

Homestay Tourism: A Case of Boabeng and Fiema in the Bono East Region of Ghana

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Homestay tourism promotes environmental sustainability by encouraging tourist accommodations and activities that have low impact and are friendly with the local environment. The aim of the study is to examine the effects of homestay tourism on residents at Boabeng and Fiema in the Bono East region of Ghana. The sample of the study was 200 respondents. Data were collected with questionnaires through household surveys and interviews with key informants in the study communities. Mean, standard deviation, frequencies and percentages were used for data analysis. Findings indicate that homestay tourism offers significant potential for income diversification, particularly for farmers who constitute the majority of the population. Cultural immersion and wildlife observation were the most popular activities among tourists, with monkeys being a central attraction. However, challenges such as low educational levels, large family sizes, and economic limitations hinder the community's ability to fully maximize the benefits of homestay tourism. The study recommends capacity-building programs, diversification of tourism activities, infrastructure improvements, and conservation efforts to ensure the long-term sustainability of homestay tourism in the study area.

Keywords: Monkey Sanctuary, tourist destinations, local communities, homestay tourism, Boabeng, Fiema

Introduction

Diversification of tourism destinations and tourism products are underway as a result of the industry's explosive growth, which has sparked the emergence of new, alternative types of tourism (Kannegieser 2015). The demand for tourism by consumers who are seeking a different type of experience has ignited the emergence of homestay tourism in the tourism industry. Homestay refers to the practice of paying for lodging while staying in someone else's home as a guest and frequently getting additional amenities from the host family or community (Jamal and Getz 1999). It is a kind of lodging in which visitors stay with a homeowner who is willing to share and convey their culture in order to learn about their way of life and culture. The homeowner provides the visitors with lodging and meals in exchange for a fair wage. Lynch (2009) defined a homestay more broadly as a commercial arrangement in which guests or visitors pay to

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stay in private homes where they interact with a host or family. Additionally, homestay tourism, as defined by Bhattarai (2022), is a type of lodging in which tourists stay in the homes of local families while visiting a certain location.

Homestay tourism includes activities such as trekking, cultural tourism, agro-tourism, health tourism and ecotourism which has the potential to drastically reduce poverty in the rural areas and also stop the youth migrating to urban areas or cities for greener pastures. Kontogeorgopoulos et al. (2015) reiterate that homestays provide visitors with an opportunity to see village life on a daily basis and, as such, offer an alternative to traditional tourism settings and interactions for experiencing a local community.

Adams et al. (2021) are of the view that, homestays are a promising product with a lot of potential to advance the sustainability of local communities and the environment within the tourism sector. Additionally, they give operators a chance to investigate cutting-edge tourism platforms, encouraging an understanding of and interaction with the social welfare, traditions, and customs of the host communities (Phelan et al. 2020). Furthermore, conducting homestays can greatly enhance the hosts' quality of life by providing them with the chance to increase their revenue from facility rentals and enhance their financial security (Asmelash and Kumar 2019).

The abundance of the Campbell's Mona monkey and the white-thighed Colobus monkey species at Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary is the main draw for tourists (Eshun and Tonto 2014; Afenyo and Amuquandoh 2014). Nonetheless, homestay resources play a crucial role in drawing travellers to these locations (Zamzuki et al. 2023). One of the key components of a unique brand and competitive advantage for marketing tourist destinations is the satisfaction and perception of both visitors and local communities. This, in turn, successfully influences traveller's choice, encourages consumption of local goods, and encourages repeat business. However, homestays at the Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary (BFMS) have little been examined. In order to guarantee cultural preservation and sustainable development, an examination into the welfare of homestay tourism at BFMS is necessary given its significance to both communities and destinations.

Statement of the Problem

The Boabeng and Fiema communities offer excellent possibilities for homestay tourism due to its network of protected areas and other geographical features, which are the main factors that contribute to the attraction of homestay tourism. However, limited research has been conducted on the specific benefits and challenges associated with homestay tourism, particularly in the context of promoting local culture and sustainable development at the study area which has unique natural and cultural attractions in Ghana. Therefore, there is a need to explore the effects of homestay tourism in the context of the Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary to better understand how this form of tourism can contribute to the preservation of local culture, conservation of natural resources, and sustainable tourism development of the communities.

Research Objectives

This study examines the effects of homestay tourism at destination communities. Specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify challenges to the implementation of homestay tourism at the local communities;
2. Investigate the benefits of homestay tourism on the host communities; and
3. Explore methods to expand homestay tourism projects in communities surrounding Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary.

Literature Review

Challenges in the Implementation of Homestay Tourism in Rural Communities

Even though homestay tourism benefits the host community in many ways, stakeholders usually encounter a variety of challenges when putting it into practice (Wijesundara and Gnanapala 2016). The most important element in the success of homestay practices is determined to be active participation in the local community (Razzaq et al. 2017; Yong and Hassan 2019). Increased economic stability through homestays has also been connected to a number of social benefits for some rural community members, the degree of which depends on community involvement (Kannegieser 2015). For example, Razzaq (2011) looked at the development of the Malaysian homestay program in 2008 and concluded that the homestays would fail if the community as a whole did not get involved. According to Razzaq's (2011) theory, this is because the homestay cannot survive without the organizational framework, social capital, and human capital that come with community capacity building.

