

## **Economic Empowerment through Homestay Tourism: A Case Study of Rural Communities in West Garo Hills District**

Dimchi T Sangma\*, Sunildro L.S. Akoijam

*Department of Management,*

*North-Eastern Hill University, Tura Campus, Meghalaya-794002, India*

*\*Corresponding author:sangma441@gmail.com*

### **Abstract**

*Homestay tourism has become a powerful tool for rural development, providing long-term jobs for people in poor regions and giving tourists a more profound understanding of the culture. In the West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya, India, which is known for its beautiful scenery and rich indigenous culture, homestay programs have become a popular way to promote community-based tourism. This study investigates the economic impacts of homestay on the livelihoods of rural families in this district using a descriptive research methodology. Primary data was obtained from homestay operators through personal interviews conducted in selected villages. The results show that homestay tourism significantly boosts household income, encourages people to start their businesses, and increases the demand for goods and services made in the area. Many of the respondents who participated said that the money they make from homestays helps them pay for things like food, school, health care, and savings. This makes their homes more self-sufficient and stable financially. The study, on the other hand, finds that there are big problems that could slow down economic growth, like inadequate infrastructure, not enough training, bad marketing, and seasonal changes. The study suggests that lawmakers and tourism associations should take certain steps to improve the infrastructure, provide training for homestay operators, and come up with full marketing plans. To make homestay tourism more sustainable and help it grow, these steps are needed so that local communities can fully benefit from the district's economic opportunities.*

**Keywords:** homestay tourism, economic impact, community based tourism, rural development

### **Introduction**

Homestay tourism is a new type of community tourism. It allows travelers to enjoy the local culture and helps host communities earn money. Studies show that homestays provide real opportunities to experience local culture, allowing visitors to see rural life, customs, and traditions in a friendly setting (Kafle, 2023; Regmi et al., 2023). Homestay offers genuine travel experiences and improves community well-being by involving locals in participation and decision-making. This model strengthens communities by blending hospitality with cultural preservation and encouraging responsible travel practices (Gautam, 2025). This tourism strategy is an efficient driver of socioeconomic development in rural areas, supporting local economies and providing employment possibilities while conserving indigenous forests and lowering infrastructural expenses (Kafle, 2023; Yasami et al., 2017). It

supports community empowerment and helps preserve local culture. Researchers have found that homestay tourism makes a significant difference in reducing poverty and boosting economic freedom. In fact, stakeholders reported higher incomes as a result of tourism (Goswami et al., 2025).

Homestay tourism has great potential in India because of its rich natural and cultural history, however there are problems with service delivery and infrastructure (Bhan, 2014). The Northeast region, especially Meghalaya, shows this potential with its special tribal culture, beautiful landscapes, and rich ecology (Dkhar & Biswas, 2025). The Garo, Khasi, and Jaintia Hills region, which is part of the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot, is particularly biodiverse, with unique agricultural practices, such as shifting cultivation and sacred grove conservation systems created by local tribes. This region's matrilineal communities and mixed cultural traditions create unique tourist attractions (Singh, 2010). Community participation is very important in nature-based tourism in Meghalaya. Local involvement is essential for achieving sustainable development goals that support economic strength, social inclusion, and environmental health (Kumar, 2024). The success of homestay tourism depends on everyone working together. This includes local governments, community members, homestay operators, and NGOs all of which play a role in implementing sustainable practices (Suardana et al., 2024). Despite the possibility of homestay tourism for sustainable community development, it faces major obstacles in both rural and mountainous areas. Inadequate infrastructure, limited financial resources, and poor marketing tactics are major hurdles to the development of sustainable tourism (Bhutio et al., 2022; Kafle, 2023; Matris, 2023). However, problems such as poor infrastructure, changes in seasons, and weak regulations need to be addressed with specific policies and training efforts to make the most of homestay tourism for sustainable growth in rural areas (Tiwari, 2025; Shah et al., 2025).

Interest in community-based tourism such as homestays, has increased recently, but there are still significant research gaps. Many studies have focused on popular tourist spots, leaving remote areas such as the West Garo Hills, unnoticed. This area presents unique challenges and opportunities for community involvement and local ownership. Additionally, there has been little focus on how homestay tourism boosts economic empowerment in areas with poor infrastructure and rich cultural diversity, such as Garo Hills.

