

## **Performance Evaluation of Amaltari Bufferzone Community Homestay of Kawasoti Municipality in Nawalpur, Nepal**

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**ABSTRACT:** This study analyzed performance evaluation of Amaltari Bufferzone Community Homestay (ABCH) of Kawasoti Municipality. This study followed post-positivist paradigm and survey methodology by applying evaluation indicators such as relevancy, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The research issues have been theorized from social capital, ecotourism, asset based community development and sustainability approach on development. The survey result shows that relevancy got highest mean value 3.9922 with std. deviation 0.90575 which is followed by impact mean value 3.7871 with std. deviation 0.78242 and sustainability mean value 3.6325 with std. deviation 0.79901. It signifies that majority of respondents are relatively satisfied with relevancy, impact and sustainability related variables. More so, effectiveness secured least mean value 3.5145 with std. deviation 0.85903 that is followed by efficiency mean value 3.6052 with std. deviation 0.78690. The value itself is not disagreed views of the respondents but from evaluation perspectives it requires more attention. However, ABCH has performed effectively due to the strong social capital, conservation and mobilization fund, good networks of physical assets, as well as quality leaderships that has brought positive impacts in community and social level. Finally, this study has high implications in the sector of improving the lives of people residing around bufferzone through the tourism activities. The development priorities of the local government must encompass the positive impacts of integrated tourism for promoting the sustainable community development practices of the indigenous people living around the Amaltari Bufferzone of Chitwan National Park.

**KEY WORDS:** Ecotourism, Bufferzone, community homestay, performance evaluation and community development.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Tourism represents sum total of operations mainly of economic nature, which directly related to the entry, stay and movement of foreigners inside and outside a certain country, city, or region (Bhatia, 2011). Thus, tourism has both economic and non-economic externalities as it generates employment opportunities, increases income potential for local residents, accelerates community wellbeing and cultural worth. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates that tourism sector now accounts for 9.5 percent of global GDP, a total of US\$ 7.6 trillion, and 313 million directly and indirectly jobs created in 2017 (World Tourism Organization [WTO], 2018). In this line, tourism sector also becoming important segment for economic growth, employment generation and poverty alleviation in Nepal (National Planning Commission [NPC], 2015). Federal government has envisioned tourism as a lead sector of national economy. Thereby, government also prepared National Tourism Strategic Plan (NTSP [2016-25]) that targeted to receive 25, 22000 tourists in 2025. Its share of contribution to GDP will be 9.29 percent equivalent to 3401 million US \$ revenue and it will create 6, 32000 employment opportunities (Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation [MoCTCA], 2017). While implementing NTSP province wise structural tourism development plan have been developed and 100 tourism development areas also have been identified. Devolved local government are also functioning power/jurisdictions related to tourism development through conservation of biodiversity, preservation of language culture and fine arts and collection of tourism fee (Constitution, 2015). The latest data shows that 11, 72073 international tourists visited last year that contributed 7.5% percent on GDP (NRs 2.876 billion) and also created employment to the 427,000 female and males (Nepal Tourism Board [NTB,] 2019). Out of total number of international tourists, more than seventy percentages were related to eco-tourism, which might indicate that the country is a highly potential destination for eco-tourism due to its natural beauty and biodiversity richness (Pradhan & Gradon, 2008).

Conceptually, ecotourism is concerned with natural and cultural attractions, alternative accommodations facilities operating mainly by indigenous people. Ecotourism in Nepal has been successfully

implementing by the bufferzone people living around protected land. A bufferzone, an area of 2 square kilometer in the vicinity of the park provisioned by fourth amendment of the National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act in 1992. The idea is to mobilize local people for conserving wildlife, natural environment and natural resources, bio-diversity and forests resources (Buffer Zone Management Regulation, 2052). In Nepal, buffer zones of 12 protected areas covering a total 5602.67 square kilometer area of forest land of 27 districts and benefiting over 0.9 million population (Ministry of Forests and Environment [MoA], 2017). Among them Amaltari is becoming more potential ecotourism and cultural tourism destinations. Homestay herein Amaltari was establishment in 2070/02/05 in the auspicious occasion of 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of wildlife fund with collective efforts of Tharu, Bote and Musharindigenous people (P. Sharma, PhD personal communication, December 17, 2018). Since then (2014-2018) more than 70,000 inter/national tourists visited this destination that generated total NRs 46070655 economy (the significant amount) to the local people (Amaltari Bufferzone Community Homestay [ABCH], 2019). Among the 165 community homestays registered in Nepal (Homestay Association of Nepal<sup>1</sup> [HOSAN], 2016). Amaltari has owned *Best Homestay Award-2017*. Here is why this study tried to explain why *performance of Amaltari is the best?* In doing so, evaluation indicators such as relevancy, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability are used.