According to Kontogeorgopoulos et al. (2015), homestay tourism has the potential to exacerbate economic disparities within communities. In actuality, homestays in particular have frequently benefited the elites in a community while failing to include all residents (Farrelly 2011). This has the potential to negatively impact the industry's profitability by creating a negative perception of tourism among the local population (Goodwin and Santilli 2009). In that instance, homestay may promote an unequal distribution of advantages because the majority of the gains from tourism are reaped by a selected group of local elites and powerful individuals who control how tourism develops (Litka 2013). For example, Kontogeorgopoulos et al. (2015) found in their study on house tourism that involvement in homestay initiatives was more accessible to the elite class of villages than to the rest of the community, and that this contributed to the rise in social inequality within the community. Additionally, Liu (2006) discovered in his research on homestay operations in Malaysia that while these businesses brought in a sizable sum of money for the host families, local host families only received 40% of the earnings; the remainder went towards homestay operators' marketing and administrative costs. Furthermore, according to Dei

(2000), there is unhappiness in certain communities in Ghana's Central Region bordering the Kakum National Park due to their exclusion from park operations.

According to Kafle (2023), developing additional essential services, facilities, and catering on alternatives that suit tourists' preferences will make travel more alluring to them. Merely depending on natural beauty and cultural events is not enough to draw tourists. Kafle (2023) reaffirmed that issues with clean drinking water, pleasant housing, wholesome local food, entertainment, security, and transportation, power, clean roads, and clean drinking water discourage tourists. Sharpley and Vass (2006) assert that lack of proper roads and transportation options, can make it difficult for tourists to access homestay destinations which may deter potential visitors from choosing homestay accommodations in rural areas. Also, limited access to electricity and communication infrastructure, such as mobile network coverage and internet connectivity, can disrupt the daily operations of homestay facilities and hinder communication between hosts and guests. Lack of reliable electricity may affect guests' comfort and safety, particularly during evening hours. Prayag and Ryan (2012) are of the view that inadequate water supply and sanitation facilities such as lack of clean drinking water, inadequate toilet facilities, and improper waste disposal in rural communities can pose health risks to both tourists and hosts impacting the overall hygiene and comfort of homestay experiences.

The key components of any homestay program's success are its leadership, as well as the community's cohesion and understanding, which strengthens its sense of pride and ownership. The local populations taking part in the homestay program are demonstrating greater openness and eagerness to join actively as they get more motivated. This is crucial because, in the event that local communities lack the means to actively engage, outside parties may readily influence them, leading to the external dominance of tourist development. Ashikin and Kalsom (2010) point out that, ineffective leadership may pose a problem for community development's ability to effectively manage the homestay program. The quantity of tourists arriving can vary significantly depending on who is in charge of the town. According to Kayat et al. (2016), for a homestay business to be successful, effective leadership from a community member is more crucial than other elements like community involvement. As a result, it is believed that having a strong leader with a strong leadership style is crucial to guiding community development towards success and helping to mobilize the community in the proper direction. Opposition and animosity could undermine the industry's potential and increase company costs in the absence of effective community involvement and leadership (Pusiran and Xiao 2013).

Although homestays and rural tourism present opportunities for natural and cultural experiences, there are issues with their management and conservation (Kafle 2023). For example, frequent bushfires, poaching, agricultural encroachment, low capacity, widespread human-wildlife conflicts, climate change, and insufficient funding for rule and regulation monitoring and enforcement are common factors that undermine conservation in many of the protected areas. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN 2010) Red List of Threatened Species lists several mammals as 'endangered' including the hippopotamus, African elephant,

lion, Diana monkey, and black and white Colobus monkeys that are found in various parks. One wonders what these animals' prospects are in light of these dangers. These factors frequently result in population declines, which raise the possibility of extinction, at least locally.

Without proper training, homestay operators and guides may struggle to navigate cultural differences and effectively facilitate cultural exchange experiences (Wang et al. 2015). Also, lack of proper training in safety protocols and emergency procedures can pose risks to both guests and hosts, especially in remote rural areas with limited access to medical facilities and emergency services (Mbaiwa 2005). For example, Razzaq (2011) asserted that the Malaysian homestay program was doomed to failure in the absence of any kind of effective planning when he studied its launch and implementation in 2008. Giving homestay hosts the right training can greatly improve both the overall experience for visitors and the local community.

Also, Pusiran and Xiao (2013) are of the view that, the acceptability and dedication of the youth to guarantee the continuation of the homestay programme when the aged are not there are of great concern. Pusiran and Xiao (2013) insist that as majority of homestay activities centre on traditional and ancient cultures, it is unclear whether the younger generation will be able to stay in the community and carry on these customs. For example, Walter et al. (2018) found in their study that the majority of homestay operators are getting older, raising concerns about the need to replace the staff in the future as the younger generation is moving from villages to cities, according to the trend, for a variety of reasons.