Therefore, this study investigates how homestay tourism contributes to the economic empowerment of rural communities in the West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya. Specifically, it seeks to:

- What are the economic benefits of homestay tourism for rural households in West Garo Hills District?
- What major challenges do homestay operators face in running and sustaining their enterprises?

Objectives of the study:-

- To assess the economic impact of homestay tourism on the livelihood of rural households in the West Garo hills Districts
- To identify the key challenges faced by homestay operators in sustaining their business.

## Literature Review

### *Homestay Tourism As Community Based Entrepreneurship*

According to Kafle (2023), homestay tourism is a type of lodging in which tourists stay with local families and learn about their culture, customs, and hospitality. This concept allows visitors to immerse themselves in genuine local culture while receiving food, accommodation, and cultural events from host communities (Wijesundara & Gnanapala, 2016). As an alternative to traditional hotels, homestay tourism is popular in remote areas and helps protect forests and keep costs low, while also boosting local economies (Kafle, 2023). As an alternative form of accommodation, homestay travel has changed significantly since early days. The idea has basic features in common with its original forms and has evolved due to different social factors, such as religious beliefs, financial motivations, cultural exchanges, environmental concerns, and goals for sustainable tourism development (Yasami et al., 2017). In Malaysia, homestay tourism was developed from basic “bed and breakfast” options for long-term visitors to an official national tourism product by 1995 (Ramele et al., 2017). Regional development patterns exhibit clear evolutionary stages, as evidenced in China’s Mogan Mountain area, which underwent initial development (2007-2011), rapid growth (2012-2015), and maturation (2016-present). These stages are influenced by geographical conditions, transportation access, tourism organization mechanisms, policy impacts, and community engagement (Long et al., 2018). Modern homestay tourism promotes rural socioeconomic development by providing tourists with authentic cultural experiences in home-like settings, while also promoting poverty reduction and sustainable tourism activities (Yasami et al., 2017; Singh, 2014).

Homestay tourism is a type of community-based alternative tourism that allows visitors to experience authentic local culture while staying with the host family. For developing nations with little infrastructure but a wealth of cultural history, homestays are ideal sustainable tourist products (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013). In India, especially in the Indian Himalayan Region, homestays are encouraged as a way to promote sustainable tourism. They help support local traditions and culture, while also providing economic benefits (Thakur et al., 2023). Research has shown that homestays can help promote gender equality by providing income opportunities for women and supporting community development in economic, environmental, and social areas (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013). However, implementation encounters major problems, such as incorrect use of ideas, lack of community leadership, poor marketing skills, and insufficient involvement from stakeholders (Wijesundara & Gnanapala, 2016).

According to Lynch (1999) and Niu Wei (2019), homestays are a unique type of accommodation that is run by families and offer small-scale cultural exchanges in residential areas. Homestays provide visitors with a more genuine taste of the local culture than impersonal hotels do by facilitating one-on-one interactions between hosts and visitors in a warm and welcoming environment (Yasami et al., 2017). Important features are small operations with special pricing, close relationships between hosts and guests, and strong connections with the local culture and environment (Wei, 2019). Homestays help guests adapt to new cultures by letting them join local celebrations and customs, becoming part of

community life (Rawal, 2023). Historical evolution indicates that homestays have consistently offered alternative lodging experiences, motivated by the pursuit of authentic cultural interactions, environmental consciousness, and sustainable tourism development, thus differentiating them from conventional chain hotels (Yasami et al., 2017).

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has become a method of sustainable development that focuses on involving the community, empowering its members, and using planning processes that start at the grassroots level. Rico and Peterek (2024) suggest that CBT is a way to implement sustainable tourism that involves the community and encourages development using local knowledge and available resources. This theoretical foundation focuses on the connection between participation and empowerment. However, Gutierrez (2023) showed that this relationship was complex. He suggests a new model in which communities need to be empowered first to participate effectively, and ongoing interaction can enhance both participation and empowerment. Research on this topic has increased significantly since 2015, particularly in developing countries, with prevalent themes including community engagement, stakeholder collaboration, and sustainability (Tuyen et al., 2025).

