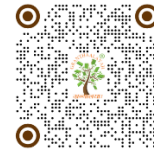


Original Article

## ENHANCING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM THROUGH EFFECTIVE HOMESTAY MANAGEMENT: EVIDENCE FROM NEPAL

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### ABSTRACT

Community-based homestay tourism is one of the important tourism strategies that can be developed to boost the local economy, maintain cultural heritage and involve community in local tourism. But, the empirical evidence on the factors affecting efficient operation of homestay in Nepal is still limited. The main objective of this study was to investigate the operational issues leading to successful management of homestays and the economic performance and tax compliance of community-based homestays in Nepal. The method used was quantitative research and one of the designs used was descriptive cross-sectional survey. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data from 89 registered Home Stay operators of pioneer Community Based Home Stay destination in Ghalegaun and Sirubari of the community-based home stays. Descriptive statistics and linear regression in SPSS version 26 were used for the collected data. It was found that quality infrastructure, road accessibility, culturally authentic homestay, adequate guest facilities, hygiene and sanitation, safe drinking water and hygienic preparation of local food are the factors which are mainly associated with effective homestay management. Homestay operation was also supported by family involvement. However, regression analysis found that none of the variables namely income level and saving capacity – was significant in terms of its relationship with annual tax payment, suggesting that tax compliance may be influenced by institutional and regulatory factors. Improved operational standards, infrastructure, sanitation, cultural authenticity, and institutional support can improve service quality, satisfaction of visitors and sustainability and competitiveness of community-based homestay tourism in Nepal.

**Keywords:** Community-Based Tourism, Homestay Management, Sustainable Tourism, Service Quality, Nepal

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the largest economic sectors globally that now plays an important role in generating employment, reducing poverty, facilitating cultural exchange and is a driver of sustainable development. The growing demand for authentic tourism experiences has led to a direction away from traditional mass tourism towards community-based tourism (CBT), which is focused on involving local communities and preserving cultural and natural resources. Nepal is blessed with unique natural beauty, high biodiversity and vibrant cultural heritage, and thus tourism is an important part of the Nepal's economy. In this context, community-based homestay programme has been developed as an important rural tourism model that helps tourists to understand local life, tradition and culture and which also provides extra income for the host households [Tiwari et al. \(2025\)](#). Homestays play a role in cultural preservation, livelihood diversification, and sustainable rural development through direct interaction with the local communities by receiving tourists [Kafle \(2023\)](#). This model not only enhances tourist satisfaction but also strengthens local economies and cultural heritage preservation [K.C et al. \(2025\)](#).

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To ensure the sustainability and competitiveness of CBT, it is essential to have good management of the stays. Successful homestays are characterised as those that offer accommodation as well as quality service delivery, appropriate infrastructure, hygiene and sanitation, hospitality and environmental management, cultural authenticity and adherence to operational standards. Well managed homestays have been seen to have a positive impact on visitor satisfaction, entrepreneurship development, household income and the long-term community resilience [Kanel et al. \(2024\)](#). Similarly, domestic research in Nepal has identified the employment generation, empowerment of local communities, conservation of the indigenous culture and promotion of the rural economies through homestay tourism [K.C. \(2018\)](#). The results of this study show that effective management is a key priority to ensure the economic, social and cultural returns of community-based tourism are maximized [Gautam \(2024\)](#).

Although extensive research on homestay tourism has been conducted, past research has tended to examine the homestay in isolation, either at a socio-economic level, or with respect to cultural preservation, satisfaction levels of visitors or the level of community participation. There was a lack of empirical studies that have looked at effective homestay management as a whole, which incorporates all aspects of homestay operation, standard of accommodation, infrastructure, hygiene, food service and institutional factors [Gautam \(2025\)](#). Additionally, although the two community homestay success stories of Nepal, Ghalegaun and Sirubari, are important, there is limited evidence available. So, the need for a better understanding of the operational factors influencing effective homestay management is felt to enhance the policy formulation and sustainability of the rural tourism development [K.C. \(2018\)](#).

The principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) continuous improvement, customer satisfaction, stakeholder involvement, service quality guide this study [Deming \(1986\)](#), [Oakland \(2003\)](#). Adopting the TQM approach to community-based homestays offers a useful framework for the understanding of how the operational quality affects the service delivery and sustainable tourism development. Hence, the purpose of this study is to look at the operational factors associated with the success of the community-based homestay management in Nepal and to evaluate the economic performance and tax compliance of the community-based homestay in Nepal [G.C \(2025\)](#). The study concludes that there are key practices in the operation of homestays that contribute to quality service delivery and sustainable tourism and this empirical evidence will be useful for the policy makers, tourism authorities, and the homestay operators to make community-based homestay tourism in Nepal more sustainable and competitive in the long term.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Homestay tourism is now one of the significant factors in community-based tourism (CBT), as it offers the tourists authentic cultural experience and facilitates the involvement of their hosts in tourism-related activities. Homestays provide direct contact between visitors and host families, enabling tourists to immerse themselves in the lives, traditions and values of the people they are visiting, in contrast to traditional accommodation facilities [Subedi \(2019\)](#). But the success of homestay tourism is not only determined by the attractiveness of a destination but also by the efficiency of the management of the destination. Tourism services, under a good management of the homestay owners, can deliver the quality services that the visitors expect and the services can be developed in a manner that will respect the local culture, will sustain the quality of the services and will be sustainable for the long term [Woli \(2022\)](#). Therefore, the management practices have become an important factor affecting the overall performance and competitiveness of community-based homestays.

Community based tourism focuses on tourism planning and management, ownership and participation of the local community [K.C et al. \(2025\)](#). Under this framework, homestay operators have an important role in providing quality tourism experience by coordinating and organizing accommodation, hospitality, cultural activities and visitors' services. The successful homestay programme depends on the active involvement of the community, the collaborative management, continuous learning and following operational standards that ensure the consistency of the services [Anand et al. \(2012\)](#), [Regmi and Walter \(2017\)](#). The results have shown that good management plays an important role in sustaining and maintaining the quality of the homestay business in the community.

Good homestay management goes beyond just offering a place to stay; it includes several aspects of operation. The overall experience and service quality that visitors have are highly dependent on infrastructure, accessibility, hygiene and sanitation, accommodation facilities, food quality and safety, communication, cultural authenticity and hospitality. According to the ASEAN Homestay Standards, leadership, organizational management, capacity building, infrastructure, collaboration with stakeholders, environmental management and continuous quality improvement are critical in successful homestay operations [Association of Southeast Asian Nations \(2016\)](#). The findings from the studies in Malaysia and Indonesia have also shown that the implementation of structured management systems, operator training, institutional support and standardized operating procedures have a great effect on the quality of the services and operational performance [Iqbal Rosyidi \(2018\)](#). These studies emphasize that a successful homestay management should take a holistic view, combining physical facilities and management skills.

The quality of the service is still one of the significant factors that affects the effectiveness of homestay management. Visitors to the homestay experience assess the quality of the homestay not just with accommodation facilities, but also with the cleanliness, hospitality, food services, safety, communication, responsiveness, and opportunities for meaningful interaction with host communities. Having good service quality boosts the overall experience of visitors and the reputation of the homestay destination.

The impact of quality management practices on enhancing visitor satisfaction, re-visitation and destination competitiveness has been consistently reported in previous research [Singh et al. \(2022\)](#). This means that homestay operators must continue to operate within the same set of standards and enhance the delivery of their services to cater to the evolving expectations of tourists [Lama \(2014\)](#).

A key component in a successful homestay programme is the ability to preserve cultural content. Homestays in communities are also different from commercial lodging, since they offer chances for visitors to experience the culture, traditional way of life, food and customs of the local community. Promoting cultural identity in providing quality hospitality services makes homestay tourism more unique and boosts the sense of authenticity of tourists [Ghimire \(2023\)](#). Research indicates that the preservation of culture, traditional architecture, food and symbol of authenticity in guest-host interaction are important factors that enhance the quality of the visiting experience, and make community homestays different from conventional lodging options [Acharya and Halpenny \(2013\)](#). As such, the challenge for homestay operators is the balance between preserving cultures and delivering quality services.