## **II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- To evaluate relevancy, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of homestay.
- To analyze the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and performances of homestay service providers.

## **III. METHODOLOGY: MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **3.1: Research Design**

Philosophically this study conducted based on objective ontological stance with deductive logic generation process or epistemology (Moore & Bruder, 2007). In doing so, post-positivist paradigm (explaining absolute truth) and trend survey method that followed quasi-experimental research design have been applied (Creswell, 2014; Gupta & Gupta, 2015). The survey is purposively conducted in Amaltari village of Kawasoti Municipality having 297 sample populations (Kawasoti Municipality, 2018; Amaltari Bufferzone Community Homestay [ABCH], 2019). The required data were collected from 236 sample respondents (28 direct beneficiaries, 128 indirect beneficiaries and 80 duty bearers) that is generated with 95% confidence level and 5% marginal error by using sample size determination formula (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). More so, household survey, observation and key informant interview techniques were applied after reliability test. The cronbach alpha value for reliability was 0.891 (highly reliable) and values of item total statistics for relevancy, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability were 0.883, 0.850, 0.864, 0.879 and 0.844 respectively (Cohen et al., 2007; Taber, 2017). In order to dig out the perceptions regarding the studied variables, the respondents were asked the questions through 5-point likert scale like; strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), strongly agree (5) and not applicable (0). The central tendency related values of the data was calculated through summative/likert scale analysis method (Subedi, 2016). Further, chi square test, correlation and t-test also have been done for inferential analysis so that numerical description of findings derived from the study helped to generalize research issues. Similarly, this study also applied description, analysis, and interpretation methods of data analysis (Yin, 2014). Description method helped to understand the meaning of the data. Analysis method helped to identify underlying meanings of data to make a systematic description and interpretation method helped to understand processes and meanings in the theoretical context.

### **3.2: The Field at a Glance**

Amaltari is situated in Kawasoti Municipality ward number 15 of Nawalpur District, Gandaki Province. The village is adjoined by Narayani river bank and Gundahai Dhakaha bufferzone community forestry of Chitwan National Park (CNP) established in 1973. It covers an area of 952.63 Km<sup>2</sup> and is located in the subtropical inner Tarai of south-central Nepal covering Nawalpur, Parsa, Chitwan and Makwanpur Districts. CNP's altitude it ranges from about 100 m (330 ft) in the river valleys to 815 m (2,674 ft) in the Churia Hills (Department of national park and Wildlife Conservation [DNPWC], 2027). There are eight bufferzone users committees in CNP. Out of that Amaltari is significantly rich in terms of natural and cultural biodiversity as well

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<sup>1</sup>This association was established in 2014 with private effort in order to monitor and regulate homestays based on homestay regulation guideline 2067, support capacity development of the homestay owners and extension of homestay tourism and marketing (HOSAN, 2016).

as conservation and development activities. This is one of the 37th community forestry of Kawasoti Municipality effectively managing by 96 sub committees (49 women & 47 men) (Amaltari Bufferzone Users Committee [ABUC], 2019). Owing to that annually around NRs. 50,00,000 park revenue has been investing for implementing skill development trainings, IGAs, community development, infrastructure development related projects. WWF, Tarai Landscape (TAL) project and ABCH are jointly implementing *sustainable community initiative project* to the 212 households (55 Tharu, 72 Bote & 85 Mushar). The focuses of the project is sustaining the livelihoods of beneficiaries through proper management of tourism components listed in below table.

