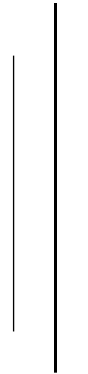


**A PROJECT REPORT ON
EXPLORING THE CONTRIBUTION OF HOSPITALITY
CULTURE TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN
POKHARA HOTELS**



BY

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A project work report submitted to Pokhara University in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor in Hotel Management



At the

Nepal Tourism and Hotel Management College

Pokhara-14, Chhinedanda

July, 2026

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project work report entitled “**Exploring the Contribution of hospitality culture to sustainable tourism development in Pokhara hotels**”. Submitted for the BHM is my original work and the project work report has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or other similar titles.

Renu Gurung

July, 2026

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project work titled **“Exploring the Contribution of Hospitality Culture to Sustainable Tourism Development in Pokhara Hotels”** submitted by Renu Gurung, (23150249) for the partial fulfillment of the requirement of the BHM embodies the Bonafide work done by her under my supervision.

.....

Mr. Suresh Raj Adhikari

Supervisor, PW

July, 2026

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Tourism has solidified its status as a vital pillar of Nepal's national economy, with Pokhara the capital of Gandaki Province standing as the country's premier leisure destination. Nestled against the backdrop of the Annapurna Mountain range and shaped by iconic freshwater bodies such as PHEWA and BEGNAS lakes, Pokhara acts as the primary gateway for international trekkers and domestic holidaymakers alike. The rapid expansion of this tourism ecosystem has triggered an unprecedented boom in the local hospitality sector, transforming Pokhara from a quiet backpacking stopover into a highly commercialized urban destination dense with hundreds of hotels, resorts, and lodges. At the heart of Nepal's service sector is a deeply embedded hospitality culture traditionally guided by the ancient socio-religious philosophy of "Atithi Devo Bhava" (The guest is equivalent to God). In the local context, this is not merely a corporate service standard; it is an intrinsic cultural value that dictates warm hospitality, mutual respect, and community-centric hosting. Good hospitality practices help create positive experiences for tourists, increase tourist satisfaction, and encourage repeat visits. As global travel trends shift increasingly toward ethical consumerism, hoteliers face the critical task of translating these deep-seated cultural hospitality values into modern sustainable practices. Sustainable tourism development which aims to balance environmental preservation, socio-cultural integrity, and economic viability is no longer an optional marketing niche for Pokhara's hotels; it is an operational imperative required to preserve the finite natural assets that draw visitors to the region. Hospitality culture plays a significant role in promoting sustainable tourism by enhancing visitor experiences, preserving local traditions, and supporting economic development. In a tourism destination like Pokhara, the practice of genuine hospitality can increase tourist satisfaction, encourage repeat visits, and strengthen the destination's image (Smith, 2015; Morrison, 2019). Cultural hospitality further contributes to community participation, employment generation, and the preservation of local heritage, which are essential components of sustainable tourism development (UNWTO, 2018; Timothy & Boyd, 2023).

1.1.1 Hospitality Culture to Sustainable Tourism Development

Hospitality culture is an important part of the tourism and hospitality industry. It refers to the traditions, values, attitudes and behaviors that focus on welcoming and serving guests with respect, warmth, friendliness and care. In Nepal, hospitality is deeply connected with culture beliefs and social values. Nepalese people traditionally believe in treating guests with kindness and respect, which is commonly reflected in hotels, restaurants and tourism business. Good hospitality practices help create positive experiences for tourists, increase tourist satisfaction and encourage repeat visits.

1.1.2 Socio- economic significance

Economic Benefits

Hospitality culture in Pokhara hotels creates direct and indirect jobs for local people, including roles in front office, housekeeping, food and beverage, guiding and transportation service. Promotion of local culture and identity Nepali traditions such as greetings, cultural food, dress & festivals. Tourism Spending circulates through multiple sectors like transport, agriculture, retail and entertainment, creating a strong multiplier effect in the region. International tourist contributes foreign currency, strengthening Nepal's economy and supporting national development projects.

Challenges

Seasonal Tourism Fluctuation leading to unstable income and temporary job losses for hospitality workers. Many Hotels staff have limited professional training in modern hospitality standards, foreign languages and customer service, which affects service quality and guest satisfaction. Rapid growth of hotels creates intense competition, often leading to price wars and reduced profit margins, which can affect service quality.

1.1.3 Cultural Impacts

Positive Impacts

Hospitality culture encourages the promotion of Nepali traditions such as greetings, festivals, music, and traditional food, helping to preserve culture identity in Pokhara. Tourists and local people interact, leading to mutual understanding, respect and learning of different cultures, values and lifestyles. Local people feel proud of their culture when it is appreciated by international tourists, strengthening cultural confidence and identity. Hotels often promote cultural programs, helping both staff and guests learn about Nepali customs and traditions.

Negative Impacts

Culture may be performed only for tourists as a business product, reducing its originality and meaning. Western influence and tourist demand can lead to changes in food, dress and lifestyle, weakening traditional practices. Excessive tourism can mix local culture with foreign elements, leading to loss of cultural uniqueness. Differences between tourists and local cultural values (behavior, dress, alcohol use) may create misunderstanding or tension. Locals may rely too much on tourism based cultural activities, reducing interest in practicing culture in daily life.

By closely examining the intersection of cultural heritage and environmental management, this study attempts to decipher how ancient hosting ethics can inform modern green initiatives, such as eco-friendly waste solutions, energy conservation, and locally sourced supply chains. The inquiry aims to move past purely theoretical definitions of sustainable tourism, offering a localized perspective on how cultural pride and community accountability can drive practical, day-to-day business choices in urban hotels.