Community based homestays are now an important model in Nepal especially at pioneer places like Sirubari and Ghalegaun. Rest of the homestays have proven the capability of the local tourism businesses to deliver genuine visitor experiences with the involvement of the community and respect for their culture. In order to improve the quality of service and consistency of operation, the Government of Nepal has set Homestay Operating Guidelines setting minimum standards in the areas of accommodation, hygiene, infrastructure, hospitality and visitor services. The guidelines highlight the importance of meeting the standards of operation, continually improving the quality of the product and engaging communities to enrich visitors' experiences and ensure the viability of homestay businesses.

While other studies on different aspects of homestay tourism have been conducted, most of them have explored a single aspect of the tourism category namely the visitor satisfaction, cultural preservation, socio-economic impacts or community participation [Dahal and Shrestha \(2018\)](#), [Sharma et al. \(2020\)](#). There is comparatively little research in the field of community-based tourism that seeks to identify the various factors that interact to shape effective homestay management. Moreover, there is still limited empirical evidence available in the country, even though the homestay, as a prime tourist product, is of great importance, particularly in the tourism development of Nepal [Kunwar and Pandey \(2016\)](#). Past research is also limited in providing a clear understanding of the operational management practices, infrastructure, service quality, authenticity, and hospitality as a whole that result in good management of homestays [Singh et al. \(2022\)](#). Hence the purpose of this study is to investigate the causes of effective homestay management in the community-based homestays of Nepal and in this way, it would also provide empirical support for strengthening management of community-based homestay tourism and improve the quality and sustainability of this tourism in Nepal.

## METHODOLOGY

The quantitative research approach and descriptive cross sectional survey design was utilized in this research to explore the factors that affects the effective homestay management in CBH in Nepal. The quantitative approach helped to collect and analyze standardized responses from homestay operators on different operational and management aspects. The cross-sectional design was deemed suitable as the data obtained from the respondents were to obtain their perception of the factors that will enable successful homestay management at one single time [Creswell and Creswell \(2018\)](#).

## SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

The study was carried out in Ghalegaun, Lamjung District and Sirubari, Syangja District of Nepal. The study was based on the pioneer community-based homestay areas of Ghalegaun, Lamjung District and Sirubari, Syangja District in Nepal. These destinations were intentionally chosen as they have successful community-based tourism initiatives and have established Homestay Programmes for a long time. The target population consisted of registered homestay owners/operators who are directly involved in managing homestay business. The purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents who have hands on experience in homestay operations. The estimated sample size was 145 homestay operators, but during the process 89 valid questionnaires were collected of which 45 were filled out by the homestay operators from Sirubari and 44 from Ghalegaun.

**Table 1**

Table 1 Sample distribution		
Location	Sample group	Number of respondents
Sirubari	Homestay owners/tourism respondents	45
Ghalegaun	Homestay owners/tourism respondents	44
Total		89

Primary data were obtained using a structured questionnaire in the field. Respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study before data collection and they were free to accept or reject the invitation. The secondary data gathered for the development of the

research instrument and the understanding of the result findings were published journal articles, government reports, tourism policies and other relevant literature.

### MEASUREMENT TOOLS

A structured questionnaire which was adapted from the past studies of community-based tourism, homestay management, and service quality was used to gather the data. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: (i) demographic characteristics of the respondents, (ii) operational and management practices and (iii) factors affecting the effective homestay management identified as accessibility, infrastructure, accommodation facilities, hygiene and sanitation, food service, hospitality, cultural authenticity, and visitors service standards. The items of the measurement were designed to capture respondents' perceptions of the operational practices that are related to effective homestay management. The responses were collected with the use of suitable categorical response options for each variable.

### DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data was coded, verified, and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The demographic characteristics of respondents were summarized using descriptive statistical techniques, such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, and the operational dimensions that affect effective homestay management were examined. The results have been illustrated in tables and presented in brief descriptive interpretations for identification of major management practices used by the operators of the community-based homestay in Nepal.

### RESULTS

The results of the study are reported in this section, based on the responses obtained from the community-based homestay operators in Nepal.

#### DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMESTAY OPERATORS

Table 2

Table 2 Demographic Characteristics of Homestay Operators			
Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	21	52.5
	Female	19	47.5
Religion	Buddhist	20	50.0
	Indigenous/Own religion	18	45.0
	Hindu	1	2.5
Ethnicity	Janjati	38	95.0
	Brahmin	1	2.5
Education	Basic level	27	67.5
	Secondary and above	6	15.0
	Illiterate	3	7.5
Occupation before Homestay	Agriculture	31	77.5
	Foreign employment	5	7.5
	Government service	3	2.5
	Others	8	12.5
Male Family Members Involved	One member	16	40.0
	Two or more members	20	50.0
Female Family Members Involved	One member	11	27.5
	Two or more members	26	65

Source: Field Survey, 2026

**Table 2** shows the accessibility, infrastructure and cultural authenticity factors which are associated with effective homestay management. It is the highest ranked operational requirement with nearly all respondents (97.5%) saying wind, animal and other environmental hazards should be protected at homestay. Maintaining open, clean, and dust free environment (77.5%) and traditional architectural and cultural features of homestay houses (75.0%) were also highlighted by a considerable part of the respondents. In addition, 70.0% said good road access is important to making tourist arrivals and improved operation. The findings overall indicate that the operational conditions that help in effective management of community-based homestay in Nepal are safe physical infrastructure, environmental cleanliness, cultural authenticity, and accessibility.

## OPERATIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING EFFECTIVE HOMESTAY MANAGEMENT

**Table 3**

<b>Table 3 Field Survey, 2026</b>				
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Good Arrangement n (%)</b>	<b>Normal Arrangement n (%)</b>	<b>No Arrangement n (%)</b>	<b>Missing n (%)</b>
Road arrangement for easy access	70	27.5	0	2.5
House reflects the original culture	75	22.5	0	2.5
Protection from wind, animals and other hazards	97.5	0	0	2.5
Open, clean and dust-free surroundings	77.5	17.5	2.5	2.5

**Source:** Field Survey, 2026

**Table 3** shows the perception of the infrastructure and environmental factors affecting effective homestay management among the respondents. The results show that the most important was having a safe physical environment, with 97.5% saying that homestays should be safe from wind, animals and other environmental hazards. Similarly, 77.5% said it was important to keep the environment in the homestay building clean, open and dust free, and 75.0% said the building should maintain the local culture as it existed before. Transport infrastructure is also essential for tourists to access the area, with 70.0% of the respondents viewing it as a key factor. In general, the results indicate that the physical infrastructure, the environment quality and cultural authenticity are the basic elements that affect the successful management of homestays in community-based tourism.

**Table 4**

<b>Table 4 Accommodation Facilities Influencing Effective Homestay Management</b>			
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Good Arrangement n (%)</b>	<b>Normal Arrangement n (%)</b>	<b>No Arrangement n (%)</b>
Separate guest rooms	87.5	10	0
Standard bed arrangement	82.5	12.5	2.5
Door mat	80.0	17.5	0
Clothes hanging facility	57.5	22.5	17.5
Adequate lighting	95	2.5	0
Smoke-free bedroom	80	10	0
Bedroom decoration	50	35	12.5
Slippers	72.5	25	0
Mirror	67.5	27.5	2.5
Tea table	60	37.5	0
Two chairs	25	42.5	30.0