**Table 1. Components of Amaltari Bufferzone Community Homestay**

Components	Categories
Accessibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kathmandu to Danda (Kawasoti) (176 K. M.) &amp; Danda to Amaltari (7 K. M.)</li> <li>• Kathmandu to Bharatpur (Chitwan) air service and Narayanghat to Danda (Kawasoti) to Amaltari (37 K. M.)</li> </ul>
Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21 Tharu homestay +5 Bote homestay +2 Bote cottage/lodges + 3 resorts</li> <li>• Delicious local organic vegetable and food items such as Chichar (A kind of stream rice traditionally cooked by local woman), Dhikari (steam wheat bread), Fish, Ghongi (snail), Numaicha, Gundruk, Chicken, Duck, Raksi and Chhyang</li> </ul>
Attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 Amaltari entrance gates constructed at Danda and Amaltari village</li> <li>• Chitwan National Park, bufferzone community forestry, Narayani river bank</li> <li>• Farm land and pasture land locating 180 meter mean from sea level</li> <li>• Indigenous Tharu museum, fish ponds and fishing</li> </ul>
Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wild animal trade fare; Cultural program conduct in community building having capacity of 300 + individuals</li> <li>• Perform cultural dances such as Lathi nach, Jhumra nach, Jogeda nach, Jharra nach and Tharu remix nach of Tharu community; Goleni nach of Bote community and Hurka nach of Mushar community</li> </ul>
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sightseeing at Tharu village, community forestry, wetland and pasture land</li> <li>• Elephant safari/bath, jeep safari, bird watching, boating and sun set</li> <li>• Cart riding and village walk around Tharu villages</li> <li>• Having 2 over nights and three days package for the guests</li> <li>• Remittance service, transportation facilities, 24 hours health service at community health clinic and overnight security services</li> </ul>
Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bufferzone management committee, homestay management committee, youth club, fathers group, mothers group, cultural groups, saving and credit groups as well as government and non-government agencies</li> </ul>
Affinities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutual understanding among Tharu, Bote and Mushar community members</li> <li>• Preserving forest resources and also performing organic farming practices</li> </ul>
Advertisements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptive information: Maps, magazines, entrance gate and brochures</li> <li>• Website: <a href="http://www.amaltaricomunityhomestay.org.np">www.amaltaricomunityhomestay.org.np</a></li> <li>• Email: <a href="mailto:simonmahato44@gmail.com">simonmahato44@gmail.com</a>, <a href="mailto:info@amaltaricomunityhomestay.org.np">info@amaltaricomunityhomestay.org.np</a>; <a href="mailto:tgdboard@gmail.com">tgdboard@gmail.com</a></li> <li>• Cell number: President (9802637825, 9857046213), Manager (98026378119867224300, 9806707805)</li> </ul>

(Developed by the Researcher, 2020)

#### IV. THE FINDINGS

##### 4.1: For Relevancy

Relevancy of homestay was assessed through ten different variables including forest resource traditional culture employment opportunities and family income. The mean value and std. deviation for all the variables found 3.9922 and 0.90575. This shows that most of the denser views are closer with the agree and strongly statement with consistent data. The findings also supported by the mode value 4 in most of the cases. The skewness value -.115 also indicates normality of data. This means respondents (i.e. direct beneficiaries, indirect beneficiaries and duty bearers) are satisfied with the relevancy of homestay activities that is preserving natural and cultural resources and creating employment options. More precisely, the statement "Amaltari bufferzone helps conserving forest resources and wildlife animals" has highest mean value 4.22. It means the bufferzone homestay more relevant for preserving natural flora and fauna. However, the statement "bufferzone

users committee members are demonstrating effective commitment (ownership)" has least mean value 3.71. It means the leadership roles and responsibilities need to be redefined in terms of transferring ownership of the protected sites and natural assets among all the bufferzone dwellers. This indicates that homestay service offering by indigenous people is more relevant for increasing family income. It has not only improving the earning level of local people but also helping upgrade national economy. This might be reason NTSP targeted to receive 25, 22000 tourists in 2025 that will be contributed 9.29 percent GDP equivalent to 3401 million US \$ revenue and create 6, 32000 employment opportunities (MoCTCA, 2017). In Nepal, Homestay working procedure 2067 has also pointed that the homestay management committee should preserve local environment, culture, tradition and rituals (MoTCA, 2010). For the code of conduct of the visitors this report also included respect to the biodiversity and ecology of the environment but silent on the procedures of benefit sharing among the service providers. The remarks of the homestay president presented below also supports this finding:

*At present there are 24 Tharu and 7 Bote homestay offering accommodation facilities according to homestay regulation 2067. Among them, 6 are also offering cottage guest house facilities too. Before that homestay committee could not provide accommodation to the guests and compelled to send them in hotel, resort and cottages. Since 2070 more than 70,000 inter/national guests have visited our village. The trend of tourist flow is increasing annually that is why we are planning to extend homestay service in 50 households (P.S. Mardaniya, informal communication on 15th August 2019).*

