

# Exploring Social Dynamics in Homestay: A study of Bethanchowk Village Community Homestay

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## Abstract

*This article explores the rich realm of homestays in Bethanchowk, revealing a complex web of cultural exchange, identity formation that is transformative, cooperative decision-making, and the significant impact of the local context. Host narratives shed light on the distinctive dynamics that distinguish homestays from other types of lodging. The process of cultural adaptation is gradual; visitors actively participate in local celebrations and customs, becoming essential strands in the rich tapestry of Bethanchowk culture. This mutual process enhances the travel experience for visitors while giving hosts priceless insights into various cultural viewpoints. Visitors who participate in a homestay experience leave with a small piece of the local identity, emphasizing transformative identity formation. By sharing their cultural heritage and encouraging positive metamorphoses, hosts contribute to influencing the perspectives of their guests. Established power structures in commercialized lodgings are challenged by the inclusive atmosphere, which values everyone and is characterized by group decision-making and a lack of hierarchy. This reciprocal experience is advantageous to guests as well as hosts. With a focus on the local environment, Bethanchowk's Village Community homestays provide visitors with a distinctive cultural experience through festivals, customs, and friendliness. Through cultural workshops and partnerships with local artisans, they work to continuously improve the homestay, making it flexible enough to adjust to guests' changing tastes and preserve its distinct ambience outside of the building. Homestay narratives are sociologically innovative spaces that transcend traditional hospitality models, fostering social interactions, cultural exchange, and identity co-creation. These findings highlight evolving consumer behavior in the hospitality sector and guide homestays towards a future where cultural exchange and enriched experiences remain at the forefront of innovation, guiding them towards a more fulfilling and enriching experience.*

**Keywords:** Homestay, Social Dynamics, Cultural Exchange, Identity, Qualitative Research,

## Introduction

In order to examine the social dynamics that take place in domestic settings, homestays offer a distinctive ground to analyze cultural and hospitality phenomena. By examining the nuances of interpersonal relationships, cultural learning, and identity formation in these immersive environments, this article seeks to advance the sociological understanding of homestays.

From the anthropocentric viewpoint, homestays are fascinating cultural phenomena that are more than just buildings. They become theaters where social interactions take place as they

throb with human connection and cross-cultural learning. Inviting guests into personal stories, hosts transform homestays into lively microcosms of existence (Kopnina, Washington, Taylor & Piccolo, 2018).

In recent years, homestays have evolved into a complicated phenomenon involving interpersonal interactions, hospitality, and cultural exchange in domestic settings. Scholars endeavoring to unravel the intricate network of interpersonal relationships have developed an interest in the workings of these all-encompassing living situations. We create shared realities through our everyday encounters, as Goffman (1916), Miller (1995), and Khan (2020) have rightly noted. This study uses a qualitative approach to investigate the social dynamics that exist in homestay experiences, concentrating on Bethanchowk Rural Municipality-3, Kavrepalanchowk district.

### **Literature Review**

Previous research has focused a great deal on the cultural and economic aspects of homestays; the social dynamics of these arrangements are still not well understood (Sapkota, 2020; Wang & Hung, 2020; Vinodan & Meera, 2021). Understanding the intricacies of social life requires examining micro-level interactions and the meanings attached to them, according to sociological perspectives, especially symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969). The importance of context-specific analyses is further highlighted by ethnographic approaches (Geertz, 1973; Dalby, 2017), which encourage researchers to investigate the distinctive socio-cultural subtleties that distinguish homestay experiences in various locations.

The increasing need for cross-cultural interactions makes it critical to understand the minute details that influence the caliber of these encounters. By performing a qualitative case study in Bethanchowk Rural Municipality-3, Kavrepalanchowk, this study seeks to close this academic gap. By doing this, we hope to add to the body of knowledge on homestays in academia as well as provide useful advice on how to improve these experiences in various cultural contexts.