**Source:** Field Survey, 2026

**Table 4** presents the respondents' view on the type of accommodation facilities that are needed for effective homestay management. The lighting was the most agreed upon at 95.0% of respondents indicating it was a good arrangement. Other important factors considered for guest comfort were separate guest rooms (87.5%) and standard bed arrangements (82.5%). Likewise, 80.0% pointed out the need to offer door mats and keep bedrooms smoke free. The bedroom decoration (50.0%) and two chairs (25.0%)

had relatively low ratings, while the other items were found to be adequately agreed upon, with ratings of moderate level of agreement for slippers (72.5%) and mirrors (67.5%) and tea tables (60.0%). The results showed that homestay operators are more concerned about the functional facilities related to improving cleanliness, comfort and convenience of the rooms rather than the decorative features in the rooms.

**Table 5**

<b>Table 5 Hygiene, Sanitation, and Environmental Health Factors Influencing Effective Homestay Management</b>			
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Good Arrangement (%)</b>	<b>Normal Arrangement (%)</b>	<b>No Arrangement (%)</b>
Dustbin	92.5	5.0	-
Clean and convenient toilet	85.0	12.5	-
Separate bathing facility	95.0	2.5	-
Livestock away from guest area	55.0	40.0	2.5
Smoke-free kitchen	52.5	45.0	-
Safe drinking water	75.0	20.0	2.5

**Source:** Field Survey, 2026

The perceptions of the respondents regarding hygiene, sanitation, environmental health factors to ensure effective homestay management are summarized in [Table 5](#). The highest scores were for separate bathing facilities (95.0%) and for good waste management (92.5%) of the indicators evaluated; the lowest scores were for the availability of a doctor to help with any bathing-related illness (77.2%) and for provision of a physician to treat the heat (64.0%). The other services widely recognized as essential service standards were clean toilet facilities (85.0%) and safe drinking water (75.0%). Smoke-free kitchens (52.5%) and keeping livestock out of the guest rooms (55.0%) were rated comparatively low, suggesting that these need to be improved in some homestays. The findings indicate that provision of hygienic accommodation facilities, sanitation and provision of a clean environment are basic aspects of successful homestay management, which directly affects the safety, comfort and quality of the homestay experience of visitors.

**Table 6**

<b>Table 6 Food Service and Hospitality Factors Influencing Effective Homestay Management</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Good Arrangement (%)</b>	<b>Normal Arrangement (%)</b>
Healthy preparation of local food	82.5	15.0
Appropriate dining arrangement	55	42.5

**Source:** Field Survey, 2026

Effective homestay management relates to the food service and hospitality practices shown in [Table 6](#). Most (82.5%) respondents considered healthy preparation and serving of local food to be an integral element of management, underscoring the value of food quality and authenticity for the improvement of tourists' experience. Also, over half (55.0%) rated satisfactory dining arrangements as satisfactory, but a significant percentage rated them as moderate. The results show that offering local cuisine in a hygienic environment and providing appropriate dining facilities are among the key factors in successful management of homestays and ultimately enhance visitors' satisfaction and the quality of community-based tourism services.

**Table 7**

<b>Table 7 Linear Regression</b>		
<b>Model Fit Measures</b>		
<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>
1	0.409	0.168

**Source:** Field Survey, 2026

The results of the linear regression model used to analyze the relationship between the selected predictors and annual tax paid by the homestay operators are shown in [Table 7](#). The correlation coefficient (R = 0.409) indicates a moderate relationship between the independent variables and annual tax payment. The coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.168) indicates that about 16.8% of the

variability in the annual tax paid by homestay operators is captured by the variables in the model. The model has some explanatory power but a significant portion of the tax payment variation is not explained, indicating that other factors economic, operational and institutional can also affect the annual tax liability of homestay operators.