Likewise, for explaining significance difference between categorical data landholding of family members and their categories, chi-square test was done. In this test, p value found (0.00) < alpha value (0.05) and reject null hypothesis. Thus the difference observed between the land holding pattern and the category of the respondents (direct as well as indirect beneficiaries & duty bearers) is significant. The category or the socio-economic position of an individual attained due to the involvement in tourism services really matters the area of land he/she belongs to. On this regards, Sharma (2011) has also illustrated that "those who have large land holding size have accomplished higher education and have got better jobs outside agriculture. But many landless and near landless people are apparently illiterate" (p. 43). The position determined in the society or social and economic status of an individual is still labeled through land holding size in Nepalese society. The reflections of the participants on same theme also has presented below:

*With saving and credit purpose we Tharu youth established Haamr Sanghati saving group in 2060. At that time we got a chance to visit Dalla Tharu Homestay in 2070. The visit program was conducted by financial support of WWF. After returning from this visit program, we decided to register community homestay for empowering Tharu youths, all the community members and also for getting earning opportunities from cultural and ecotourism activities. Before involving in homestay tourism nobody know about the name of our village. Our social identity was in the shadow but at a time we are becoming popular for cultural and adventurous tourism activities as well as local organic products (C. R. Mahato, Saturday, 16th August 2019 [KII]).*

*The community hall seemed houseful before starting cultural program. I sat at the front row of hall where more than 200 guests were waiting for program. The opening item conducted with entrance of 18 hosts (9 female and 9 male) wearing cultural dress. They are belonging to aged, young and teenager age groups (representatives of three generations). Most of the faces were well known for me as I already interacted with them in/formally. The lead role was played by president and secretary of homestay committee. Moving on, they performed Jhumra nach, Jogeda nach, Jharra nach, Goleni nach, Hurka nach and Lathi nach turn by turn. At the end of program they also performed Tharu remix nach and requested guests dancing dance together with them (Observation Friday 16th August, 2019 [9:30-11 PM]).*

#### **4.2 For Efficiency**

The efficiency of homestay tried to assess through ten different variables including knowledge on hospitality, hospitality management, use of local resources and tourism activities. The mean value and std. deviation for all the variables found 3.6052 and 0.78690. This proves that most of the denser views are the consistently with closer to neutral and agree statement. This is also supported by mode value and median value (4 each for the entire statements) and skewness value -.179 (normality of data). This means all the respondents are satisfied with the efficiency of homestay that is creating employment options. More specifically, among the different variables the statement "service charges are differing to the international and domestic guests" have got the highest mean value, i.e. 3.88. It means the homestay and other tourism services have fixed different prices to the categories of tourists and could be due to the types of the service offered. This will definitely attract the internal tourists and even help in earning large revenue from the international tourists from home stay and other tourism activities. Even though, the statement "villagers are equally benefitted from tourism earning" has the least mean value (3.12). It means there are some concerns about unequal sharing of the earnings from the

homestay which itself are group enterprises. However, ABCH performing efficient services equally to the inter/national guests due to collective efforts of local level induced and indigenous organizations. In this respect, NTB has mobilized the local development actors and stakeholders (NGOs, women's group, youth club, cultural group, forest user groups) to manage homestay service related facilities and training for ensuring quality and efficiency of homestay (MoCTCA, 2010). The findings also can be supported by the remarks of the participant inserted below:

*Before 2002, only Tharu Village Resort was offering accommodation facilities to the international guest. They need to book room before two years. At present there are two another resorts Machan Village resort and Temple Tiger. The Bird calling resort is also opening soon. This tourism destination is popular for elephant bath and safari. There are 12 elephants in Tharu Village Resort, 6 in Machan Village resort, 5 in Temple Tiger. Amaltari homestay also provide such activities but they need to pay per elephant NRs. 4000 to the resort owner and also pay NRs. 900 from each Hatti safari group. Recently, 29 Tharu women are also operating Tharu Sanskritik Athjithi Griha. The cottage seems typical that is constructed by local materials. It is located around the paddy field in peace environment nearby Adshibashi Museum. The 2 leaders completed nature guide trainings are planning to appoint all the female staffs very soon. They have been involving in saving/credit activities since 12 years. They are involving in turmeric, vegetable farming and fish pond collectively (D. N. Mahato, Friday 15th August 2019 [KII]).*

Similarly, for analyzing the relationships between categorical data tourism activities and the increased earning opportunities of the villagers, the chi-square test was done. In this test, p value (0.00) found < alpha value (0.05) that also rejected null hypothesis. This indicates that difference observed between the tourism activities and the increased earning opportunities of the villagers is significant. In other words, it can be said that the tourism activities really matters in the lives of Amaltari bufferzone people by enhancing earning opportunities. In Nepal, MoCTCA (2019) also shows that year 2018 seems remarkable improvement in international tourist arrivals. The office of the Investment Board Nepal (2019) also claims that "it is well recognized that domestic tourists have above average spending patterns during their short trips and if service providers can successfully identify and meet their touristic needs, that market should also should continue to experience growth" (para 4).