Homestay tourism is emerging as an important concept in India's hospitality sector, with enormous potential for long-term development. According to research, homestays bring economic benefits by reducing poverty, diversifying livelihoods, and empowering local economies, particularly in rural and hilly communities (Kulshreshtha & Kulshreshtha, 2019; Lakhera et al., 2024). The idea combines traditional Indian values like “Atithi Devo Bhava” (Guest is God) and “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” (The World is One Family), promoting social sustainability and the preservation of culture (Lakhera et al., 2024). Homestay tourism has positive effects on social, economic, and environmental aspects, especially in the Indian Himalayan Region. It helps achieve sustainable development goals and preserves cultural heritage (Sanyal et al., 2023).

### ***Homestay Tourism and Economic Empowerment***

Homestay tourism has become an important way to boost the economy, especially in rural areas, by providing people with more ways to make money and make their homes financially more stable. In Malaysia, homestay programs that highlight regional customs and culture have become symbols of rural tourism. These programs aim not only to promote cultural interchange but also to provide additional income and job opportunities in rural communities. This has encouraged more people to participate in homestay tourism and improve their economic status (Pusiran & Xiao, 2013). In Lamjung District, Nepal, homestay operators have seen a steady rise in income and expenses, with many covering their everyday expenses through earnings from homestays (Magar, 2021). These initiatives help economic development in several ways, such as creating jobs, supporting women entrepreneurs, encouraging people to return to their hometowns, building infrastructure, and enhancing living standards (Agarwal & Mehra, 2019; Magar, 2021). According to Regmi et al. (2023), homestay tourism helps reduce poverty, while conserving local customs and culture. Pokhrel and Mahat (2025) found that family member's health and education outcomes improved as a result of these economic benefits, which means that more people can afford to obtain those

services. In addition to creating direct jobs, homestay tourism encourages the creation of indirect jobs in industries such as local craft, food services, and transportation. China's Mogan Mountain homestay agglomeration is an excellent example of how homestay companies can improve local tourism resources, boost the tourism industry, and create extra jobs (Long et al., 2018). The homestay model provides an opportunity for individuals and families to work for themselves using their homes and local cultural resources. This form of self-employment is clearly seen in the Indian state of Uttarakhand, where homestays and collaborative consumption have helped promote rural sustainability (Kataria et al., 2023). Homestay tourism has become an important way to help women gain economic independence and to support sustainable development in different communities. Studies show that homestay programs help women earn extra income, improve family relationships, and enhance their social influence (Quang et al., 2023). In India, homestay programs have provided job opportunities for 90% of local women and have helped with environmental protection and cultural preservation (Chakraborty, 2019). In Nepal, homestays offer great opportunities for women, helping the community grow and supporting gender equality. Women-operated homestays in Barpak have helped them earn money and participate in tourism development (Acharya and Halpenny, 2013).

### ***Homestay Tourism as a Driver of Rural Entrepreneurship***

Homestay tourism has become an important factor in rural entrepreneurship, functioning as a micro-business that offers sustainable job opportunities in rural and tribal areas. People from small villages usually run these programs with little government help. These include agricultural, cultural, and recreational tourist activities (Zamani-Farahani, 2011). The effect of entrepreneurship is especially significant for rural women, who gain psychological, social, and economic skills by running homestay businesses, resulting in socioeconomic empowerment (Singh et al., 2020). According to Chatterjee et al. (2024), homestays act as catalysts for the promotion of regional art, culture, and customs while shifting resources from urban to rural areas through skillfully implemented marketing methods. In Nepal, homestay programs give rural women the opportunity to receive technical and vocational training. However, they face problems because many of them do not have much schooling or know how to read and write, therefore the programs need to be tailored to their needs, and ongoing support is needed (Kanel et al., 2021). Homestay success requires property owners to build skills in management routines and operational capacities, while technology development and transaction management continue to be areas for improvement (Priyatiningsih, 2022). Trust and group action are two important forms of social capital in community-based tourism development that enable locals to successfully participate in homestay programs (Pramanik et al., 2019). The homestay program in Malaysia uses women's social skills and cultural exchanges to help reduce poverty in rural areas and to promote business ownership among indigenous people (Osman & Bakar, 2014). These studies collectively illustrate how homestay tourism incorporates local social institutions, traditional knowledge, and community ownership to promote rural entrepreneurship and sustainable development.