Benefits of Homestay Tourism

Homestay program is generally practiced in remote and rural areas where the locals promote conservation of areas such as forest, parks, heritage sites, monuments and landscapes for sightseeing. The local residents operate homestay in their own home at low costs and generate profit from visitors by offering local traditional culture and values. According to Kafle (2023), homestay tourism provides travellers with a more genuine and fulfilling travel experience by enabling them to fully immerse themselves in the local way of life. Additionally, it offers a chance for close interaction with locals, promoting friendship and understanding across cultural boundaries. At the same time, heightened interest from visitors in the local way of life can reinforce the sense of identity within the community (Ball 2004). Additionally, homestay offers visitors a singular chance to immerse themselves in the customs and way of life of the locals in a conducive environment, similar to their homes, as well as the indigenous and traditional cultures (Boonratana 2010). Shahzalal (2016) also adds that learning, maintaining, and conserving local customs, crafts, trades, and traditions, strengthening community members, and reaffirming culture and values are among the most common positive benefits of homestay tourism on culture. By offering their own local products and services, operators start to generate income. Homestay operators produce their own local foods from their farms and sell them to their guests, offer their own local hospitality and cultures and generate income.

Community involvement in home stay operation provides a job opportunity and improves local quality of life which also ensure financial stability (Agyeiwaah et al. 2014; Tamir 2015). As an example of direct employment, some locals are employed as security guides, tour guides, cleaners, travel agents, managers, and homestay caregivers (Eshun, 2010). Sales of food items, taxi drivers, handicraft vendors, research assistants, and local tour guides who help visitors all contribute to the indirect employment sector. According to Zamzuki et al. (2023), homestay project is the best way to help those living in rural areas to increase their income.

The homestay programme becomes an additional source of income for property owners since they often take on other forms of employment (Ibrahim and Razzaq 2011). After the implementation of home stay programme in Malaysia for instance, the handicraft industry of the village grew up, the communities started to use the local hand-made materials such as rattan basket. Similarly, women and youth generated money by offering local cultures and tradition to their guest (Ibrahim and Razzaq 2011).

In the case of Nepal it has been alternative economic sources for the villagers who run the homestay in their home. “Homestay programme has become the noticeable source of income for indigenous women in Lwang” (Thapaliya et al. 2012). Sebele (2010) asserted that residents of those communities may eliminate poverty and improve their standard of living as long as waged employment is available.

The only subsector where there are more women than males (57%) is homestays (Panta and Thapa 2018). According to some research, participating in community-based homestays has sparked socioeconomic changes by giving rural women the chance to break out from the traditional role of homemaker and take an active role in their community's development (Acharya and Halpenny 2013). Participating in homestay programs can empower women in a number of ways, such as by enhancing their education and developing their entrepreneurial skills (Vij et al. 2023), gaining access to and control over capital and resources for production, as well as increasing their employment and entrepreneurial opportunities and economic competence both inside and outside the home (Joo et al., 2020), generating additional income (Cherayi and Jose 2016), developing their critical consciousness, self-confidence, and sense of fulfilment and self-worth (Joo et al. 2020), and ultimately increasing their autonomy and self-esteem.

Methods to Expand Homestay Tourism Projects

Homestay tourism has emerged as an essential segment of sustainable tourism, particularly in rural areas with rich biodiversity and cultural heritage (Wang et al. 2020). In order to expand homestay tourism, improving the quality of accommodations is crucial. Studies show that tourists seek comfort, safety, and cleanliness when selecting homestays (Guttentag 2015). By renovating existing homes and constructing eco-friendly accommodations, the local community can attract more tourists, particularly those interested in environmentally conscious travel (Becken 2017).

Cultural experiences are central to the success of homestay tourism (Lindberg and Johnson 2019). Offering tourists opportunities to participate in traditional music, dance, and culinary activities enhances their experience and creates lasting memories.

Locally guided tours and workshops allow for a deeper connection between tourists and the community, fostering a better understanding of the local culture and lifestyle (Tolkach and King 2015).

Effective marketing and branding are also essential for expanding homestay tourism (Tussyadiah 2016). A strong online presence, including partnerships with platforms like Airbnb, which is an online platform that allows residents to rent out their homes, apartments or rooms to travellers and tourists, can significantly increase visibility. According to Lin and Yeh (2021), branding homestays around key themes like sustainability and cultural heritage can make destinations more attractive. Community involvement in tourism is essential for sustainable development (Goodwin 2017). Training locals in hospitality management and customer service is a proven strategy for improving the quality of homestay experiences (Choi and Murray 2010). Studies indicate that such capacity-building initiatives lead to higher satisfaction among tourists and better economic outcomes for the community (Mbaiwa 2017).

Sustainability is at the core of successful rural tourism projects (Lane 2009). Homestay tourism, when developed with sustainable practices in mind, can contribute to both conservation efforts and local development (Kiss 2004). Incorporating renewable energy sources, such as solar power, and sustainable waste management systems, can reduce negative environmental impact of tourism (Honey 2008). Moreover, involving tourists in conservation activities, such as tree planting or wildlife monitoring, can create a deeper sense of connection between visitors and the local community members (Fennell 2014).

Tourism cannot thrive without adequate infrastructure (UNWTO 2019). Studies suggest that improving transportation access and developing local businesses such as cafes and souvenir shops enhance the overall tourism experience (Scheyvens 2011). These efforts make the destination more accessible and enjoyable for tourists, while also creating economic opportunities for the local community (Nair and Thomas 2018). Festivals and events are effective tools for promoting rural tourism (Gibson et al. 2012). By organizing annual cultural festivals, local communities can draw attention to their heritage, traditions, and natural assets (Raj and Vignati, 2021).