The specific research questions, methods, and conclusions that underpin our examination of the social dynamics of homestay experiences within the distinctive socio-cultural setting of Bethanchowk Rural Municipality-3, Kavrepalanchowk, will be clarified in the sections that follow.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A critical knowledge gap still exists regarding the complex social dynamics that take place in these domestic settings, especially in particular places like Bethanchowk Rural Municipality-3, Kavrepalanchowk, even though homestays have become more and more popular as a means of immersive travel experiences and cultural exchange. Previous research has primarily concentrated on economic factors and general cultural ramifications, which has left a gap in our understanding of the small-scale relationships, power struggles, and communication styles that influence the day-to-day experiences of those participating in homestays (Langberg, Dvorsky, Molitor, Bourchtein, Eddy, Smith & Eadeh, 2018)

The understanding of how closely the social dynamics in host-guest relationships affect the quality of homestay experiences highlights this research problem. With homestays growing in popularity as a means of intercultural communication, it is critical to comprehend the unique difficulties, agreements, and mutually beneficial developments that arise in these situations. Moreover, a constraint on the applicability of current findings is the neglect of distinct regional contexts, like Bethanchowk Rural Municipality-3, Kavrepalanchowk.

Therefore, the primary issue this study attempts to solve is the lack of investigation into the social dynamics of homestay experiences, especially in the unique sociocultural setting of Bethanchowk Rural Municipality-3, Kavrepalanchowk. This research aims to close this knowledge gap by examining the nuances of interpersonal interactions, cultural exchange, and developing an identity within homestays. It does so by offering a nuanced understanding that adds to the larger conversation on homestay encounters and cross-cultural engagements, both theoretically and practically.

### **Objective**

The primary objective of this study is to explore the social dynamics within homestay experiences, with a focus on understanding how these dynamics contribute to cultural exchange, interpersonal relationships, and the construction of identity. Specific objectives include examining communication patterns, power dynamics, and the impact of homestays on participants' perceptions of culture.

### **Methods**

The research adopts a qualitative case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social dynamics within homestays. The case study involves selecting a Bethanchowk Village Community Homestay conducting in-depth interviews with hosts. Participant observation was employed to immerse the researcher in the daily interactions and routines of the homestay setting. Narrative analysis was applied to derive patterns and themes from the qualitative data.

### **Findings**

The exploration of Bethanchowk's homestay narratives unveils a captivating journey into the multifaceted dynamics of cultural immersion, identity formation, and collaborative hospitality practices. The stories shared by hosts and guests in this unique setting illuminate the transformative nature of homestays, where the intertwining threads of local traditions, communal warmth, and continuous improvement efforts create an environment distinct from conventional accommodations. As we delve into the findings, we navigate through the nuances of cultural adaptation, witnessing the gradual integration of guests into the vibrant tapestry of Bethanchowk. The central theme of transformative identity formation emerges as a guiding force, underscoring the reciprocal impact on both guests and hosts. Collaborative decision-making, egalitarian dynamics, and the profound influence of the local context add layers to the homestay experience, reflecting a community-oriented ethos. The vision for continuous improvement serves as a compass, guiding these homestays toward a future

where cultural exchange and enriched experiences remain at the forefront of hospitality innovation.

### **Community Building through Micro-level Interactions**

Micro-level interactions emerge as foundational to the homestay experience, fostering a sense of community. Morning tea discussions, collaborative farming, and shared meals create an environment where guests and hosts develop close bonds.

Consumer behavior is a complex phenomenon that is intricately linked to social constructs. One fascinating trend in consumer preferences is the growing inclination towards homestays. This shift can be attributed to the desire for a homely environment, a welcoming atmosphere, and, perhaps most significantly, the opportunity for direct social interaction with the hosts. Unlike conventional hotels or guest houses, homestays offer a unique experience where the relationship between the host and the guest transcends the transactional nature of accommodation. A homestay is not merely a place to sleep; it becomes a space where meaningful connections are forged. The intimacy of a homestay allows for direct interaction with the hosts, fostering a sense of familiarity and warmth.