## ***Homestay Tourism in Meghalaya and Northeast India***

Homestay tourism in Northeast India has become an important alternative tourism model that offers various advantages for local communities. Research in Arunachal Pradesh indicates that the quality of homestay services positively influences tourist satisfaction, with lodging, facilities, and services being significant variables (Lungtan & Thappa, 2024). The future of homestay tourism in this region has several different aspects. First, it provides a practical tourism model that is in line with development goals. Homestay tourism is important because it helps local communities by promoting economic, social, cultural, and environmental sustainability (Basak et al., 2021). Northeast India's cultural and ecological advantages make homestay tourism more beneficial. These qualities make homestays a good alternative to hotels for guests seeking authentic experience. Homestays enhance tourists' experiences and allow communities to promote their cultures (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013). According to Dutta and Mukhopadhyay (2024), homestay tourism in the Darjeeling Hills is a sustainable way to deal with overtourism because it sends tourists to less-visited areas while still following responsible tourism practices.

Meghalaya has great potential for tourism because of its natural features, such as waterfalls, caves, living root bridges, and a variety of plants and animals (Peinlang, 2019; Nayak & Mishra, 2013; Sarkar et al., 2024). Nature-based tourism has a significant effect on local jobs and income, particularly in helping women involved in tourism. Studies show that it has great potential for boosting the state economy (De & Devi, 2010). According to studies conducted in the state, indigenous traditions and matrilineal society of Meghalaya have a profound impact on homestay tourism, even if they do not have the resources they need, the women in this matriarchal community are self-assured and receptive to visitors' request for cultural tour (Kharkongor et al., 2018). Many women have become successful stakeholders in the tourism industry since the matrilineal structure encourages them to become entrepreneurs (Dutta, 2023). Government support is important for sustainable tourism growth, especially in encouraging community-based tourism and homestays (Lyngdoh, 2022; Suharyanto et al., 2019).

## ***Challenges and Constraints in Homestay Tourism Development***

Homestay tourism development encounters important challenges in various regions, limiting its ability to serve as a sustainable rural development strategy. In India's Kumaon region, the main constraints include a lack of money, poor road networks, insufficient leisure activities for youngsters, and inadequate skill development (Singh & Kamruddin, 2024). Homestay tourism encounters an important infrastructure challenge that limits its growth in various countries. In Sri Lanka, homestay operations face challenges owing to insufficient facilities and communication issues, as well as problems such as the absence of formal management systems and a lack of industry awareness (Wijesundara & Gnanapala, 2016). Similarly, Nepal's homestay industry faces major problems such as unclear rules, insufficient infrastructure, and insufficient training (Kafle, 2023). The Sikkim and Darjeeling hill regions face similar challenges, as homestays struggle with limited financial support, marketing issues, and poor solid waste management, which affect the development of sustainable tourism (Bhutio et al., 2022). Yong et al. (2024) highlight that homestay entrepreneurs in

Sabah, Malaysia, face challenges related to advertising, insufficient training, and limited community involvement. Despite these obstacles, homestay tourism holds potential for preserving cultural heritage, fostering local and economic growth, and standardizing tourism.

## **Research design and Methodology**

### ***Research Design***

This research uses a descriptive design to examine Economic Empowerment through Homestay Tourism, focusing on rural communities in the West Garo Hills District. In order to provide a clear and accurate picture of the present situation and difficulties linked with homestay tourism in the West Garo Hills district, a descriptive approach is considered suitable because it allows for the systematic description of the study population's characteristics, behaviors, and perceptions.

### ***Study area***

This research focuses on Tura, the district headquarters of the West Garo Hills in Meghalaya. Tura, located in the foothills of the Nokrek range, serves as a cultural and administrative center with a population of 74,858 according to the 2011 Census, primarily consisting of the indigenous Garo community. The region is characterized by its natural features, including waterfalls such as Rongbangdare and Pelgadare, as well as streams like the Ganol River. Tura Peak (872 m) is a significant landmark, recognized for its historical importance and popularity as a trekking destination.