Also, collaborating with conservation and wildlife organizations can elevate homestay tourism projects by attracting tourists interested in eco-tourism and conservation (Bramwell & Lane, 2012). Research shows that partnerships with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) can provide resources for both conservation and community development, as well as raise awareness about the importance of preserving biodiversity (Zeppel and Muloin 2011).

Methodology

Study Area

The settlements of Boabeng and Fiema are situated in the Nkoranza North District in the Bono East Region of Ghana. These two communities are surrounded by forest, which housed two types of monkeys known as Mona and Colobus monkeys.

History has it that the people of Boabeng migrated from the Ashanti Region to their current location in 1812. At that time, the area was covered by a dense forest. Upon arriving in the Nkoranza traditional area, they first visited the Nkoranza chief, whose ancestry also originated from Amakom, a suburb of Kumasi. The then Nkoranza chief directed them to settle in any part of the area they deemed suitable.

An elder from the Boabeng community surveyed the area for a possible location and settled on the Boabeng land. He searched for water and discovered a lake within the forest. Surprisingly, he found that the water in the lake bubbled as if it was boiling. He decided to explore the surrounding area and came across two monkeys dancing around a calabash with a talisman under a tree. He observed this phenomenon for three days and saw the same spectacle.

He then returned to inform his people and the Nkoranza chief. The Nkoranza chief sent his chief priest to verify the claims. Following investigations, it became apparent that the monkeys were the descendants of Daworo (a god in the area) and were not to be harmed. Anyone attempting to kill the monkeys would meet with dire consequences. The people of Boabeng took the calabash together with the talisman home and appointed Nana Damoah Awuah as its fetish priest to care for and watch over it.

Similarly, the people of Fiema migrated from Kokofu in Kumasi to settle in the area, following the Nkoranza chief's directives. They were assigned to safeguard the Nkoranza chief's Oracle of War, Abudwo. The two gods in the area, Abudwo and Daworo, share a spiritual bond, entrusting them with a joint responsibility to protect the monkeys.

Monkeys are sacred and charismatic animals in the study communities. Nonetheless, traditional authorities were entitled to ownership and management of the Sanctuary with monitoring and consultative functions by Ghana Wildlife Division (Attuquayefio and Gyampoh 2010). The community has restricted access to agriculture within the sanctuary. Sacred sites like the monkey burial grounds and the sacred groves of the Daworo shrine are located within the Sanctuary's 1.9 km² (192 ha) core protected forest area, which spans 5 km² of forest (Ormsby 2012).

The Sanctuary is situated in a zone that transitions from forest to savannah. Its vegetation, which includes a range of forest trees, savannah tree species, and grassland areas, reflects traits of both the tropical wet forest from the South and the Guinea savannah from the North (Kankam and Sicotte 2013). Kankam and Sicotte (2013) contend further that the vegetation of the BFMS is composed mainly of multiple and single canopy forests, interspersed with cropland between fragmented forest and villages and a few small fragments of plantations (such as teak, mango, and cocoa tree plantations). At BFMS, daily temperatures range from 20°C to 34°C, with an average annual temperature of 26°C (Attuquayefio and Gyampoh 2010). During the dry season, morning temperatures are often lower than afternoon and night time temperatures. Compared to other district peripheral villages, BFMS has a temperate and tranquil climate because of the rainforest.

The monkey sanctuary was initiated by Boabeng and Fiema communities, however, the monkeys have spread to the surrounding communities, and the local people in these communities have set up a committee to manage the project

at the local level. Apart from Boabeng and Fiema, the other communities that help manage the sanctuary include; Akrudwa Number 1, Akrudwa Number 2, Busunya, Bonte, Bomini, Senya and Kokorompe.

Rationale for Selecting the Study Area

The two communities, namely, Boabeng and Fiema were purposely selected because they actively participate in hosting visitors and offering lodging in their homes, which gives insights into how this tourism model operates. Almost every house in these two communities is a potential homestay facility. By examining community engagement in homestay tourism at the sanctuary, one can better understand its effects, on livelihoods and empowerment.

Sampling Design

The study made use of descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey research design is usually used to gather information about the respondents' feelings, attitude, opinion, interests, and problems (Siedlecki 2020). The reason for the choice is that it presents a picture of the specific details of a situation and collects data, test hypotheses, or answer research questions concerning the status of the subject of study. There are a number of advantages of descriptive research, however the two main benefits of this research method is being able to use various forms of data as well as incorporating human experience (Siedlecki 2020). Thus, descriptive survey is directed at determining the nature of a situation as it exists at the time of study. It helps identify conditions present and points out future needs. Descriptive survey also provides a lot of information from a large sample of individuals from which generalization could be made about the population.

Target Population and Sample Size

The target population for the study was household heads or their representatives aged 18 years and above. This is because people in that age group including homestay operators, were among the economically active population in the study area (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) 2012).

A list of household heads was compiled and used as a sampling frame for the selection of the respondents. The unit of data collection was individual household heads in the communities. Those selected for the in-depth interview were the key informants or the opinion leaders in the study area. They were made up of homestay operators, workers of BFMS, tourists, traditional authorities, assemblymen and unit committee members from Boabeng and Fiema communities.