*"A typical day begins with morning tea and conversations. We might discuss plans for the day, share stories, or just enjoy the peaceful surroundings. Throughout the day, guests often participate in our farming activities, and evenings are filled with shared meals and cultural exchanges. These micro-level interactions create a sense of camaraderie," notes a homestay host.*" - BirBahadur Lama (47 Year)

The emphasis on direct interaction and the establishment of a personal connection between hosts and guests is a distinctive feature of homestays. This approach prioritizes the preferences and needs of the guests, creating an environment where their voices are heard. Unlike the anonymity often associated with traditional lodging options, homestays provide a platform for guests to express their opinions and preferences directly. Research further supports the notion that people find a greater sense of peace and fulfillment during their stay in homestays. The ability to engage in meaningful activities, participate in local culture, and immerse oneself in the daily life of the host community contributes to a richer and more fulfilling travel experience.

In conclusion, the popularity of homestays in the realm of consumer behavior is a testament to the evolving preferences of individuals. The desire for a homely environment, welcoming nature, and direct social interaction has positioned homestays as a preferred choice for those seeking more than just accommodation during their travels. The focus on creating a sense of camaraderie through micro-level interactions underscores the social construction of consumer behavior in the realm of hospitality.

### **Cultural Exchange as a Gradual Process**

The concept of cultural exchange as a gradual process is underscored by the transformative journey that guests undergo during their stay in a foreign culture. The statement emphasizes that this exchange is not an instantaneous occurrence but rather unfolds over time. As guests

immerse themselves in the local way of life, participating in festivals and donning traditional attire, they undergo a nuanced process of acclimatization.

*“Cultural exchange is a gradual process. Initially, there might be some adjustments, but it's beautiful to see how guests embrace our way of life. We had guests from different parts of the world participating in local festivals, wearing traditional attire. These experiences not only enrich their journey but also teach us about their cultures.”*- Krishna Sangtang (72 years)

The use of the term "gradual journey" implies that cultural exchange is a phased experience, involving a series of adjustments and assimilation. It acknowledges that initial encounters may require some sorts of cultural exchange, but as time progresses, guests organically integrate into the cultural milieu. The beauty of this process is highlighted in the guests' willingness to embrace the host culture, participating in local traditions and adopting traditional clothing.

Furthermore, the reciprocal nature of cultural exchange enriches the experience for both guests and hosts. The hosts benefit from the cross-cultural exchange, gaining insights into the diverse perspectives and practices of their guests. The guests, in turn, gain a profound understanding of the local culture, as evidenced by their active participation in festivals and adoption of traditional attire.

The quote from a host further emphasizes the positive outcomes of cultural adaptation. The mention of guests from different parts of the world engaging in local festivals and embracing traditional attire exemplifies how this process transcends geographical boundaries. These experiences not only enhance the guests' journey but also serve as educational opportunities for the hosts, fostering a mutual exchange of cultural knowledge.

### **Transformative Identity Formation**

Transformative Identity Formation in the context of homestays refers to the profound and lasting changes in the self-perception and cultural identity of guests as a result of their immersive experiences within the host culture. The homestay is depicted as more than a mere accommodation; it becomes a transformative space where guests actively engage with the local way of life, traditions, and community. This active participation leads to a deep appreciation for the host culture, and guests depart with an altered sense of identity that incorporates elements of the local community, leaving an enduring impact on their hearts.

*“Absolutely. For guests, interacting with our community and immersing themselves in our traditions often leads to a newfound appreciation for our culture. They leave with a part of our identity in their hearts. On the other hand, as hosts, showcasing our cultural heritage and receiving appreciation enhances our pride and identity. It's a reciprocal process of identity co-creation.”*- Karma Lama (50 years)

In the reciprocal nature of this transformative process, hosts also undergo a positive transformation. By showcasing their cultural heritage and receiving appreciation from guests, hosts experience an enhanced sense of pride and identity. The act of sharing and

presenting their traditions contributes to the co-creation of identity, as hosts actively participate in shaping the perceptions and experiences of their guests.