Tura was chosen for this research because of its significance as a gateway to key regional tourist destinations, including Balpakram National Park and Siju Cave. This strategic location, combined with its lively local culture, makes it and its surrounding rural villages suitable for the development of homestay tourism, giving a perfect framework for investigating its economic consequences on local households.

### ***Research instrument***

This study used a quantitative method. Primary data was gathered from homestay operators through schedule. The schedule was developed by modifying items and constructs derived from prior research. The instrument comprises two sections: the initial section gathers data on respondent's demographic and household characteristics, including age, gender, educational attainment, family size, and previous occupation. The second section included statements and questions pertaining to the study's primary variables, including income generation, the economic impact of homestay, entrepreneurial activities, and perceived challenges. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, was employed to assess attitudes and perceptions across various items.

### ***Sampling plan***

Data were gathered from ten homestay operators in the chosen villages of the West Garo Hills District. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were utilized in combination. Participants were initially identified through local tourism associations and community leaders, employing purposive sampling methods. These participants then played a key role in

snowball sampling, which uncovered additional homestay operators in the vicinity. As a result, the sample includes a significant number of the active homestay entrepreneurs in the study area.

***Tool and techniques for data analysis***

Descriptive statistics in Excel were used to examine the study’s data. In order to summarize the respondents socio-demographic and livelihood related factors, percentage analysis and frequency distribution were used. To determine the degree of agreement or disagreement with statements regarding economic benefits and challenges, mean score analysis was used to the Likert-scale responses. Tabulation and graphing tools like pie charts were used to make the results easy to understand. Using these approaches, the researcher was able to uncover common trends, assess the economic contributions of homestay, and draw relevant conclusions about their role in empowering rural households in West Garo Hills District.

**Results**

**Table 1: Demographic and Business Profile of Homestay Operators**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Year of operation	1993	1	10%
	2019	1	10%
	2021	4	40%
	2022	2	20%
	2023	2	20%
Sex of respondents	Male	7	70%
	Female	3	30%
Primary occupation before homestay	Agriculture	4	40%
	Business	3	30%
	Teacher	1	10%
	Government employee	1	10%
	Cabin crew	1	10%
Nature of operation	Full time	6	60%
	Part time	4	40%

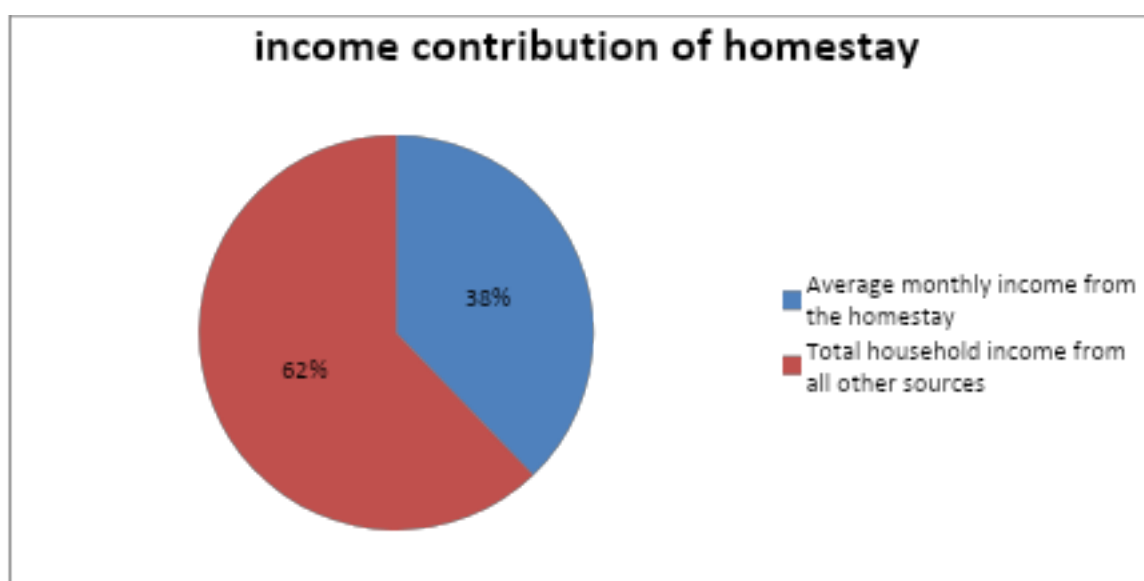
The table shows the demographic and business profile of the respondents. Data shows that most homestays (40%) started in 2021, showing increased interest in tourism business recently. Most operators are male (70%), and females make up 30%, indicating that homestay ownership is mainly male in the study area. Before starting their homestay ventures, most respondents (40%) worked in agriculture, followed by those in business (30%). The remaining respondents were in teaching, government service, and other professions (10% each). Sixty percent of respondents run their homestays full-time, while forty percent do so part-time. This shows that homestay tourism is both a main and extra source of income for local business owners.