Employing a multi-stage sampling technique, 200 heads of households were selected from households at both Boabeng and Fiema. The sample size of 200 was arrived at to ensure fair representation of different categories of people living within the community. This is in line with Hair et al.,s (1987) suggestion that a sample size of at least 100 is enough for statistical analysis. In the first stage, purposive sampling technique was used to select Boabeng and Fiema

where respondents were drawn from based on accessibility to the sanctuary as well as availability of homestay tourism facilities. The second phase centred on the listing of household heads in the communities. As part of this exercise, field assistants were tasked to list and identify the number of households in each house and also give identification marks to each of the household heads. The third phase dealt with allocation of the sample size of 200 among the households in the community. At the fourth phase, simple random sampling (without replacement) was used in selecting the individuals from the list of heads of households. Using simple random sampling, one adult household head was selected from the sampling frame to complete a questionnaire. With regards to the descriptive analyses, mean and percentages were used to describe the individual characteristics of the respondents as well as the scores of the various scale items.

Sampling Technique

Primary data were collected through household surveys, key informant interviews and direct field observations. Household surveys were carried out by administering semi-structured questionnaires. A total of 200 semi-structured questionnaires (open and close-ended questions) were administered to the residents of Boabeng (80 questionnaires) and Fiema (120 questionnaires) depending on the size of each community.

Questionnaires were structured to capture socio-economic characteristics of the respondents; the impact of homestay tourism on the local population living within the Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary (BFMS). Some socio-economic parameters of the local population vital to this study were: age, gender, main occupation, level of education, marital status, and length of stay in the community, and number of children, income among others. In each sampled community, the research assistants helped to translate the questions into the local dialect (Twi) and responses in English.

Key informant interviews were used to collect general information on the capacity of homestay tourism to improve the livelihood of the local people living within the BFMS. Information collected through key informant interviews and direct field observations was mainly used to ascertain the truthfulness of responses obtained during household surveys.

Results and Discussion

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Socio-demographic characteristics have been found to influence residents' attitudes towards tourism development in local communities (Mensah 2016). Analysis of socio-demographic data of respondents revealed that the main socio-demographic attributes were: sex, age, length of stay in the community, education, number of children, occupation, marital status, religion, residence, and income (Table 1).

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	113	56.5
Female	87	43.5
Age		
18-25	20	10.0
26-35	40	20.0
36-45	43	21.5
46-55	49	24.5
Over 55 years	48	24.0
Length of Stay in the Community		
Less than 1 year	3	1.5
1 year	4	2.0
2 years	8	4.0
3 years	31	15.5
More than 4 years	154	77.0
Level of Education		
Tertiary Education	18	9.0
Secondary Education	67	33.5
Basic Education	45	22.5
No Formal Education	70	35.0
Number of children		
None	16	8.0
1	10	5.0
2	15	7.5
3	53	26.5
More than 4	106	53.0
Main Occupation		
Farmer	114	57.0
Trader	41	20.5
Teacher	15	7.5
Nurse	6	3.0
Others	24	12.0
Marital Status		
Single	41	20.5
Married	110	55.0
Divorced	22	11.0

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Widowed	19	9.5
Separated	8	4.0
Religion		
Islam	20	10.0
Christianity	166	83.0
Traditionalist	14	7.0
Residence		
Fiema	95	47.5
Boabeng	105	52.5
Average Monthly Income		
Less than GHS500	101	50.5
GHS500-GHS1000	57	28.5
GHS1000-GHS2000	22	11.0
GHS2000-GHS3000	16	8.0
Above GHS3000	4	2.0

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Studies by Panta and Thapa (2018) indicate that there are more women than males in homestays, however, Table 1 showed that there were 56.5% males and 43.5% females, indicating a slightly higher proportion of males who took part in the study. This distribution suggested that males were more represented in the study, which could have implications for the interpretation of the results, particularly in areas where gender roles might influence perceptions and experiences.

The age distribution showed that about 51.5% of respondents were youth between the ages of 18 and 45, accounting for more than half of the total sample. This confirmed findings from Ibrahim and Razzaq (2011) which stated that the youth generated money from homestay program by offering local cultures and tradition to their guests.

A significant majority of respondents (77.0%) had lived in the community for more than four years. This indicated that most respondents were long-term residents with likely deep-rooted knowledge and familiarity with the area, which might influence their perspectives on local activities and community development.

The data revealed that the largest proportion of respondents (35.0%) had no formal education, followed closely by those with secondary (33.5%). This highlighted a relatively low level of formal education within the community, which could impact access to certain types of employment or participation in research and development activities. Only 9% of respondents had attained tertiary education.

The large family sizes, with over half (53.0%) of respondents having more than four children, may affect the capacity to host tourists. While large families could offer a more immersive homestay experience, it may also strain resources. Understanding family dynamics is critical in ensuring that homestay tourism

does not become a burden but instead creates a beneficial exchange for both hosts and tourists.

Most respondents (57.0%) were farmers, which suggests that homestay tourism in this community is likely intertwined with agricultural activities. This confirms the studies undertaken in Nepal which found out that Nepal homestay operators produce their own local foods from their fields and sell them to their guest to generate income (Bhuiyan et al. 2011). Farmers hosting tourists can offer experiences related to local farming practices, which can enrich tourists' cultural understanding and provide supplementary income for host families. Traders (20.5%) may offer insights into local markets, further enhancing the cultural exchange between visitors and hosts.