The Interviewer's question about power dynamics in the homestay context acknowledges the importance of collaborative decision-making. In a setting where guests and hosts come together for a transformative experience, power dynamics must be approached with sensitivity. Collaborative decision-making ensures that both parties have a voice in shaping their shared experience. This approach fosters a sense of equality, respect, and mutual understanding, aligning with the reciprocal and transformative nature of identity formation in homestays.

In summary, transformative identity formation within homestays involves both guests and hosts undergoing significant changes in their self-perception and cultural identity through immersive cultural experiences. The reciprocal process of guests leaving with a part of the host identity in their hearts and hosts co-creating their identity through showcasing cultural heritage emphasizes the dynamic and mutually beneficial nature of cultural exchange in this unique hospitality setting.

### **Collaborative Decision-Making and Egalitarian Dynamics**

Power dynamics within the homestay are characterized by collaboration and shared decision-making. The absence of hierarchy ensures that everyone's opinions are valued, fostering an egalitarian environment.

*“Collaboration is key. Whether it's planning events, deciding on activities, or even something as simple as what to cook for dinner, everyone has a say. There's no hierarchy. It's about sharing responsibilities and respecting each other's opinions. This approach creates a harmonious environment where everyone feels valued.”*- Chari Maya Tamang (45 Year)

Collaborative Decision-Making and Egalitarian Dynamics in a homestay setting describe a power structure where decision-making is shared among all participants, and there is an absence of hierarchy. This approach ensures that everyone's opinions are considered and valued, promoting an egalitarian environment. Collaboration is emphasized in various aspects, from planning events to daily tasks, with everyone having a voice and sharing responsibilities. The result is a harmonious atmosphere where mutual respect and inclusivity contribute to a sense of value for every individual involved.

### **Influence of Local Context on Homestay Atmosphere**

The local context emerges as the soul of the homestay. Festivals, traditions, and the warmth of the community create a unique atmosphere, offering guests an authentic immersion into the life of Bethanchowk.

*“The local context is the soul of our homestay. Our festivals, traditions, and the warmth of the community create a unique atmosphere. Guests get to be part of these experiences,*

*which sets our homestay apart. It's not just about the physical space; it's about immersing them in the authentic life of Bethanchowk.” - Biras Tamang (48 Year)*

The Influence of Local Context on Homestay Atmosphere highlights that the essence of the homestay lies in the local festivals, traditions, and community warmth. This unique atmosphere offers guests an authentic immersion into the life of Bethanchowk, distinguishing the homestay by more than just its physical space but also by providing an opportunity for guests to be a part of local experiences.

### **Continuous Improvement and Enrichment**

The vision for continuous improvement involves introducing more interactive cultural sessions, encouraging active guest participation in traditional practices, and incorporating local artisans. This reflects a commitment to enriching the overall homestay experience.

*“I'm always looking for ways to make the experience richer. One idea is to introduce more interactive cultural sessions where guests can actively participate in traditional practices. Additionally, incorporating local artisans and artists for workshops could add another layer to the cultural immersion.” - Amar Lama (45 Year)*

Continuous Improvement and Enrichment in the homestay involve plans for more interactive cultural sessions, active guest participation in traditional practices, and collaboration with local artisans. The goal is to enhance the overall homestay experience by introducing diverse cultural elements and workshops led by local artists. The host expresses a commitment to constantly enriching the guest experience through these initiatives.

### **Summary, Conclusion and Theoretical Reflection**

The narratives from Bethanchowk's homestays weave a rich tapestry of experiences, uncovering the intricate dynamics at play within these unique hospitality settings. Cultural exchange emerges as a nuanced journey, with guests actively participating in local festivals and traditions, gradually becoming woven into the vibrant cultural fabric of Bethanchowk. This reciprocal process not only enhances the guests' journey but also provides hosts with a profound understanding of diverse cultural perspectives, fostering a deeper connection.

