villages. The village in Nepal is a cultural and natural setting of rural human settlement. What can we sell in rural areas? Definitely, rural areas can sell their originality of cultural and natural identifies. Many scholars agreed that in a specific rural village, people travel for a variety of reasons, including personal fulfillment, study, research, exploration, business, or professional endeavors. All of these phenomena also can be known as village tourism. Village is a nostalgic emotion of a human being. Village is the symbolic history of humanity and sentiment. Identity of a human being, in certain cases, is based on the cultural setting of a village. The village is not only the headcount of humanity. The word village comes from a French term referring to a group of buildings. It is not only the groups of buildings; it is the bunch of emotions of civilizational history (Sapkota, 2020).

A village is a close and bonded community located in a rural setting. In Nepal rural municipalities and municipalities except metros (Biratnagar, Birgunj, Bharatpur, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Pokhara – 6 Metro) and sub-metros (Itahari, Dharan, Janakpur, Kalaiya, Jitpursimara, Hetaunda, Butwal, Ghorahi, Tulsipur, Nepalgunj, Dhangadi -11 Submetro) cities. Remaining, 276 municipalities (Nagarpalika) and 460 rural municipalities (Gaunpalika) so in total 736 local governments can be regarded as villages of Nepal. Village is very rich in art, culture, hospitality, and originality. Nepal is also known as the country of always smiling people. A village is a small settlement usually found in a rural setting. Villages are generally larger than a “hamlet” but smaller than a “town.” There are 6743 Wards (Hamlets and Towns) in Nepal. Some geographers specifically define a village as having between 500 and 2,500 inhabitants, however the number is not significant. In most parts of the world, villages are settlements of people clustered around a central point. Villages are the center of indigenous civilization.

Clause 51 (L) Policies relating to Tourism, Nepalese constitution 2015 says: To establish environmentally friendly tourism sectors as a vital pillar of the country's economy by identifying, safeguarding, promoting, and publicizing Nepal's historical, cultural, religious, archaeological, and natural heritages; establishing the legal and regulatory frameworks necessary for the growth of the tourism industry; and giving locals precedence when it comes to the benefits that come from these sectors. Thus, In Nepal, the foundation of a sustainable national economy is tourism. It is the process of identifying, promoting, and publicizing Nepal's natural, historical, cultural, and religious heritages. The villages receive the same strands. The distribution of tourism-related revenue to the local population is the most crucial issue. The government of Nepal defines a homestay as an arrangement in which the host offers their guest lodging, food, and other related services. Homestays can be run independently or in community groups. This definition is found in "homestay working procedure 2067." The process also distinguished between two types of homestay: a village community homestay program and an urban homestay that was classified as a private homestay. Typically, individual hosts run the urban homestay program, and they are only able to accommodate four guests per day to minimize any negative effects on the country's regular hotel industry. 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 (Chhetri, 2020). The urban section is a politically defined section of community in Nepal. Tourism development starts from tourism planning and tourism planning starts from prevailing concepts.

2. Objectives and Methods

To identify and generalize the basic concepts and contemporary practices of Nepalese village tourism this study has been conducted. From the methodological perspective it is a general review of recently published journal articles. The study is a qualitative review paper so it is based on secondary information published in latest journals. It is a basic or a primary document developed as a guideline to start local tourism planning and development. The experience and observation of researcher is reflected in the paper.

3. Results and Discussion

This study has given more focus on basic concepts of village tourism that have been practicing in Nepal. As the study is based on qualitative review, the results and discussion are presented in two sections. The first section deals on three different concepts of village tourism such as smart village tourism, spatial village tourism

and community based ecotourism. Likewise, the second section presents contemporary practices of village tourism in Nepal.