**Table 8**

<b>Table 8 Model Coefficients - How Much Tax Do You Pay to The Government Annually for Running a Homestay?</b>				
<b>Predictor</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>P</b>
Intercept <sup>a</sup>	0.2157	0.0541	3.99	<.001
<b>Level of total Income:</b>				
2 – 1	-0.0171	0.0223	-0.767	0.45
3 – 1	-0.0157	0.0235	-0.665	0.512
<b>Saving Capacity after homestay:</b>				
4 – 3	0.045	0.0529	0.85	0.404
5 – 3	0.01	0.054	0.186	0.854
<sup>a</sup> Represents reference level				

**Source:** Field Survey, 2026

The estimated regression co-efficient of predictors of annual tax payment among homestay operators are shown in [Table 8](#). The results show that total income and saving capacity after running a homestay were not statistically significant in determining the annual amount of tax paid to the government (all the p values were greater than 0.05). There was no significant difference between those in the higher income brackets and the reference group in the amount of tax paid. Similarly, disparity in saving capacity was not significantly related to annual tax payments. The results indicate that the variables in the model were not significant predictors of the annual tax contribution, suggesting that other factors, including government taxation policies, businesses registration status, tax compliance behaviour or the size of homestay operation might explain the variations in the amount of tax contribution made by the homestay operators per year.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the study, it is concluded that the successful management of the homestay in Nepal requires the efficiency of quality infrastructure, accommodation facilities, hygiene and sanitation, food service, cultural authenticity and family participation. The demographic findings revealed that homestays are mostly run by the indigenous Janjati households where agriculture is the main livelihood and both the male and female members of Janjati households are engaged in managing the business of the homestay. This is in line with the results of [Acharya and Halpenny \(2013\)](#) and [Regmi and Walter \(2017\)](#) that found community-based homestays in rural areas improve both household involvement and local economic development and encourage diversification of rural livelihoods. Additionally, the study indicated that the safe physical infrastructure, clean surroundings, culturally authentic houses and good road accessibility were considered as critical operational factors, consistent with the ASEAN Homestay Standard [Association of Southeast Asian Nations \(2016\)](#) and the results of the study conducted by [Kafle \(2023\)](#) which highlighted the role of infrastructure, accessibility and cultural preservation in enhancing the quality of services and satisfaction of visitors. Likewise, the respondents rated high the accommodation facilities, including adequate lighting, separate guest rooms, the standard of the bedding and smoke-free rooms, which are more likely to be cared for being clean, comfortable and functional. Hygiene and sanitation, separate bathing area, clean toilets, waste disposal, and safe drinking water, were also highlighted as key service standards in accordance with the Homestay Operating Guidelines of Nepal by the [Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation \(2014\)](#). Lower scores for the presence of smoke-free kitchens and keeping livestock away from the guests' area, however, suggest that there are still some room for improvement in some homestays. Another good indicator of both a person's satisfaction with the food and their cultural authenticity was how the food was prepared locally, which was again related to the findings of [Gautam \(2025\)](#). In terms of the economic performance and tax compliance, income level and saving capacity was not significant enough to predict on an annual tax payment, which indicates that institutional regulatory factors may play a bigger role in determining tax compliance than income of the house. The findings indicate that the enhancement of operation standards, infrastructure, sanitation, hospitality, and institutional support is crucial for ensuring high quality of services and sustainability of the community-based homestay tourism in Nepal.

## CONCLUSION

With quantitative cross-sectional survey, this study explored the operational aspects of effective management of homestays, along with the economic performance and tax compliance of community-based homestays in the context of Nepal. The results show

that good homestay management is mainly based on good infrastructure, good transportation, culturally authentic accommodation, hygienic facilities, safe drinking water, good local food and clean environment. However, the role of family participation and traditional agricultural livelihoods are also important in sustaining Community based Homestay Businesses. The results are aligned with previous research that emphasize the significance of service quality, cultural preservation and community involvement in sustainable rural tourism respectively. The results indicate that income and saving capacity is not a significant determinant of an annual tax payment, but that other institutional and regulatory factors could influence tax compliance. In general, setting up standards for operations, strengthening infrastructure and sanitation, protecting cultural heritage and increasing the institutional support can enhance the quality of service, satisfaction of visitors, and sustainability and competitiveness of community-based homestay tourism in Nepal.

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