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate how traditional cultural hospitality values can be effectively integrated into modern sustainable tourism practices within the hospitality sector of Pokhara, Nepal. As rapid urban commercialization puts pressure on local ecosystems, this research seeks to analyze how the foundational philosophy of "Atithi Devo Bhava" can transition from an abstract social ethos into a structured operational framework for sustainability.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the acknowledged importance of hospitality culture in attracting tourists, a critical gap remains in understanding its structured contribution to sustainable tourism development within the hotel sector of Pokhara. Existing corporate frameworks in local hotels frequently prioritize short-term profit maximization, leaving broader sustainability dimensions such as cultural authenticity, long-term environmental responsibility, and equitable socio-economic metrics largely overlooked.

Furthermore, the accelerating commercialization of culture risks commodifying sacred traditions like "Atithi Devo Bhava", reducing authentic cultural expressions into superficial marketing tools. This issue is compounded by a widespread deficit in professionally trained hospitality staff, which diminishes service quality and weakens the transmission of authentic traditional values to global

travelers. Currently, there is insufficient empirical research exploring how Pokhara's hotels can balance the economic drive for profitability with the socio-cultural and environmental demands of sustainability. Consequently, this study is necessary to identify these operational gaps and provide actionable, empirical insights to align local hospitality cultures with sustainable tourism benchmarks.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How do hotel staff and managers understand hospitality culture in their daily service practices?
2. What role does hospitality culture play in shaping tourists' experiences and satisfaction?
3. What challenges do hotels face in maintaining authentic hospitality culture?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The overarching goal of this research is to evaluate the operational role and efficacy of traditional hospitality culture in supporting sustainable tourism practices within the hotels of Pokhara.

The research is guided by the following specific objectives:

- To explore how hotel managers and staff perceive and incorporate traditional hospitality culture into their daily service practices.
- To examine the influence of hospitality culture on tourists' experiences and overall satisfaction during their stay in hotels in Pokhara.
- To identify the challenges that hotels encounter in preserving and practicing authentic hospitality culture while promoting sustainable tourism.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it examines the contribution of hospitality culture to sustainable tourism development in Pokhara hotels, providing valuable insights for theory, research, practice, and society.

From a theoretical perspective, the study enriches the existing literature by integrating the concepts of hospitality culture and sustainable tourism development within the context of Nepal's hotel industry. It contributes to a deeper understanding of how hospitality values, service quality, employee behavior, and organizational culture influence sustainable tourism practices and long-term destination development.

From a methodological perspective, this research demonstrates the application of a quantitative research approach using structured questionnaires and statistical analysis to investigate the relationship between hospitality culture and sustainable tourism development. The research design and methods can serve as a useful reference for future researchers conducting similar studies in the fields of hospitality, tourism, and sustainable development, particularly in developing countries.

Academically, the study provides a valuable source of information for students, researchers, and scholars by addressing a relatively underexplored area in Nepalese tourism research. The empirical findings add to the existing body of knowledge and may encourage further research on hospitality culture, sustainability, and tourism management. The study can also be used as reference material for academic projects, dissertations, and future policy-related research.

Practically, the findings of this study are expected to benefit hotel owners, managers, employees, tourism entrepreneurs, and tourism organizations by highlighting the importance of fostering a strong hospitality culture to achieve sustainable tourism goals. The research offers practical recommendations that can help improve service quality, customer satisfaction, employee performance, environmental responsibility, and community engagement, thereby enhancing the overall competitiveness and sustainability of hotels in Pokhara.

From a societal perspective, the study supports the broader objective of sustainable tourism by emphasizing practices that promote environmental conservation, preserve local culture and heritage, create employment opportunities, and improve the well-being of local communities. By encouraging responsible hospitality practices, the study contributes to balancing economic growth with social and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, the findings may assist policymakers, tourism authorities, and local government agencies in developing effective strategies and policies that strengthen sustainable tourism development while ensuring the long-term growth and resilience of the hospitality industry in Pokhara and Nepal as a whole.

1.6 Literature Review

The hospitality industry plays a pivotal role in the growth and sustainability of tourism by creating experiences that influence tourists' perceptions, satisfaction, and intentions to revisit a destination. While hotels are traditionally viewed as providers of accommodation and related services, they also serve as important cultural institutions

that reflect and preserve the social values, customs, and traditions of the communities in which they operate. Hospitality, therefore, extends beyond the delivery of tangible services to encompass interpersonal relationships, cultural exchange, and the expression of local identity. In destinations with rich cultural heritage, such as Pokhara, the quality of hospitality is shaped not only by professional service standards but also by deeply rooted cultural values that define the relationship between hosts and guests.

In Nepal, the concept of hospitality is closely associated with the philosophy of "Atithi Devo Bhava", meaning "the guest is equivalent to God." This philosophy emphasizes respect, generosity, compassion, and sincere care for visitors, making hospitality an important cultural and moral responsibility rather than merely a commercial activity (Kunwar, 2017). Such traditional values have historically distinguished Nepalese hospitality by fostering meaningful interactions between local communities and tourists. These authentic cultural encounters contribute to memorable visitor experiences while strengthening the destination's cultural identity and competitiveness within the global tourism market.

The increasing globalization of tourism, however, has transformed the operational environment of hotels. Growing international competition, changing tourist expectations, technological advancement, and the commercialization of tourism have encouraged many hospitality businesses to adopt standardized service models that prioritize efficiency and profitability. Although these developments have improved service consistency and operational performance, they have also raised concerns regarding the gradual erosion of traditional hospitality values and local cultural identity (Cros & McKercher, 2020). Hotels increasingly face the challenge of balancing internationally recognized service standards with the preservation of authentic cultural practices that distinguish their destinations from competing tourism markets.