**Table 2: Income Contribution of Homestay to Total Household Income**

Variable	Range/ category	Mean
Average monthly income from Homestay	20,000 – 80,000	48,000
Average household income from other sources	30,000 – 3,00,000	79,000

Respondents earn an average of ₹48,000 each month from their homestay businesses. Their average monthly income from other sources is ₹79,000.

This shows that homestays offer extra income, but other income sources make up a bigger part of household earnings. This highlights homestay tourism as both a main and additional way for host families to earn a living.



**Figure 1: income contribution of homestay to total household income**

The chart indicates that 38% of total household income is from homestay operations, while 62% comes from other sources like agriculture or business. Homestay tourism is an important extra income source for local families. The findings show that tourism entrepreneurship is important for improving rural livelihoods and helping community-based economic development.

**Table 3: Frequency summary for usage of homestay income**

Category of use	Frequency	% of respondent
Children's education	10	17.24
Healthcare	10	17.24
House improvement	8	13.78
Savings	10	17.24
Reinvestment in business	10	17.24
Purchasing assets	1	1.72
Daily household expenses	9	15.52

The table indicates that a large portion of homestay income goes to children's education, healthcare, savings, and business reinvestment, each accounting for 17.24%. Daily household expenses account for 15.52 percent, while home improvement accounts for 13.78 percent. Only a small number of respondents (1.72%) use their income to buy assets. Homestay earnings mainly help family welfare and business growth.

**Table 4: Perception of economic impact**

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Total	Mean score
Created new employment opportunities for people	6	4	0	10	6.57
Improved family's standard of living	4	6	0	10	6.29
Homestay income is reliable	5	4	1	10	6.29
Frequently purchase local goods	6	4	0	10	6.57

The findings reveal that respondents have a positive impression of the economic impact of homestay tourism. Most strongly agree that homestays have produced new job opportunities and encouraged regular purchasing of local items, with a mean score of 6.57. Respondents also agree that homestay income is dependable and has raised their family's standard of living, with a mean score of 6.29. The findings show that homestay operations greatly help local jobs, household well-being, and community economy.

**Table 5: Challenges in Sustaining Homestay Tourism**

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total	Mean score
Infrastructure issues	4	5	1	0	10	4.30
Finance	4	6	0	0	10	4.40
Seasonality	3	6	1	0	10	4.20
Difficult in marketing	3	5	2	0	10	4.10
High competition	1	4	5	0	10	3.60
Communication barriers	0	4	5	1	10	3.30
High operation costs	0	6	4	0	10	3.60
Lack of training	0	3	6	1	10	3.20
Limited government support	0	2	5	3	10	2.90

The results show that the main challenges for homestay operators are financial issues (mean = 4.40) and infrastructure problems (mean = 4.30). Other major issues are seasonality (4.20) and challenges in marketing (4.10). Moderate challenges like high competition (3.60) and high operating costs (3.60) impact homestay operations. At the same time, communication barriers (3.30), lack of training (3.20), and limited government support (2.90) are seen as less

important. The results show that financial issues, bad infrastructure, and seasonal demand are the main barriers to the growth of homestay tourism in the area.