#### **4.3 For Effectiveness**

The effectiveness of homestay again assessed through ten different variables including learning/earning opportunities, organic farming practices, living standard and rural economy. The mean value and std. deviation for all the variables found 3.5145 and 0.85903. This shows that most of the denser views are consistently falls between neutral and agree statement. This is also supported by the mode value 4 in most of the cases and skewness value -.242 (normality of data). This means respondents are also satisfied with effectiveness of homestay activities. More so, among the variables, the statement, "Tourism basket fund is investing to implement IGAs" has the highest mean value 3.58. It means the majority of respondents perceive that homestay earning is quite helpful in creating employment opportunities for the settlement dwellers. It means there are some concerns that the basket fund money are not used in such activities. The basket fund concept has been initiated by different tourism related institutions in Nepal. Nepal Mountaineering Association (2014) has created a central basket fund, which will have fund donated from all around the world to support the bereaved families of the climbers died during the course of fulfilling their duties. In addition, the people of Amaltari are also benefited from basket fund. It could be due to the formation of local government after election in 2017, whose top most priorities observed is the building of physical infrastructures. Alternatively, the statement "Tourism basket fund has been investing to implement physical infrastructure development projects in local levels" has the least mean value 3.36. However, the park revenue is investing to implement such projects to the bufferzone people. The remarks generated during field observation also support this:

*I went together with farmers towards paddy field for irrigation. We reached river stream side that demarked their farm land with pasture land and dense forest. During irrigation, I started counting more than dozen of 20-30 feet height shakes constructed by wood, babiyo and plastic. It is constructed for securing their agricultural products from wild animals (i.e. rhinoceros, wild elephant, bear, wild pig, hedgehogs and monkey) by shouting and playing with drums on top of shakes during harvesting period. I understood wild animals are not only eating and damaging their products but also making their life vulnerable. There is a chance of encountered and attacked by wild animals at farm land and their own settlement. The lives of Mushars are negatively/positively affected by bufferzone program. The wild animals are eating/damaging their agricultural products in all season since establishment of National Park. Despite park revenue also has been investing in this community. They are getting chance to participate in mason and vegetable farming trainings. The conservation fund has constructed 21 cemented houses to those whose habitats were damaged by massive earth quake in 2015. WWF and*

TAL project jointly provided financial/technical support to 10 households for performing commercial vegetable farming. The entire amount NRs. 10,00,000 is invested for constructing 10 tunnels (one for each HHs) made by trust and green net at 2 Katha land, bought vegetable seeds/tools and conducting exposure visits (Observation Friday 16th August, 2019 [3 -4 PM ]).

Likewise, for analyzing mean difference between scale data family income and nominal data the places of the education of their children independent sample t-test was done. In this case, probability associated with Levene's Test for Equality of Variances (0.029) found less than the level of significance (0.05) in which the case of equal variances was not assumed. In this test p value (0.055) >  $\alpha$  value (0.05) that fail to reject null hypothesis. Thus there is no relation between the income of the families and the selection of the school. The aspects can be interpreted from equity perspectives as well. Far walking distance to get the good private schools is also hindering the Amaltari dwellers from imparting their children quality education (MoE, 2014). It is the responsibility of state and the private sector in opening the educational institutions as per the demand of the people there.