Sustainable tourism has emerged as an important framework for addressing these challenges by promoting tourism development that simultaneously supports economic prosperity, environmental protection, and socio-cultural preservation. Within the hotel sector, sustainable tourism extends beyond environmental initiatives to include the safeguarding of cultural heritage, strengthening community participation, and maintaining authentic host–guest relationships. The principles of Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) further reinforce this perspective by

emphasizing that long-term organizational success depends on creating value for multiple stakeholders, including hotel managers, employees, tourists, local communities, and government institutions. Similarly, the Socio-Cultural Sustainability Model (UNWTO, 2018) highlights the importance of protecting local traditions and cultural identity while ensuring that tourism development generates lasting benefits for host communities.

Although previous studies have extensively examined sustainable tourism, service quality, cultural tourism, and tourist satisfaction, comparatively fewer studies have investigated how traditional hospitality culture is integrated into the daily operations of hotels, particularly in developing tourism destinations such as Pokhara. Existing literature has largely focused on the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism, while the socio-cultural aspects of hospitality have received comparatively less empirical attention. Furthermore, limited research has simultaneously explored the perspectives of hotel managers and employees, tourists' experiences of cultural hospitality, and the institutional challenges that influence the preservation of authentic hospitality practices.

In light of these observations, this literature review synthesizes previous research relevant to traditional hospitality culture and sustainable tourism in the hotel sector. The review is organized into three major themes: traditional hospitality culture in hotel operations; the relationship between hospitality culture, tourist experiences, and satisfaction; and the challenges of preserving authentic hospitality culture within contemporary hotel management. The review concludes by identifying the research gap that provides the rationale for the present study.

1.6.1 Traditional Hospitality Culture in Hotel Operations

Traditional hospitality culture represents the customs, beliefs, values, and behavioral practices that guide the interactions between hosts and guests within a particular society. In the hospitality industry, these cultural values shape how services are delivered and how relationships are established between hotel employees and visitors. Unlike standardized service procedures that primarily emphasize operational efficiency, traditional hospitality culture places greater importance on warmth, respect, empathy, generosity, and personalized attention. Consequently, hospitality is viewed not merely as a commercial transaction but as a social and cultural practice that reflects the identity, heritage, and values of the host community.

The significance of traditional hospitality culture has been widely recognized in tourism literature as an important factor contributing to destination competitiveness and sustainable tourism development. According to Freeman's (1984) Stakeholder Theory, organizations achieve long-term success by balancing the interests of multiple stakeholders, including employees, customers, local communities, suppliers, and government institutions. Within the hotel industry, this perspective suggests that integrating local cultural values into daily service delivery creates mutual benefits for both businesses and communities. Hotels that respect and preserve local traditions strengthen relationships with residents while simultaneously providing visitors with authentic cultural experiences that cannot easily be replicated elsewhere.

In the Nepalese context, hospitality is deeply rooted in the cultural philosophy of **Atithi Devo Bhava**, which translates as "the guest is equivalent to God." This philosophy regards receiving and serving guests as both a moral obligation and a social responsibility rather than simply a business activity. Kunwar (2017) explains that this traditional belief encourages hosts to demonstrate sincerity, humility, respect, generosity, and compassion in their interactions with visitors. These values have historically shaped Nepalese hospitality practices, where guests are welcomed with genuine warmth and treated as respected members of the community. Such cultural traditions continue to influence hospitality services across many parts of Nepal, particularly in destinations where tourism is closely connected with local culture and heritage.

Previous studies have consistently emphasized that authentic hospitality extends beyond the provision of physical facilities and technical service quality. While comfortable accommodation, cleanliness, and efficient operations remain essential components of hotel services, tourists increasingly seek meaningful cultural experiences that allow them to connect with local communities. Morrison (2019) argues that destination competitiveness depends not only on infrastructure and attractions but also on the ability of tourism providers to create memorable experiences through authentic interactions. Similarly, Timothy and Boyd (2023) observe that cultural values expressed through local hospitality strengthen visitors' emotional attachment to destinations by encouraging trust, social interaction, and cultural understanding. These findings suggest that traditional hospitality culture has become an important experiential resource capable of differentiating destinations within an increasingly competitive global tourism market.

Traditional hospitality culture is reflected in various operational aspects of hotel management. Hotels may incorporate local customs into guest reception, communication styles, interior decoration, food and beverage services, cultural performances, and community-based tourism activities. The use of traditional architecture, locally produced handicrafts, indigenous cuisine, and culturally appropriate greetings enables hotels to preserve local identity while enhancing visitors' experiences. Such practices also generate economic opportunities for local artisans, farmers, and cultural performers, thereby strengthening the link between tourism development and community well-being. As a result, hospitality culture contributes not only to visitor satisfaction but also to broader objectives of cultural preservation and inclusive local development.

Despite these advantages, integrating traditional hospitality culture into modern hotel operations presents considerable challenges. The globalization of tourism has encouraged hotels to adopt internationally recognized service standards designed to satisfy diverse customer expectations and improve operational efficiency. While standardization promotes consistency and professionalism, excessive reliance on global service models may reduce opportunities for expressing local cultural identity. Pizam (2010) argues that hospitality organizations increasingly face the challenge of balancing standardized operational procedures with culturally distinctive service practices. Similarly, Cros and McKercher (2020) caution that commercializing cultural traditions for tourism purposes may gradually diminish their authenticity when cultural expressions are modified primarily to satisfy market demand rather than preserve their original social and cultural meanings.

The operationalization of traditional hospitality culture also depends significantly on organizational commitment and employee capability. Hotel managers play a critical role in creating policies that encourage cultural preservation through staff recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and organizational leadership. Employees, as frontline representatives of the hotel, are responsible for translating cultural values into everyday service interactions. Their ability to demonstrate respect, empathy, cultural sensitivity, and genuine care directly influences tourists' perceptions of service quality and authenticity. However, inadequate professional training, high employee turnover, seasonal employment, and limited institutional support often reduce the consistency with which traditional hospitality values are practiced across hotel operations.