Concepts of Village Tourism

Concepts are the preliminary ideas. To plan anything, it needs concepts. To plan village tourism, it needs its concepts. Homestays represent village tourism in Nepal. More than 500 homestays exist in Nepal, handled by the local communities; however, a few are managed by private businesses (Onlinekhabar, 2021). A minimum of 597 rooms and 1006 beds are available to visitors in 79 private homestays, 245 officially registered communities, and other places in 13 different districts, according to the National Tourism Statistics (2019) cites (Regmi et al., 2023). In this respect, Mr. Keshab Badal, a chairman of the Homestay Association of Nepal claimed that there are more than 600 homestays in Nepal at present that can accommodate 1600 beds. There are three concepts in practices of village tourism prevailing in Nepal. More precisely, Smart Village Tourism, Spatial Village Tourism and Community based Ecotourism. The rural or village tourism easily uplift the living status of community people of Nepal. Those basic concepts are analyzed below:

3.1. Smart Village Tourism

Smart Village (S- Specific Identity, M- Measurable input output mechanism, A - achievable Target of tourism components, R- Responsible accountability of Hospitality and T- Technologically, Timely and Transparent service delivery) is a systematic village with special identity, nature, culture and technological services. The smart village concept, which was adapted from the smart city concept, places a premium on city order to facilitate people's rapid access to information. According to Arisanti (2019), the concept of a smart village gauges a program's degree of success by examining how well it manages resources to make them more sustainable and effective. This is done by involving all members of the community, including the government, academia, and social institutions. In this age of globalization there are not any significant differences in cities and villages. Communication and information technology has made everything accessible. Here in Nepal also anyone can book remote homestay from anywhere in the world. However, still the staff of local governments are not very used to new technology.

The implementation of both smart cities and smart villages can enhance the provision of more contemporary and fair public services. In order to maximize the potential of the local community, efforts to address national issues like poverty, health, clean water, and electricity are prioritized over synergy. The decision to

make smart village policies the center of innovation in regional development will therefore be more advantageous. Thus, Smart village tourism concept is the integration of Smart Economy, Smart Mobility, Smart Community, Smart Environment and Smart Government. Therefore, the local government must consider the smart concept of village tourism in Nepal.

3.2. Spatial Village Tourism

A village is a settlement of human geography. A village is a notion of history and culture of people. While developing a village as a tourism hub it must produce a cultural spatial map of the location. In order to build social harmony and identity and improve one's quality of life, local culture is crucial (Suprapti, et al., 2019). The local culture must be drawn in scientific socio-cultural maps. The model village must have cultural entrance, agricultural land, forest, parks, transport, drinking water, sanitation, irrigation systems. The settlements must have some historical sacred places like temple, mosque, and church. It must have school, college, bank, and cultural stages of amphitheaters. It should have a cultural local calendar of common people. The village must have a cultural and natural list of tangible and intangible heritages. The buildings must be traditional with complete modern facilities. Actually it is a map or a blueprint of tourism development activities of a village. It shows natural and cultural assets to be transformed into a tourism capital.

Accordingly, homestay tourism, which is regarded as one of the key economic drivers, aids the empowerment of local communities by conserving their magnificent culture. The income of rural impoverished people can also be viewed as a result of the indirect good influence and inducement of homestay tourism (Regmi, et al. 2023). A planner or a development activist or a member of local government must know the concept of Spatial Village Tourism. Then only a planner can plan the village tourism properly.

3.3. Community based Ecotourism

The concept of community based ecotourism focus on community development with ecological sustainability. No doubt, village tourism also can be known as community based tourism. As a means of maximizing rural resources in the battle against poverty, one industry with the potential to grow is rural tourism. Utilizing the Community-based Ecotourism (CBE) concept in the form of a tourism village is one way to develop rural tourism activities. Unlike traditional tourism, CBE directly contributes to the preservation of the environment, supports local efforts at economic empowerment, and promotes sustainable development and conservation

(Indriati & Munir, 2016). A community with basic norms and values treats tourists in the community. The welcome and hospitality are based on cultural values.