Majority of respondents (55.0%) were married, indicating stable family structures, which were important for homestay tourism. Families that host tourists are often seen as providing more authentic and comfortable experiences. Understanding marital status also aids in identifying how family structures may influence the division of labour and responsibilities in managing homestay programs.

The dominance of Christianity (83.0%) in the community may influence the type of cultural practices and customs shared with tourists. Religious events, festivals, and practices could be incorporated into the homestay experience, offering tourists a deeper connection to the community's spiritual life.

The even split between the two communities of Boabeng (52.5%) and Fiema (47.5%) ensures that both areas contribute to homestay tourism. These communities can collaborate in promoting tourism, leveraging their unique attractions, such as Boabeng's cultural heritage and Fiema's historical sites, to create a diverse range of experiences for tourists.

A significant portion of respondents (50.5%) on average, earned less than GHS500 monthly income, highlighting the economic challenges faced by the community. However, homestay project may become an additional source of income for property owners since they often take on other forms of employment (Ibrahim and Razzaq 2011, 19). For example, after the implementation of homestay programme in Malaysia, the handicraft industry of the village grew up, the local people started to use the local hand-made materials such as rattan basket, similarly women and youth generated money by offering local cultures and tradition to their guest. In the case of Nepal it has become an alternative source of income for the people who run the homestay in their home. Homestay project has also become the noticeable source of income for indigenous women at Lwang in Nepal (Thapaliya et al. 2012). Homestay tourism presents a viable opportunity to improve income levels by diversifying the economic activities of local residents. With appropriate support, local people in the study area could increase their earnings by offering authentic and affordable homestay experiences.

Challenges in the Implementation of Homestay Tourism in the Local Communities

Stakeholders of homestay tourism in host communities encounter a lot of challenges when putting the homestay programme into practice (Wijesundara and Gnanapala 2016). Table 2 illustrates some of these challenges in the implementation of homestay tourism programme in the study area.

Table 2. *Challenges in the Implementation of Homestay Tourism*

Challenge	Mean	Standard Deviation
Poor roads	0.18	0.42
Poor network/internet connection	0.12	0.34
Communication barriers	0.16	0.39
Lack of research facilities	0.15	0.33
Limited access to basic necessities	0.19	0.44
Open defecation in the forest	0.23	0.47

Source: Field Survey (2024)

The challenge of poor roads (mean: 0.18) is a major obstacle enumerated by respondents, which is frequently cited in the literature as a key barrier to rural tourism development. In the study area, this is not surprising since the road from Busunya, the district capital, to most of the communities adjacent to the Sanctuary are not tarred and are in their bad states. Research by Butler and Rogerson (2016) points out that inadequate infrastructure, particularly poor roads, limits accessibility to remote areas and reduces the attractiveness of homestay tourism for potential visitors. However, Rogerson (2019) also suggests that in regions where tourism potential is high, improving infrastructure is often prioritized by governments or NGOs to boost tourism.

Poor network and internet connection (mean: 0.12) was also highlighted as a significant challenge. In today's digital age, reliable internet access is crucial for promoting and sustaining homestay tourism. As noted by Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018), many rural homestay operations face technological limitations, making it difficult for hosts to engage in online marketing, manage bookings, or communicate effectively with guests. Furthermore, communication barriers (mean: 0.16) also pose a challenge, as many homestay hosts may not speak the languages of their international guests. The GSS (2021), reports that effective literacy level for the study area is 60.2% which is below the national average of 69.8%. This is supported by McLaren (2021), who identifies language and cultural differences as obstacles that can affect the quality of service and the overall tourist experience.

Lack of research facilities (mean: 0.15) was another challenge mentioned by respondents. According to Sharpley and Telfer (2015), rural homestay programs often suffer from inadequate resources for training and research, limiting the operators' ability to assess market trends and make improvements based on tourist feedback. This can stifle innovation and growth in the homestay sector.

Moreover, limited access to basic necessities (mean: 0.19), such as water and food, was frequently cited. It was observed that major part of the farmlands in the community have been reserved to take care of monkeys and therefore, farmers have to travel far distance in order to cultivate their crops. Besides, farmers who farm

close to the sanctuary do so at their own risks as monkeys eat and destroy farm produce such as yam, plantain, banana, groundnut among others, which are found within their reach. This challenge resonates with studies like those by Snyman (2017), which highlight the resource constraints in rural communities that make it difficult to accommodate tourists comfortably. Finally, open defecation in the forest (mean: 0.23) was identified as a severe sanitation issue. The literature emphasizes the need for proper sanitation and waste management systems, as noted by Hampton and Jeyacheya (2020), who argue that poor hygiene can deter tourists and pose serious health risks to both visitors and local residents.

In an interview, an elder in the community stated that:

“There are a lot of challenges in implementing homestay tourism. These include bad roads, poor internet connectivity, limited access to portable water, open defecation in the forest, and also communication barriers. Sometimes thieves come to the community, and this reduces visitors’ length of stay and minimize their return to the community”.