In the context of Pokhara, preserving traditional hospitality culture has become increasingly important as tourism continues to expand and diversify. As one of Nepal's leading tourist destinations, Pokhara attracts visitors from diverse cultural backgrounds whose expectations often combine international service standards with authentic local experiences. Hotels are therefore required to balance commercial competitiveness with cultural preservation by integrating traditional Nepalese hospitality into contemporary management practices. Achieving this balance is essential for maintaining the destination's unique cultural identity while contributing to sustainable tourism development. Understanding how hotel managers and employees interpret and implement traditional hospitality culture within their daily operations is therefore crucial for assessing its role in enhancing service quality, strengthening destination competitiveness, and promoting sustainable tourism.

1.6.2 Hospitality Culture, Tourist Experience, and Sustainable Tourism

Hospitality culture is widely recognized as a key determinant of tourist experiences and an essential component of sustainable tourism development. While physical infrastructure, accommodation quality, and recreational facilities contribute to visitor satisfaction, tourism scholars increasingly argue that memorable experiences are created through meaningful interactions between hosts and guests. Hospitality culture encompasses the values, attitudes, and service behaviors that reflect the identity of the host community and shape visitors' perceptions of a destination. Consequently, hotels are no longer viewed solely as providers of accommodation but also as cultural ambassadors responsible for creating authentic and memorable experiences that enhance tourists' overall satisfaction.

Tourist experience is a multidimensional concept that includes tourists' cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral responses throughout their travel journey. These experiences begin before arrival and continue through accommodation, interactions with employees and local communities, participation in cultural activities, and post-visit reflections. Morrison (2019) argues that tourists increasingly seek authentic experiences that allow them to engage with local culture rather than simply consume standardized tourism products. As tourism markets become more competitive, destinations that successfully integrate cultural authenticity into hospitality services are more likely to achieve higher levels of visitor satisfaction, positive destination image, and repeat visitation.

Hospitality culture contributes significantly to the quality of these experiences because it influences how visitors are welcomed, assisted, and treated throughout their stay. Unlike standardized customer service protocols that emphasize procedural efficiency, culturally grounded hospitality emphasizes empathy, respect, generosity, and personalized attention. In Nepal, these qualities are deeply embedded in the philosophy of **Atithi Devo Bhava**, which regards serving guests as a moral and cultural responsibility rather than merely a commercial obligation (Kunwar, 2017). This philosophy encourages hotel employees to establish genuine interpersonal relationships with visitors, thereby creating emotional connections that extend beyond the delivery of basic services. Such interactions enhance tourists' perceptions of authenticity and strengthen their appreciation of the destination's cultural identity.

Previous studies suggest that authentic hospitality experiences positively influence tourist satisfaction because visitors increasingly value cultural immersion alongside traditional measures of service quality. Satisfaction is not determined solely by tangible facilities such as room comfort, cleanliness, or food quality but also by intangible aspects including friendliness, sincerity, cultural respect, and emotional engagement. Morrison (2019) notes that personalized services and authentic host–guest interactions contribute to memorable tourism experiences by creating positive emotions and strengthening destination attachment. Similarly, Dwyer et al. (2009) argue that successful destination management requires tourism enterprises to coordinate their services in ways that enhance visitors' overall experiences while simultaneously protecting local cultural resources.

The relationship between hospitality culture and sustainable tourism is particularly important because tourism development depends on maintaining a balance between economic growth, environmental conservation, and socio-cultural preservation. The Socio-Cultural Sustainability Model (UNWTO, 2018) emphasizes that tourism should contribute to protecting local traditions, strengthening cultural identity, and improving community well-being while generating economic benefits. Within the hotel sector, this requires integrating local customs, traditions, and cultural values into service delivery without compromising their authenticity. Hotels therefore play a significant role in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage by incorporating local architecture, traditional cuisine, indigenous art, cultural performances, and customary greeting practices into guests' experiences.

Hospitality culture also strengthens sustainable tourism by fostering positive relationships between tourists and host communities. Sustainable tourism extends beyond minimizing environmental impacts; it also seeks to preserve social harmony, encourage cultural understanding, and ensure that local community benefit from tourism development. According to Freeman's (1984) Stakeholder Theory, organizations create sustainable value when they consider the interests of all stakeholders rather than focusing exclusively on financial performance. In the context of hospitality, this implies that hotel managers should balance the expectations of tourists with the cultural values and well-being of local communities. By respecting local traditions and encouraging community participation, hotels contribute to more inclusive and sustainable tourism development.

Another important contribution of hospitality culture to sustainable tourism is its role in destination competitiveness. As international tourism continues to expand, many destinations offer comparable accommodation facilities and standardized services, making cultural authenticity an increasingly important source of competitive advantage. Visitors often distinguish destinations based on the quality of interpersonal interactions and the uniqueness of local experiences rather than physical infrastructure alone. Hotels that successfully integrate traditional hospitality values into their operations create distinctive tourism products that are difficult for competitors to imitate. Such differentiation not only enhances tourist satisfaction but also strengthens destination branding and long-term market competitiveness (Morrison, 2019).

Despite these benefits, maintaining authentic hospitality culture within contemporary tourism presents considerable challenges. Increasing globalization, commercialization, and technological advancement have encouraged hotels to adopt standardized international service models that prioritize efficiency, consistency, and profitability. Although these practices improve operational performance, they may simultaneously reduce opportunities for meaningful cultural interaction and personalized service. When hospitality becomes excessively standardized, tourists may perceive hotel experiences as similar across destinations, thereby reducing the cultural uniqueness that contributes to memorable travel experiences. Cros and McKercher (2020) argue that excessive commercialization of cultural practices may transform living traditions into market-oriented performances, diminishing their authenticity and weakening their cultural significance.