Central to these narratives is the theme of transformative identity formation, where homestay experiences leave an indelible mark on both guests and hosts. Guests depart with a part of the local identity embedded in their hearts, showcasing the reciprocal nature of this transformative journey. Simultaneously, hosts undergo positive transformations as they actively engage in shaping guests' perceptions through the sharing of cultural heritage, creating a harmonious exchange.

The ethos of collaborative decision-making and the absence of hierarchy within homestays stand out prominently. This inclusive environment fosters a sense of value for everyone involved, with shared responsibilities and mutual respect becoming the cornerstones of the homestay experience. In these settings, decisions, whether about planning events or daily tasks, are made collectively, reflecting a community-oriented approach that challenges traditional power dynamics found in more commercialized accommodations.

The influence of the local context emerges as the soul of Bethanchowk's homestays, where festivals, traditions, and community warmth create a unique atmosphere. This goes beyond the physical space, offering guests an authentic immersion into the life of Bethanchowk. It becomes a living, breathing entity that distinguishes these homestays and provides guests with a genuine and holistic cultural experience.

The vision for continuous improvement underscores a commitment to enhancing the overall homestay experience. Initiatives such as interactive cultural sessions and collaboration with local artisans exemplify a proactive approach to enriching cultural immersion for guests. This forward-looking mindset ensures that the homestay remains a dynamic and evolving space, adapting to the changing needs and preferences of its diverse guests.

From a sociological perspective, these narratives showcase how homestays transcend traditional hospitality models, becoming hubs for meaningful social interactions, cultural exchange, and the co-creation of identity. The emphasis on collaborative decision-making and the influence of the local context reflects a collective and community-oriented approach that challenges conventional power dynamics present in more commercialized accommodations.

In conclusion, the narratives from Bethanchowk's homestays paint a vivid picture of the transformative power inherent in immersive cultural experiences. The interplay of cultural exchange, identity formation, collaborative decision-making, local context influence, and continuous improvement efforts highlights the dynamic and reciprocal nature of the homestay experience. It not only serves as a fascinating sociological case study but also encapsulates the evolving preferences and enriching encounters in contemporary consumer behavior within the hospitality sector.

### **Implications for Practice**

Organizers of homestays have the opportunity to improve the overall quality of their programs by strategically implementing the insights obtained from the study. The fabric of social connections between hosts and guests can be strengthened by establishing an atmosphere in which meaningful communal experiences are prioritized in program design. Furthermore, developing successful orientation strategies requires an understanding of and emphasis on the gradual nature of cultural exchange. Homestay organizers can help guests and hosts adjust more smoothly by offering thorough guidance, which will ultimately lead to a more seamless integration into the local way of life. Furthermore, the recognition of the mutual identity formation process emphasizes how important mutual appreciation is. As a result, holding mutual appreciation workshops turns into a worthwhile endeavor. It provides a structured setting where hosts and Guests can learn more about one another's cultural backgrounds and create a more meaningful and genuine cultural exchange experience. Homestay coordinators can make sure that their programs have a lasting and transformative effect on participants' cultural exchange journey in addition to meeting their immediate needs by strategically implementing these insights.

### Implications for Future Research

Future research projects should examine the long-term effects of homestay experiences on the cultural perceptions and identity formation of both hosts and guests in order to further our understanding of homestay dynamics. Examining the enduring impact of these encounters can provide important new perspectives on the long-term consequences of intercultural communication. Furthermore, comparative research between various homestay environments is necessary to pinpoint differences in social dynamics impacted by local and cultural elements. These types of studies can provide insight into the subtle contextual factors that influence the homestay experience. In addition, the utilization of longitudinal research to monitor the development of homestay programs and evaluate the efficacy of ongoing enhancement endeavors will aid in the creation of enduring and significant methodologies. A comprehensive framework that builds upon the interview data and seamlessly integrates with previous research will be provided by organizing these research endeavors into a coherent narrative within a research paper that is structured according to thematic categories. This will foster a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics within homestay environments.

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