Benefits of Homestay Tourism in Local Communities

Homestay tourism offers opportunity for close interaction with locals, promoting friendship and understanding across cultural boundaries (Kafle 2023). Table 3 reveals the main benefits of homestay tourism to residents in the study area.

Table 3. *Benefits of Homestay Tourism*

Benefits	Mean	Standard Deviation
Job Creation	0.23	0.47
Buying of local products	0.10	0.31
Financial support	0.14	0.37
Infrastructure development	0.095	0.30
Community pride (popularity)	0.105	0.32
Income (rent)	0.13	0.35
Networking	0.15	0.38
No benefits	0.05	0.22

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Respondents agreed that job creation (mean: 0.23) is one of the most significant economic benefits of homestay tourism. This finding aligns with the literature, which highlights that homestay tourism often provides employment opportunities in underserved communities by allowing locals to participate in various service roles such as catering, tour guiding, and transportation. According to Gascón (2019), homestay tourism can offer employment to individuals who may not have formal education or technical skills, which fits well with the respondents' view that job creation is a primary benefit.

Buying of local products (mean: 0.10) is also emphasized by respondents, showing that homestay tourism encourages tourists to purchase locally made items such as handicrafts, food, and souvenirs. This aligns with research from Ghimire (2017), which demonstrates that tourism can strengthen the local economy by creating a direct market for traditional products, thus preserving cultural heritage and

craftsmanship. However, the literature also warns that without proper regulation, this benefit might become less significant if mass-produced items replace authentic local products. In an interview, one elder in the community said:

“Tourist presence has a positive impact on the local community because they buy some of our farm produce and it is a source of income. Tourists interactions with families in the community enhance their understanding of local culture, participating in daily routines of the host family”.

Financial support (mean: 0.14) is another economic benefit identified, which is supported by Tolkach and King (2015), who suggest that homestay tourism directly impacts household incomes, offering an alternative source of revenue to farming and other traditional livelihoods. Furthermore, infrastructure development (mean: 0.095) is noted, and as highlighted by Moscardo (2017), tourism often triggers public and private investments in infrastructure, which can improve the overall quality of life for local residents. Roads, electricity, and water supply tend to be improved due to the influx of visitors, a point echoed in both the survey and the literature.

Additionally, community pride (mean: 0.105) was identified as a socio-cultural benefit. This is consistent with studies by Kunjuraman and Hussin (2017), which state that homestay tourism enhances the visibility and reputation of rural communities, leading to increased cultural pride and identity preservation. However, as noted by Saarinen (2021), if not managed properly, this pride can lead to the commodification of culture, where cultural expressions are altered to meet tourist expectations rather than staying authentic to the community.

The survey results also point to networking opportunities (mean: 0.15), where interactions with tourists facilitate knowledge exchange and cultural understanding. This mirrors findings from McIntosh and Zahra (2008), who argued that homestay tourism creates social capital by fostering interpersonal relationships between locals and foreigners. However, the literature also mentions that such interactions can sometimes result in cultural dilution if local traditions are overshadowed by external influences. In an interview, the Chief Priest in the community said:

“Homestay tourism helps the local people at Fiema and Boabeng protect the forest and the monkeys in it to help attract tourist to our community. When tourist come to this community, they are interested to learn about our culture. Because of homestay tourism, the community also receives financial support from NGOs for infrastructure development (schools and boreholes), and also for tree planting exercises. The community also receive funds to help in environmental preservation”.

Methods to Expand Homestay Tourism Projects in the Local Communities

Homestay tourism has emerged as an essential segment of sustainable tourism, particularly in rural areas with rich biodiversity and cultural heritage (Wang et al. 2020). Table 4 illustrate ways to expand homestay tourism projects in the vicinity of Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary.

Table 4. *Ways to Expand Homestay Tourism Projects*

Expansion Strategy	Mean	Standard Deviation
Development of infrastructures	0.22	0.47
Protecting the natural vegetation	0.13	0.35
Educational training for homestay operators	0.10	0.30
Community unity	0.09	0.31
Addressing guest complaints	0.19	0.44
Supporting tourists	0.09	0.29
Improving accommodation facilities	0.07	0.27
Effective marketing campaigns	0.10	0.30

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Respondents agreed that infrastructure development (mean: 0.22) is essential to expanding homestay tourism. In the study area, this could involve upgrading amenities, such as roads and the guesthouse, while preserving the local character, which aligns with the ecotourism principles recommended by Ghosh et al. (2021). The literature consistently supports this, with authors like Twining-Ward (2019) suggesting that improved infrastructure such as better roads, electricity, and communication networks will enhance the accessibility and appeal of homestay destinations, thereby increasing tourist numbers. However, it is crucial that infrastructure improvements are sustainable Buckley (2020).

Protecting the natural vegetation (mean: 0.13) was another critical strategy identified, reflecting the growing trend of eco-conscious tourism. It was found out that residents in the study area helped in the planting of acacia tree to serve as green fire belt to prevent bushfires from destroying the monkey sanctuary. According to Weaver (2018), the preservation of natural resources is vital for maintaining the attractiveness of homestay locations, particularly those like Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary, which rely on their environmental assets.