The preservation of hospitality culture is therefore essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of tourism destinations. Hotels that successfully combine professional service standards with authentic cultural practices are better positioned to create memorable visitor experiences while supporting local communities and preserving cultural heritage. In destinations such as Pokhara, where tourism is closely linked to natural beauty and cultural richness, maintaining traditional hospitality values can enhance visitor satisfaction, strengthen destination identity, and contribute to sustainable tourism development. However, achieving this balance requires effective leadership, continuous employee training, stakeholder collaboration, and organizational commitment to preserving cultural authenticity within modern hotel operations.

Overall, the literature demonstrates a strong relationship between hospitality culture, tourist experience, and sustainable tourism. Authentic hospitality enhances visitors' emotional and cultural experiences, increases satisfaction, and strengthens destination loyalty. At the same time, it contributes to the preservation of local traditions and supports the broader objectives of sustainable tourism. Nevertheless, relatively limited empirical research has examined how these relationships operate within the hotel sector of Pokhara, particularly from the combined perspectives of hotel managers, employees, and tourists. This limitation provides an important rationale for the present study.

1.6.3 Challenges to Preserving Authentic Hospitality Culture

The preservation of authentic hospitality culture has become an increasingly important concern within the tourism and hotel industry as destinations experience rapid growth, globalization, and changing consumer expectations. Although traditional hospitality values contribute significantly to tourist satisfaction, destination competitiveness, and sustainable tourism development, maintaining these values in contemporary hotel operations presents numerous challenges. Previous studies indicate that economic pressures, cultural commodification, globalization, workforce limitations, institutional weaknesses, and changing tourist preferences collectively threaten the continuity of authentic hospitality practices. These challenges are particularly evident in developing tourism destinations, where hotels must simultaneously achieve commercial success and preserve the cultural traditions that distinguish them from competing destinations.

One of the most widely discussed challenges in the literature is the commercialization or commodification of culture. Cultural commodification occurs when local traditions, customs, rituals, and hospitality practices are modified primarily to satisfy tourist demand rather than to preserve their original social and cultural significance. Cros and McKercher (2020) argue that tourism often transforms cultural heritage into marketable products, where traditions are selectively presented or simplified to maximize commercial appeal. While this process may generate economic benefits for tourism businesses, it can gradually reduce the authenticity of cultural expressions. Traditional greetings, ceremonies, festivals, local cuisine, and hospitality rituals may become staged performances designed to entertain visitors rather than genuine reflections of community life. Consequently, the intrinsic cultural meaning of hospitality may be weakened as commercial objectives increasingly dominate service delivery.

Globalization has further intensified the challenge of preserving authentic hospitality culture. The expansion of international tourism has encouraged hotels to adopt globally recognized service standards to meet the expectations of increasingly diverse visitors. Standardized operating procedures, international quality certifications, and multinational hotel management practices have undoubtedly improved efficiency and consistency across the hospitality industry. However, these standardized approaches often reduce opportunities for hotels to express local cultural identity through their services. As international hotel brands expand and independent hotels seek to compete within global markets, there is growing pressure to prioritize uniformity over cultural uniqueness. Morrison (2019) notes that while service standardization enhances operational effectiveness, destinations must simultaneously preserve the cultural characteristics that differentiate them from competitors. Failure to achieve this balance may result in hotels offering similar guest experiences regardless of location, thereby diminishing the uniqueness that attracts cultural tourists.

Changing tourist expectations also present significant challenges for preserving traditional hospitality practices. Contemporary tourists increasingly demand high-quality facilities, rapid service delivery, digital technologies, and internationally familiar products alongside authentic cultural experiences. Hotels therefore face the complex task of balancing modern service expectations with traditional hospitality values. Some establishments may choose to prioritize efficiency

and convenience by introducing standardized technologies, automated services, or internationally recognized hospitality models. Although these innovations improve customer convenience, they may reduce opportunities for personal interaction between employees and guests, which has traditionally been a defining characteristic of Nepalese hospitality. The gradual replacement of personalized service with technology-driven interactions risks weakening the emotional connections that contribute to memorable tourism experiences.

Human resource constraints represent another major obstacle to sustaining authentic hospitality culture. Frontline employees are the primary representatives of hotel culture because they directly interact with guests throughout the service encounter. Their attitudes, communication skills, cultural understanding, and interpersonal behaviors significantly influence visitors' perceptions of hospitality. However, many tourism destinations experience persistent shortages of skilled hospitality professionals. Limited access to professional training, inadequate opportunities for cultural education, and insufficient investment in employee development reduce workers' ability to integrate traditional hospitality values into contemporary service practices. Employees may receive technical training related to operational procedures while receiving comparatively little preparation in cultural interpretation, traditional customs, or local heritage.

High employee turnover further complicates the preservation of hospitality culture within hotels. The hospitality industry is widely characterized by seasonal employment, relatively low wages, demanding working conditions, and frequent staff mobility. Such conditions make it difficult for hotels to develop a stable workforce capable of consistently transmitting organizational values and cultural traditions to new employees. Frequent staff replacement interrupts the continuity of institutional knowledge and reduces opportunities for experienced employees to mentor newly recruited staff. Consequently, traditional hospitality values that depend upon long-term socialization and practical experience may gradually decline within hotel organizations. These challenges are particularly significant in destinations where tourism demand fluctuates seasonally, affecting employment stability and organizational commitment.

Financial constraints also influence the ability of hotels to preserve authentic hospitality culture. Many small and medium-sized hotels operate with limited financial resources and prioritize short-term operational survival over long-term

cultural investment. Competitive pricing strategies, fluctuating tourist arrivals, and rising operational costs often reduce the resources available for employee training, cultural programming, heritage conservation, and community engagement initiatives. Dwyer et al. (2009) argue that sustainable tourism requires coordinated investment in human resources, destination management, and cultural preservation. However, hotels facing financial uncertainty may find it difficult to allocate sufficient resources to initiatives that strengthen cultural authenticity while remaining economically competitive.