More so, a presentable exemplary model of the social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental development of a community is community tourism. Beyond doubt, perfect community development is community tourism. Or protection, promotion, and public presentation of the local natural and cultural attractions are major outcomes of community tourism. Besides, social, cultural, ecological, political, and economic development of the potential communities located in 736 local levels itself is a community based tourism in Nepal. Tourists visit to see the social, cultural, historical, ecological, economic, and political activities of the community. More so, local community people also visit to see the community development activities in such potential destinations (Wijaya, 2020). In Nepalese context, some of the community based homestays are becoming popular resource centers to the people living throughout the country. For example, Amaltari, Madi, Dalla, Bhada, Gabhar Valley homestays are performing remarkable community development works at present.

3.4. Practices of Village Tourism

Village tourism in Nepal is regarded as one of the critical economic drivers, aids the empowerment of local communities by conserving their magnificent culture. The income of impoverished rural people can also get viewed as a result of the good indirect influence and induced homestay tourism (Regmi, et al. 2023). Rural communities or individual homeowners generally run homestay programs with the most basic amenities. Like a regular bed like the host's regular bed, local cuisine like the host usually eats, and superb traditional hospitality with varied cultural and natural wonders of a particular place. Visitors participating in a homestay program might experience local cultural activities, the host's traditional way of life, and local customs. Homestay enterprises offer numerous chances to encourage women's entrepreneurship and the development of the country's tourism industry (Adhikari, 2020). It will have a profound effect on the rural economy of the country.

The effect of homestay build strong social capital, effective conservation fund and homestay community fund mobilization and utilization, excellent leadership that has improved the livelihoods of the Tharu, Bote, and Mushar indigenous people, and WWF's technical and financial support have all contributed to Amaltari homestay's success (Pasa, 2020). This is a really successful homestay. The Panauti homestay tourism is an emerging community-based homestay initiative in Nepal. Panauti is the homeland of various ethnic groups, still bound by a social hierarchy. This hierarchy hinders several marginalized groups from participating in various

socio-economic activities, including tourism. However, such systems have changed over the course of time (Chitrakar et al. 2020). This homestay has brilliantly shown the Newar community women empowerment activities in development.

In 2011, Dalla Gaun started hosting homestays, thanks to support from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). The WWF supplied the initial phase's conceptual, technical, and partial financial support. When the WWF approached the villagers to start homestay tourism, there were about 120 households in Dalla Gaun, according to information from the locals; however, only 11 households expressed interest in managing homestay facilities (Sapkota, 2020). Prince Harry from the UK has visited the homestay.

In terms of Ghalegaun's Tourism Management Committee (GTMC), every activity is planned and overseen at the village level. The villagers established GTDMC as a local organization. The GTDMC is in charge of managing all tourism-related projects. The members of the GTDMC are chosen by the villagers at large and include the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and representatives from the local Youth Club, Mothers' and Fathers' groups, and other organizations. In addition to the homestay owners, the villagers who are not directly involved in the homestay tourism program are also asked for their opinions. The GTDMC meets regularly at least once a month, and more frequently as needed (Sapkota, 2020). Ghalegaun is also doing remarkable tourism development performances.

It is believed that the Sirubari villagers were the first in Nepal to adopt the concept of homestay tourism. In the context of Nepal, the term "homestay" refers to the general idea of "accommodation provided in the homes of residents of a tourist destination" (Sapkota, 2020). Sirubari is where Nepalese village tourism, also known as homestay tourism, began. It is a legendary place of Nepalese village tourism. Pasa (2021) also found that rural tourism in Sirubari has been maintaining community well-being, and conserving biodiversity and becoming learning platforms to the neighboring villagers and others people. Finally, including these, other more than 600 homestays are working in Nepal. It has to be developed at least 5,400 community homestay (six to nine in each local level) in 736 local governments. So, Nepal need around more than 6,000 community homestays throughout the country. The priority must be given to Nepali domestic tourists as well as Chinese and Indian tourists. In one hand, visiting trend of Nepali tourists also have been increased significantly. In another hand, GDP per capita income of the Chinese and Indian have been increasing. In doing so, homestay tourism management committees can develop different packages to the visitors in all season and regions. Top-level political leaders and bureaucrats must be able to make cooperative and mutual diplomatic relation with China and India.