In an interview, the Chief Priest in the community stated that:

It is essential to conserve the natural environment by preventing encroachment of the forest, which will help maintain the ecological balance and attractiveness of the area for tourists. Also, organising regular training programs for homestay operators can enhance the quality of services provided, ensuring that both operators and guests have a smooth experience. There need to be a strong sense of unity and collaboration among all the communities surrounding Boabeng-Fiema monkey sanctuary. This can lead to mutual support and the sharing of resources, further benefiting the tourism sector.

Furthermore, educational training for homestay operators (mean: 0.09) was recognized as essential. In the study area, training programs focusing on quality service can empower the community to take an active role in managing and benefiting from the sanctuary. Research by Schott and Klosse (2021) suggested that

providing homestay hosts with training in hospitality, language skills, and cultural sensitivity can improve the quality of services and enhance the tourist experience.

Respondents also emphasized the importance of addressing guest complaints (mean: 0.10), which aligns with the findings of Teye and Timothy (2020), who argue that the ability to quickly and efficiently resolve issues can significantly boost tourist satisfaction and encourage repeat visits. Community unity (mean: 0.19) was highlighted as another important factor. Studies by Tosun (2006) demonstrate that strong community involvement and cooperation are necessary for the success of tourism projects. Moreover, improving accommodation facilities (mean: 0.09) was seen as a priority, as highlighted by Henderson (2017), who agreed that clean, comfortable, and aesthetically pleasing accommodations are essential to attracting high-value tourists.

Table 4 shows that effective marketing campaigns (mean: 0.10) were identified as a way to expand homestay tourism. Literature by Morrison (2021) stresses the importance of targeted marketing efforts, especially digital marketing, to raise awareness of lesser-known tourist destinations like Boabeng and Fiema in the Nkoranza north district.

An elder in the community said:

“Solutions should be provided to guest complaints swiftly and effectively. This will not only ensure guest satisfaction but also foster positive reviews, encouraging repeat visits. Providing comprehensive support to tourists in terms of information, guidance, and assistance will greatly enhance their overall experience, ensuring a positive image of the local community. Again, regular maintenance of homestay accommodations is crucial to meet international standards and enhance the comfort of visitors. There should also be effective marketing campaigns that highlight the unique aspects of the local community, culture, and natural beauty that can attract a larger number of visitors. Moreover, improving infrastructure, such as roads, hospitals, and banking services, will not only benefit the local community but also provide essential services to tourists, making the destination more attractive and accessible”.

Summary of Findings

Homestay tourism contributed to job creation, networking opportunities, and financial support for the community. It also provided income from hosting tourists and increased patronage of local products. However, a small portion of respondents reported not experiencing any direct benefits from homestay tourism, suggesting that the distribution of advantages may not be evenly spread.

The main challenges identified were poor sanitation, limited access to basic necessities, poor road infrastructure, communication barriers, and lack of research facilities. These issues not only impact negatively on the quality of the tourist experience but also hinder the overall growth of the homestay tourism sector.

Respondents identified infrastructure development, better handling of guest complaints, educational training for homestay operators, and effective marketing campaigns as key strategies for expanding the homestay tourism project. There was a strong emphasis on protecting natural vegetation, enhancing community unity, and improving accommodation facilities to meet international standards.

Conclusion

The study concludes that homestay tourism at Boabeng and Fiema has had a positive impact on the local community, especially in terms of job creation, cultural preservation, and supplemental income for host families. However, the implementation of homestay tourism faces several challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, poor sanitation, and communication barriers. These issues need to be addressed to ensure the sustainable growth of the tourism sector.

While homestay tourism has brought significant economic and socio-cultural benefits, its long-term success will depend on addressing these challenges and expanding opportunities for all community members. The sanctuary's natural environment, particularly its wildlife, continues to be a strong attraction for tourists, but more attention is needed to improve the overall tourist experience through better facilities and services.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of homestay tourism and ensure its long-term sustainability:

- i. The government and local authorities should prioritize the development of infrastructure in the catchment area of the sanctuary. In this case, there should be improvement of road networks, sanitation systems, and access to basic necessities such as potable water. Improved infrastructure will make the area more accessible and increase its appeal to tourists.
- ii. Regular training programs should be organized to improve the hospitality, communication, and management skills of homestay operators. This will ensure that visitors receive high-quality services and that the operators can effectively manage guest expectations and needs.
- iii. A structured system should be established for handling and resolving guest complaints swiftly and effectively. This will improve guest satisfaction and encourage positive word of mouth advertisements, which are essential for attracting repeat visitors.
- iv. Measures should be taken to protect the natural environment, especially the sanctuary's wildlife and forests. Sustainable tourism practices should be promoted, such as eco-friendly homestay facilities, reforestation projects, and conservation efforts.
- v. Targeted marketing strategies, particularly through online platforms and social media, should be employed to promote the unique aspects of BFMS. Highlighting the sanctuary's wildlife, cultural heritage, and immersive homestay experiences will help attract a broader audience, including international tourists.
- vi. The Boabeng and Fiema communities should collaborate with other communities within the catchment area of BFMS to create a unified front in promoting homestay tourism. Sharing resources and knowledge will strengthen the local tourism sector and create a more cohesive tourist experience.

- vii. Homestay accommodations should be upgraded to meet international standards, providing comfortable and well-maintained living spaces for tourists. This will enhance the overall experience and encourage longer stays.

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