Institutional and governance challenges further affect the sustainability of traditional hospitality culture. The successful preservation of cultural heritage requires effective collaboration among government agencies, tourism authorities, local communities, educational institutions, and private-sector organizations. Stakeholder Theory emphasizes that sustainable organizational performance depends upon balancing the interests of diverse stakeholder groups rather than pursuing financial objectives alone (Freeman, 1984). In practice, however, tourism policies often prioritize economic growth and visitor numbers over socio-cultural sustainability. Weak policy implementation, inadequate regulatory frameworks, and limited coordination among tourism stakeholders may reduce opportunities for protecting local traditions within hotel operations. Without supportive institutional mechanisms, hotels may receive limited guidance or incentives to integrate cultural preservation into their business strategies.

Within Nepal, and particularly in Pokhara, these challenges are becoming increasingly significant as tourism continues to expand. Pokhara's growing popularity as an international tourism destination has generated substantial economic opportunities while simultaneously increasing pressure on local culture and hospitality practices. Rapid urbanization, infrastructure development, market competition, and changing visitor expectations require hotels to continuously adapt their services. While these developments contribute to economic growth, they may unintentionally encourage greater reliance on standardized hospitality models at the expense of traditional cultural values. Maintaining the philosophy of *Atithi Devo Bhava* within such a dynamic operating environment therefore requires deliberate organizational commitment, continuous employee development, and supportive tourism policies that recognize culture as a valuable resource for sustainable development (Kunwar, 2017).

The literature demonstrates that preserving authentic hospitality culture is a multidimensional challenge influenced by economic, organizational, cultural, and institutional factors. Commercialization, globalization, workforce shortages, financial limitations, and governance weaknesses collectively threaten the continuity of traditional hospitality practices within hotel operations. At the same time, these challenges highlight the importance of integrating cultural preservation into tourism planning and hotel management strategies. Addressing these issues requires collaborative efforts among hotel managers, employees, policymakers, local communities, and tourists to ensure that economic development does not undermine the cultural values that constitute the foundation of authentic hospitality. Despite growing scholarly attention to these issues, limited empirical research has examined how hotels in Pokhara specifically experience and respond to these challenges. Understanding these context-specific barriers is therefore essential for developing strategies that strengthen cultural preservation while supporting sustainable tourism development.

Research Gap

Previous studies have made significant contributions to understanding hospitality, sustainable tourism, service quality, cultural tourism, and tourist satisfaction. Researchers such as Freeman (1984) have emphasized the importance of balancing stakeholder interests in achieving sustainable organizational performance, while Morrison (2019) and Timothy and Boyd (2023) have highlighted the role of authentic hospitality and cultural experiences in enhancing destination competitiveness and visitor satisfaction. Similarly, Cros and McKercher (2020) examined the effects of globalization and cultural commodification on the preservation of cultural heritage, and Kunwar (2017) explained the cultural significance of the Nepalese philosophy of *Atithi Devo Bhava* in shaping hospitality practices. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that authentic hospitality contributes to memorable tourist experiences and supports sustainable tourism development.

Despite these contributions, the existing literature reveals several important limitations. First, most studies have concentrated on service quality, tourist satisfaction, or the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism, while comparatively little attention has been given to the socio-cultural dimension of traditional hospitality culture within hotel operations. Second, although hospitality

culture has been discussed conceptually, there is limited empirical evidence on how traditional cultural values are incorporated into the daily management practices of hotels, particularly in developing tourism destinations such as Pokhara. Third, previous research has generally examined the perspectives of either tourists or hotel operators, with relatively few studies integrating the views of hotel managers, employees, and tourists within a single analytical framework. Finally, limited research has explored the organizational and institutional challenges that hotels face in preserving authentic hospitality culture while adapting to globalization, technological change, and increasing commercialization.

This study addresses these gaps by investigating how traditional hospitality culture is practiced and preserved within hotel operations in Pokhara and by examining its contribution to sustainable tourism. Unlike previous studies, it adopts a multi-stakeholder perspective by incorporating the experiences and perceptions of hotel managers, employees, and tourists. Guided by Stakeholder Theory and the Socio-Cultural Sustainability Model, the study examines the relationship between traditional hospitality culture, tourist experience, and sustainable tourism while also identifying the challenges and opportunities associated with maintaining cultural authenticity in contemporary hotel management.

By integrating cultural, managerial, and sustainability perspectives within the context of Pokhara, this research extends existing knowledge beyond traditional service quality studies. It generates new insights into how hotels can preserve authentic Nepalese hospitality values while meeting modern tourism demands, providing practical recommendations for hotel managers, policymakers, and tourism stakeholders to strengthen sustainable tourism and protect the cultural identity of the destination.

1.7 Research Methods

This study will adopt a qualitative research approach to explore and understand the experiences, opinions, perceptions, and practices of individuals working in the hotel sector of Pokhara. A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it helps the researcher obtain detailed information about participants' views and provides a deeper understanding of the research issue within its real-life context.

The qualitative approach allows participants to express their experiences and perspectives freely, which helps the researcher identify important factors, challenges, and opportunities related to hotel operations and services.

1.7.1 Research Design

The study will follow a descriptive qualitative research design. This design is selected because the study aims to describe and interpret the experiences and viewpoints of hotel employees and managers regarding the research topic. The descriptive design helps to collect detailed information from participants without manipulating the research environment. It focuses on understanding the current situation, practices, and experiences within selected hotels in Pokhara.

1.7.2 Study Area

The study will be conducted in Pokhara, Nepal, which is one of the major tourism destinations in the country. Pokhara is well known for its natural attractions, adventure tourism, cultural importance, and hospitality services. The city has a developed hotel industry that provides accommodation, food and beverage services, and other facilities to domestic and international visitors.