#### 4.4 For Impact

Regarding the impact of the homestay, it was assessed through seven different variables including family livelihoods, community wellbeing, health/hygiene & environment and risk with wild animals. The mean value and std. deviation for all the variables found 4.0000 and 0.78242. This shows that most of the denser views are consistently falls between neutral and agree statement. This is also supported by the mode value 4 in most of the cases and skewness value -.612 indicating normality of data. This means all the respondents' views on impact seem satisfied. More precisely, among the variables the statement, "Mutual relationships among Tharu, Bote and Mushar people have been increased" has got the highest mean value 4.05. It means the improving family livelihood through homestay has enhanced the communal harmony in the region. In the same theme, one of the participants expressed that:

*The collective efforts of Tharu, Bote and Mushar people help conserving forest resources and preserving their culture. Young generations are also involving in cultural program and transmitting cultural norms and values. For me Amaltari homestay becoming popular to the inter/national tourists because of natural and cultural attractions. Conservation, culture and community sentiments of the indigenous people might threemajor pillars for tourism activities in this area (C. B. Paija, informal communication on Thursday 14th August 2019).*

However, in different, the statement, "The family and rural economy have been increased annually" has got the least mean value 3.62. It is signaling that, yet many intervening measures are needed to convert homestay tourism activities into changing the lives of all. This could be due to the large ratio of expenditures and very less savings. The preamble of the constitution of Nepal (2015) also includes, "Protecting and promoting social and cultural solidarity, tolerance and harmony, and unity in diversity by recognizing the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-cultural and diverse regional characteristics, society", which represents the feelings of all Nepalese and the state. The transferred multi-cultural harmony among different ethnic groups of people in Amaltari settlements is resembled in the community managed home-stay enterprises. However, the economic transformation through tourism business is yet to achieve in changing the lives of people living there.

Similarly, in order to analyze the relationships between homestay income and total family income a correlation test was done. The calculated value  $r = .878$  shows strong correlation with 99% level of significance. Thus, the homestay income really matters in the total family income of the Amaltari residents. One of the studies, Thakuri (2016) also shows that the economic status of homestay operators in Nawalparasi district was better than in the other districts. Income of homestay operators was enough to manage the basic expenditure of daily household, health and education of their children. Economically, homestay has provided the opportunity for marketing of other local products as well as created the opportunity of self-employment. that is why the livelihoods non beneficiaries of tourism are still struggling for livelihood. In the same theme, one of the participants seriously reflected that:

*Fishing at Narayani River and other water stream was primary occupation of Majhi, Mushar and Bote people in the past. Out of total 100 + Majhi, Mushar and Bote households, only 28 people have fishing license. The national park authority has stopped distributing new license since 15 years. That is the reason last year those indigenous people conducted one months' strike in front of bufferzone users' committee office. The movement was initiated by Majhi Mushar Bote Kalyan Sewa Samittee (MMBKSS) established in 2050. The head office of MMBKSS is located in Kawasoti Bazar where I worked for three years (J. Bote, Saturday, 16th August 2019 [KII]).*

#### 4.5 For Sustainability

Finally, the sustainability of homestay was assessed through eleven different variables including performance of homestay, popularity of the destination, internal/external assistances and involvement of private sectors. The mean value and std. deviation for the variables found 3.6325 and 0.79901. This shows that most of the denser views are consistently falls between neutral and agree statement. This is also supported by the mode value 4 in most of the cases and skewness value -.248 indicating normality of data. This means respondents from all the categories are satisfied sustainability of homestay management practices too. In the reference of sustainability approach, ABCH is prioritizing for forming human, social, physical, financial and natural capital through strong institutional and social mobilization process (Hada, 2007). More specifically, among the variables the statement, "this homestay has received the best homestay award" got the highest mean value 3.78. It means the Amaltari homestay has awards from central level. This recognition of the homestay has attracted many inter/national tourists in the settlement. Differently, the statement, "Necessary measures been taken to address the environmental sustainability" has got the least mean value 3.51. It signifies that the natural resource preserving measures are in place in the region, however, the environmental sustainability is least prioritized. It was observed that Amaltari homestay is highly appreciated by a large number of people, who visited there. However, as pointed by Karki, Chhetri, Chaudhary and Khanal (2017), the homestay program has increased conservation awareness, fostered environment conservation, waste management and increased plantation activities, the concern of sustainable environmental protection aspects is still undermined in Amaltari zone. The homestay management committee should seriously undertake the different dimensions of sustainable development goals like social welfare, environment protection and resource protection for the future generation (NPC, 2017).