4. Conclusion

Village tourism is frequently known as rural tourism in Nepal. Village is the root of human civilization. To understand the root of human civilization and culture one has to visit a village. To understand the social norms and culture of a village, tourists prefer the village. Village tourism directly contributes community wellbeing of the local people through the commercialization of their cultural and natural products. Owing to that village tourism helped to maintain community wellbeing and reduce poverty in homestay tourism destinations such as Amaltari, Dalla, Bhada, Gabhar Valley, Nagarkot. However, having lots of natural and cultural attractions, community people particularly residing in the remote village setting are economically poor and vulnerable. Therefore, their economic poverty can be eradicated through the implementation of appropriate village tourism concepts such as smart village tourism, spatial village tourism and community based ecotourism. In doing so, 736 local government of Nepal must develop at least 5,400 community homestay (six to nine in each local level) tourism destinations. The priority must be given to Nepali tourists as well as Chinese and Indian tourists through different packages in all season and regions. Top-level political leaders and bureaucrats must be able to make diplomatic relation with China and India for promoting village tourism throughout the country.

References

- Adhikari, B. B. (2020). Steps taken for development of homestay tourism in Nepal. *NUTA Journal*, 7(1-2), 18-30.
- Arisanti, I. (2019). Smart village concept and tourism development in Sumbawa Regency. *Jurnal Riset Kajian Teknologi dan Lingkungan*, 2(1), 31-37.
- Chitrakar, K., Carr, N. & Albrecht, J. N. (2020). Community-based homestay tourism and social inclusion. In *The Routledge Handbook of Community Based Tourism Management* (pp. 238-248). Routledge.
- Chhetri, S. (2022). *Impact of Community Homestay in Betini Village A Study of Betini Village, Ward No. 2, Sahid Lakhani Rural Municipality, Gorkha, Nepal* (Doctoral dissertation, Department of Sociology).
- Indiarti, W. & Munir, A. (2016, May). The implementation of a community-based ecotourism concept in Osing Tourism Village development strategy of Banyuwangi Regency, Indonesia. In *Asia Tourism Forum 2016-the 12th Biennial Conference of Hospitality and Tourism Industry in Asia* (pp. 72-77). Atlantis Press.

- Pasa, R. B. (2020). Tourism in Nepal: The models for assessing performance of Amaltari Bufferzone community homestay in Nawalpur. *Nepalese Journal of Development and Rural Studies*, 17, 54-71.
- Pasa, R. B. (2021). Interface between Tourism and Rural Development in Panchmul, Nepal. *Nepalese Journal of Development and Rural Studies*, 18, 6-24. <https://doi.org/10.3126/njdrs.v18i01.41945>
- Regmi, S., Neupane, A., Neupane, R. & Pokharel, A. (2023). Potentiality of Community-Based Tourism Homestay for Sustainable Livelihood in Nepal: A Review. *Economic Growth and Environment Sustainability (EGNES) 2(1) 01-04*
- Sapkota, R. (2020). *Community-Based Homestay Tourism as a Tool for Community Empowerment: A Case Study of Two Community-Managed Homestay Destinations in Nepal*. Liverpool John Moores University (United Kingdom).
- Suprapti, A., Sardjono, A. B., Indriastjario, I. & Pandelaki, E. E. (2019). The spatial concepts of cultural heritage village toward a tourism development; A case study of Kadilangu Demak Indonesia. *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, 43(1), 36-46.
- Wijaya, I. K. M. (2020). Implementation of community-based ecotourism concept in Paksewali Tourism Village, Bali Indonesia. *Solid State Technology*, 63(5), 4877-4887.