The study will focus on selected hotels located in Pokhara, particularly in tourism areas such as Lakeside. These hotels are selected because they represent important parts of the hospitality sector and provide a suitable environment for exploring issues related to hotel management, employee experiences, and service practices.

1.7.3 Study Population and Participants

The participants of this study will include individuals working in selected hotels in Pokhara. The study participants will consist of hotel managers, supervisors, and employees who are directly involved in daily hotel operations.

The participants will include:

- Hotel managers involved in planning, decision-making, and overall management.
- Supervisors responsible for monitoring hotel activities and staff performance.
- Front office employees involved in guest communication and reception services.
- Housekeeping staff involved in room maintenance and cleanliness.
- Food and beverage employees involved in customer service activities.

Participants will be selected based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement in hotel operations

1.7.4 Sampling Method

The study will use a purposive sampling technique to select participants. This sampling method is appropriate for qualitative research because it allows the researcher to choose individuals who have relevant knowledge and experience related to the research topic.

Participants will be selected from different positions within hotels to obtain diverse perspectives. The number of participants will depend on data saturation, which occurs when additional interviews do not provide new information or themes.

1.7.5 Data Collection Method

The primary method of data collection will be **in-depth interviews**. This method is selected because it enables the researcher to collect detailed information about participants' experiences, opinions, and perceptions.

Face-to-face interviews will be conducted with selected hotel managers, supervisors, and employees. A semi-structured interview guide will be prepared based on the research objectives. Open-ended questions will be used to encourage participants to provide detailed responses.

During the interviews, the researcher will ask follow-up questions whenever necessary to gain a clearer understanding of participants' views. With participants' permission, interviews will be recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

1.7.6 Data Analysis Method

The collected qualitative data will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The research will first organize and transcribe the interview data. After becoming familiar with the information, important statements and ideas will be coded.

The analysis process will include:

1. Transcribing interview responses.
2. Reviewing and understanding collected information.
3. Identifying important codes and categories.
4. Developing major themes from the collected data.
5. Interpreting themes according to the research objectives.

The findings will be presented in a descriptive manner using themes and participants' viewpoints

1.7.7 Reliability and Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the research will be maintained through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

- Credibility: Ensured through collecting information from knowledgeable participants and conducting detailed interviews.
- Dependability: Maintained by following a systematic research process and keeping proper records.
- Confirmability: Ensured by presenting findings based on participants' actual responses rather than researcher assumptions.
- Transferability: Supported by providing detailed descriptions of the study context and participants.

1.7.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles will be followed throughout the research process. Participants will be informed about the purpose of the study before data collection. Participation will be voluntary, and informed consent will be obtained from all participants.

The privacy and confidentiality of participants will be maintained. Personal information will not be disclosed, and collected data will be used only for academic purposes. Participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage if they wish.

CHAPTER II

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from the field study conducted in selected hotels in Pokhara. The data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with hotel owners, managers, and employees to explore how hospitality culture influences sustainable tourism development. The analysis is based on participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and everyday practices related to hospitality and sustainability within their workplaces.

A thematic analysis was used to examine the interview data. Instead of organizing the findings only under economic, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions, the analysis identified three broader themes that better represent the participants' shared experiences and perspectives. These themes reflect how the traditional philosophy of Atithi Devo Bhava ("The Guest is God") continues to shape hospitality practices while supporting sustainable tourism in Pokhara. The three themes identified in this study are:

- Preserving Hospitality Values through the Philosophy of Atithi Devo Bhava
- Hospitality Culture as a Driver of Sustainable Tourism Practices
- Challenges and Future Directions for Sustaining Hospitality Culture in the Tourism Industry

The themes are supported by participants' direct quotations to illustrate their perspectives while maintaining confidentiality. The purpose of this chapter is to present and interpret the findings derived from the fieldwork, demonstrating how traditional hospitality values continue to shape hotel operations in Pokhara and contribute to sustainable tourism development.

A total of 10 participants took part in the study. They included hotel owners, managers, and employees working in selected hotels in Pokhara. Their diverse responsibilities and professional experiences provided valuable insights into how hospitality culture is practiced and sustained in the workplace.

2.1 Demographic Profile of the Participants

Understanding the demographic characteristics of the participants provides important context for interpreting the findings of this study. Since the research explored the role of hospitality culture in promoting sustainable tourism, participants were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in hotel operations and their knowledge of hospitality practices. The participants represented different roles within the hotel industry, allowing the study to capture a range of perspectives from strategic, managerial, and operational levels.

Table 2.1: Demographic Profile of the Participants

Participant code	Position	Gender	Year of experience	Hotel category
R1	Owner	Male	18 years	Star hotel
R2	Manager	Male	12 years	Star hotel
R3	Employee	Female	6 years	Star hotel
R4	Owner	Male	12 years	Tourist standard hotel
R5	Employee	Female	5 years	Tourist standard hotel
R6	Employee	Male	2 years	Star hotel
R7	Owner	Male	8 years	Boutique hotel
R8	Manager	Male	8 years	Boutique hotel
R9	Employee	Female	5 years	Boutique hotel
R10	Employee	Male	4 years	Boutique hotel

The participants had professional experience ranging from 4 to 18 years, reflecting both long-term industry expertise and the perspectives of relatively newer employees. Owners and managers contributed strategic insights into business management, service quality, and sustainability initiatives, while employees shared their day-to-day experiences of interacting with guests and implementing hospitality practices.

To protect participants' privacy and maintain confidentiality, each interviewee was assigned a unique identification code (R1–R10). These codes are used throughout

the findings chapter when presenting quotations and discussing participants' views. This approach ensures anonymity while allowing readers to distinguish between different perspectives.

The diversity in participants' roles and experience strengthened the credibility of the findings by providing a comprehensive understanding of how hospitality culture is perceived and practiced across different levels of the hotel industry in Pokhara.