Accordingly, for explaining the relationships between categorical data local children, youths and women are becoming interactive and tourism activities, chi-square test was done. The calculated p value (0.043) found < alpha value (0.05) that rejected null hypothesis. This means accepting alternative hypothesis. Hence, it can be said that local children, youths and women of Amaltari village are becoming more interactive with tourism activities. It might be reason they are adopting diversified livelihood strategies and thoughtfully involving in tourism and farming activities. In the same theme one of the participants reflected that:

*I am president of Hamar Digo Gaun Paryatan Cooperative. There are 11 executive members (4 Tharu, 3 Bote and 4 Mushari). It was established in 2071 with 40 members. At present there are 363 share members. We have 1 Billion ghumti fund and saving 75, 00,000 only. We provide 8% interest in saving amount. We provide credit capital in 6% minimum interest rate for biogas plant (NRs. 30000) and animal husbandry farming (NRs. 50000). We provide loan on 12% interest rate for business and buffalo farming up to NRs. 1, 50,000 without any collateral. We also provide up to NRs.2, 00,000 credit capital in 6% minimum interest rate to those who want to start homestay service. We are motivating 4 potential Mushar households to operate homestay services. WWF, Tarai Landscape (TAL) project, ABCH including our cooperative are jointly implementing sustainable community initiative project to the 212 households (55 Tharu, 72 Bote & 85 Mushar) (N. B. Mahato, Friday 15th August 2019 [KII]).*

#### 4.6 Theorization and Meaning Making

For theorizing research issues from theoretically, this study brought insights from social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; McClenaghan, 2000; Ponthieux, 2004), asset based community development (ABCD) approach (Ellis & Sheridan, 2014; Phillips & Pittman, 2009), ecotourism (Pradhan & Gradon, 2008; Villepoux, 2013) and UN sustainability approach on development (Wills, 2005; Hada, 2007). The theoretical outcomes generated thematically based on evaluation indicators also have been presented in below table.

**Table 2. Thematic Outcomes of the Study**

Evaluation Indicators	Themes (Attributes )	Outcomes
• Relevancy	○ Forest resource	✓ Utilized, controlled and mobilized
	○ Traditional culture	✓ Preserved, transmitting/performing
	○ Employment opportunities	✓ Provided and creating
	○ Family income	✓ Increasing and mobilizing
• Efficiency	○ Knowledge on hospitality	✓ Becoming knowledgeable/skillful
	○ Hospitality management	✓ Well managed practices
	○ Use of local resources	✓ Supplying local food and crafts
	○ Tourism activities	✓ Adventurous and cultural activities
• Effectiveness	○ Learning/earning	✓ Provided and creating

Evaluation Indicators	Themes (Attributes )	Outcomes
	opportunities	
	○ Organic farming practices	✓ Performing and extending
	○ Living standard	✓ Highly satisfied and improving
	○ Rural economy	✓ Collecting, investing and generating
• Impact	○ Family livelihoods	✓ Adopting diversified livelihoods
	○ Community wellbeing	✓ Achieved and improving
	○ Health/hygiene & environment	✓ Well maintained and managed
	○ Risk with wild animals	✓ Highly risk at Mushar community
• Sustainability	○ Performance of homestay	✓ Owned best homestay award
	○ Popularity of the destination	✓ More popular for domestic tourists
	○ Internal/external assistance	✓ Received and mobilized
	○ Involvement of private sectors	✓ Involved and planning to involve

(Developed by the Researcher, 2019)

All the theoretical outcomes presented in table 2 are also explained briefly for meaning making. From the vantage point of social capital theory, twenty six homestays (21 Tharu & 5 Bote) and dozens of lodges, guest houses, restaurants and resorts operating by indigenous and incoming entrepreneurs shows good networking of bonding and bridging social capital. That is not only uplifting their collective cooperation (Sorheim, 2003; Ponthieux, 2004) but also helps achieving economic, cultural and symbolic capitals in the village and beyond (Bourdieu, 1986). Further, they are establishing linking relationships with politicians, bureaucrats and development stakeholders working in conservation and development sector (Coleman, 1988). Hence, the strong social capitals benefitted them equally from sociological and economic perspectives. Sociologically, they are collectively working in a social and cultural environment, with norms, rules, and obligations (Coleman, 1988). And economically they are becoming self-interested, independent and thoughtfully seeking to fulfill their expected goals related to improvement of daily life and livelihood (Coleman, 1988).

In the reference of ABCD approach, local development actors and stakeholders including ABCH are promoting community development activities in sustainable manner (Ellis & Sheridan, 2014). WWF and ABUC are collectively implementing *Sustainable Communities Initiatives Project* for 212 beneficiaries' households (55 Tharu, 72 Bote & 85 Mushar). In doing so, they are realizing individual are the means and end of ABCD approach whose knowledge/skills need to be recognized and identified (Phillips & Pittman, 2009). They are thus collectively working in in/formal association with common interest (Phillips & Pittman, 2009) and receiving technical/financial assistance from govt. and non-govt. agencies. The assistance was/is invested for constructing 3 welcome gates, community building (having 300+ individuals capacity), cultural museum, road networks, park and also sharing their experience and physical assets to the others (Phillips & Pittman, 2009).