## **Discussion**

This study shows that homestay tourism in the West Garo Hills District is essential for rural economic growth, but it also encounters major challenges that could impact its future sustainability. The data supports existing literature that views homestays as an effective means for socio-economic development (Kafle, 2023; Goswami et al., 2025). It also confirms the ongoing challenges related to infrastructure and market access in rural areas (Bhutio et al., 2022; Kafle, 2023).

The significant economic impact is clear. Homestays contribute, on average, 38% of total household income, which is strong evidence of their transformative role. This is consistent with research from Nepal and Malaysia, which shows that homestays have offered important additional and main income, helping to reduce poverty and improve financial stability (Magar, 2021; Pusiran & Xiao, 2013). This economic dependence is not just about money; the use of income shows a clear enhancement in human development indicators. The distribution of earnings for children's education, healthcare, and savings highlights how homestay tourism supports sustainable livelihoods, reflecting the findings of Pokhrel and Mahat (2025) on better health and education results. Also, the fact that everyone put money back into the business shows that people are willing to take risks and are committed to long-term growth, not just survival.

The study confirms that homestays contribute to local economic development. Operators often buy goods from local shops and farms, which shows a strong positive impact on the local economy by stimulating other sectors. This finding aligns with Long et al. (2018), who noted the development of indirect jobs in supporting industries in China's Mogan Mountain. Homestays have been seen as having “created new employment opportunities” and “improved the family's standard of living”. This supports their role as a community-based entrepreneurship model, allowing locals to use their homes and culture for economic benefit (Chatterjee et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2020).

While the homestay model shows great potential for community-based tourism, its sustainability is threatened by key challenges such as financial issues, poor infrastructure, seasonality, and marketing difficulties. This finding matches research from the Himalayan region and Sri Lanka, which shows that bad roads, unreliable utilities, and weak marketing are major problems (Bhutio et al., 2022; Wijesundara & Gnanapala, 2016). Households depend on homestay income (38%), making them very vulnerable to low and irregular tourist numbers, which require strategic action. Operators felt confident in their interpersonal skills and saw communication barriers as less important. However, they viewed the “lack of training” and “limited government support” as less critical issues. This contradiction shows that operators may not yet understand how formal training in hospitality, financial management, and digital marketing can immediately alleviate their core marketing and competition issues. This reveals a significant gap where government and NGO initiatives might bring enormous value by not only offering support but also demonstrating tangible results.

## **Conclusion and implication**

This study shows how homestay tourism helps improve rural livelihoods and boosts economic empowerment in the West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya. Results show that income from homestay operations makes up about 38% of total household income, suggesting that homestay tourism is a key source of financial support for local families. Homestay tourism not only generates income but also creates jobs, improves living standards, and promotes local goods, which helps the local economy.

The study highlights several challenges that limit the sustainable growth of homestay tourism. Key constraints are financial issues, bad infrastructure, high costs, strong competition, seasonal tourist flows, and limited marketing knowledge among operators. Additionally, lack of government support and poor training in hospitality management limit the potential of homestay businesses. To support long-term and community-based tourist growth in the region, targeted policy interventions, increased capacity-building and digital marketing campaigns, and enhanced infrastructural development are required.

## **Limitation and future directions of research**

This study offers important insights into how homestay tourism can boost economic empowerment in the West Garo Hills district, but it is essential to recognize some limitations. The sample size was small and focused on a few chosen homestay operators, which might not capture the opinions of all stakeholders in the area. The study mainly used self-reported data, which could be affected by the respondents' own views or biases.

Furthermore, the study concentrated on the economic aspects of homestay tourism, without delving thoroughly into the social, cultural, and environmental issues. Despite these limitations, the findings provide an important foundation for understanding how homestay tourism affects rural livelihoods and provide guidance for further in-depth and comparative research.

Future research could build on this work by comparing homestay tourism in various areas of Meghalaya or the wider Northeastern states. Studies might also look into how satisfied tourists are, the effects on gender empowerment, and the lasting social, economic, and environmental effects of homestay tourism. Moreover, exploring how government policies, community connections, and sustainable practices influence the homestay tourism sector could offer important insights for its improvement.

In conclusion, the results show that homestay tourism can greatly help rural development and empower communities, as long as we tackle the structural and institutional issues effectively.

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