From theoretical gaze of ecotourism, over 0.9 million bufferzone people from 27 districts are benefitted from park revenue in protected land (MoFE, 2017). In case of CNP more than 2, 00,000 tourists visited in which 60 percent of them were domestic tourists (it was 30% in previous year) (Kantipur National Daily, 2018). Similarly, more than 70,000 inter/national tourists visited ABCH now to then. It has generated more than NRs. 46070655 until fiscal year 2018. The park revenue also has been investing for *sustainable community's initiatives project*. There is a provision to utilize certain amount of revenue such as 10% for providing conservation related awareness raising training, 20% for IGAs, 30% for community development and another 30% for physical infrastructure development projects (Pradhan & Gradon, 2008). More so, 96 forest users groups of Amaltari Bufferzone are directly or indirectly benefitted from conservation fund allocating more than NRs. 32, 00,000 annually.

From the view point of sustainability approach, local development actors and stakeholders including ABCH are collectively working for sustainable livelihood. They are giving high priority for forming and mobilizing human, social, physical, financial and natural capital in general and through social mobilization in particular (Hada, 2007). That is why ABCH is leading by accessible, accountable, ethical and quality leaderships having good networking in District, provincial and central levels. This might helped to own best homestay award in 2072 and abled to establish its identity in inter/national tourism markets. The destination is becoming popular for adventurous activities such as elephant bath/safari; jeep safari; bird watching; hiking around community forestry, pasture and wetland; cart riding and village walk. The destination is also famous for cultural dances of Tharu, Bote and Mushar indigenous people. And also popular for typical organic foods (Chichar, Dhikari, Ghongi, Numaicha); fish, chicken, duck, gundruk and local hard drinks (Raksi & Chhyang) too. The trends of visiting inter/national tourists have been increasing significantly due to the diversified natural and cultural attractions. For the sustainability, ABCH still need to establish partnership with govt. and non-



govt.agencies, CBOs and private sectors for upgrading its facilities and activities as well as sustaining its effective and efficient performances for bringing positive impacts on the lives of bufferzone people (UN, 1990).

## **V. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1: Conclusions**

This study comes up with conclusions that ABCH has performed more effectively/efficiently due to the strong social capital, good networks of physical assets, ecotourism as well as accessible, accountable, ethical and quality leaderships. ABCH thus help bringing positive impacts in the lives of bufferzone people in a sustainable manner. Besides natural beauties, Amaltari has several social/cultural features to attract both international and national tourists. The settlement comprises indigenous people belonging to Tharu, Bote and Mushar community. These indigenous groups have their own typical traditions, culture, norms/values, dress up, varieties of local food and organic farm productions to attract tourists. They are serving tourism activities with inborn quality hospitality characters and performing cultural programs due to bonding, bridging and linking social capitals. The participation of the female and young generations in homestay and other tourism and agriculture sector is quite impressive. The bufferzone users committee under ecotourism development principle becoming effective while conserving biodiversity, wildlife, natural environment and forest resources. The park revenue and ABCH basket fund also has been investing in conservation, climate change, and vocational related capacity and skill development trainings and physical infrastructure development projects. However, they have some concerns like wastage management in bufferzone areas, advertising local products in national and international tourism market, reviving the cultural organizations for preserving and transmitting culture from generation to generation, promoting organic farming and equal benefit sharing.

### **5.2: Policy Implications**

The local governments like the ward office and municipal office should take lead role on improving the livelihoods of all and promoting rural economy through homestay, tourism and farming activities. The sustainability of livelihoods becomes a combination of the capabilities and resources such as social, human, financial, natural and material assets people have. The people living around Amaltari have sustainable livelihood due to the diversified livelihoods created by tourism, agriculture and the sustainable communities initiatives project implementing by conservation fund. However, the serious concerns of the people on wastage management and equal benefit sharing should not be undermined. Similarly, the locals have a concern that ABCH should be proactive in minimizing the modernization and demonstrative effects due to the excessive flow of the tourists. The large numbers of direct beneficiaries offering homestay, cottage/guest house, restaurants, teashop, paying guest and hotel/resort have more concerns about upgrading road connectivity and marketing facilities.

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