2.2 Preserving Hospitality Values through the Philosophy of Atithi Devo Bhava “The Guest is God”

The interview findings indicate that the philosophy of Atithi Devo Bhava, meaning "The Guest is God," continues to shape the way hospitality is understood and practiced in the selected hotels in Pokhara. Across all participant groups, there was a shared belief that hospitality is not limited to providing accommodation or delivering services. Instead, it is viewed as a reflection of Nepalese culture, where guests are welcomed with sincerity, respect, and genuine care. Participants described these values as an important part of their daily work and as a defining feature of the country's tourism industry.

Many respondents explained that true hospitality begins with simple but meaningful actions. Greeting guests warmly, listening attentively to their needs, responding with patience, and treating every visitor with dignity were seen as expressions of the traditional values they had inherited. These practices were considered essential not only for ensuring guest satisfaction but also for preserving the cultural identity that distinguishes Nepal from other tourist destinations.

One hotel owner shared:

"We welcome every guest as if they were visiting our own home. Respecting and caring for them is something we have learned from our culture, not just from our profession."

This statement illustrates that hospitality is deeply rooted in cultural values rather than being driven solely by commercial objectives. For this participant, welcoming guests with warmth reflects a long-standing social tradition that continues to influence everyday hotel operations.

A hotel manager expressed a similar view:

"Guests may forget the room they stayed in, but they never forget how they were treated. A genuine smile and respectful behaviors leave a lasting impression."

The manager's experience highlights that memorable hospitality is created through positive human interactions. While modern facilities contribute to guest comfort, participants believed that kindness, honesty, and personal attention are the qualities that encourage visitors to return and recommend the destination to others. An employee also emphasized the importance of building personal relationships with guests:

"When we take time to understand our guests and help them sincerely, they feel comfortable with us. Many visitors return because they feel welcomed like members of our family."

This response demonstrates that participants see hospitality as a relationship built on trust rather than a one-time service transaction. Creating a welcoming environment was viewed as an important way of strengthening guest loyalty and enhancing the overall tourism experience.

Several respondents also explained that practicing Atithi Devo Bhava helps preserve Nepal's cultural identity in an increasingly competitive tourism market. They believed that international visitors are attracted not only by natural attractions but also by the warmth and authenticity of Nepalese hospitality. By sharing local customs, traditions, and respectful behaviors, hotel staff contribute to a more meaningful cultural experience for tourists.

One participant stated:

"Hospitality is part of who we are. Visitors can find hotels everywhere, but they remember the kindness and respect they receive here."

Another respondent added:

"We encourage new employees to understand that hospitality is more than completing daily tasks. It is about showing compassion, patience, and respect because these values represent our culture."

These views suggest that hospitality culture is sustained through both personal commitment and organizational practice. Participants emphasized that experienced staff play an important role in passing these values to younger employees, ensuring that traditional hospitality continues despite changes in the tourism industry.

Overall, the participants demonstrate that Atithi Devo Bhava remains a guiding philosophy that influences how hospitality is practiced in Pokhara's hotels. Participants regarded this philosophy as a source of cultural identity, service

excellence, and guest satisfaction. By preserving these traditional values in their daily interactions, they believe they not only enhance visitors' experiences but also strength.

2.3 Hospitality Culture as a Driver of Sustainable Tourism Practices

Participants viewed hospitality culture as an important foundation for achieving sustainable tourism. Rather than seeing hospitality as limited to serving guests, respondents described it as a practice that benefits local communities, protects cultural heritage, and encourages responsible use of environmental resources. Their experiences suggest that sustainable tourism is created through everyday actions that combine quality service with social responsibility and environmental awareness.

Participants consistently explained that genuine hospitality encourages visitors to stay longer, return in the future, and recommend Pokhara to others. They believed that when guests feel welcomed and respected, they develop a stronger connection with the destination, which contributes to the long-term growth of the tourism industry. According to many respondents, hospitality culture therefore creates value not only for individual hotels but also for the wider local economy.

One hotel owner explained:

"When guests are happy with our hospitality, they come back and also tell their friends about Pokhara. This helps our business and many other businesses in the community."

This response demonstrates that participants perceived hospitality as an investment in long-term tourism development rather than a short-term business strategy. Positive guest experiences were viewed as an important factor in building the destination's reputation and attracting future visitors.

A hotel manager shared a similar perspective:

"Good hospitality benefits everyone. When tourists stay longer, local restaurants, transport services, guides, and small businesses also receive more opportunities."

The manager's statement reflects an understanding that tourism is interconnected with the local economy. Participants recognized that the benefits of hospitality extend beyond hotel operations and contribute to employment and income generation for different sectors within the community.

In addition to economic contributions, respondents highlighted the importance of preserving local culture through hospitality practices. Many explained that introducing guests to traditional food, festivals, customs, and local lifestyles helps

visitors develop a deeper appreciation of Nepalese culture while creating opportunities for local artisans and producers.

One participant stated:

"Many guests ask about our traditions and local food. We enjoy sharing these experiences because it helps them understand our culture."

Another respondent added:

"Whenever possible, we recommend local products and encourage guests to visit nearby cultural sites. It supports local people and gives tourists a more meaningful experience."

These responses suggest that hospitality culture serves as a bridge between visitors and the host community. Participants believed that cultural exchange enriches the tourist experience while encouraging local communities to preserve their traditions and cultural identity.

Environmental responsibility also emerged as an important aspect of sustainable hospitality. Although respondents acknowledged that hotels generate waste and consume natural resources, they explained that many businesses are adopting environmentally friendly practices to reduce their environmental impact. Participants mentioned reducing plastic use, conserving water and electricity, improving waste management, and encouraging guests to participate in sustainable practices.

One employee commented:

"We remind guests to reuse towels and avoid wasting water. Small actions may seem simple, but together they make a difference."

Another participant explained:

"We try to purchase products from local suppliers whenever possible. It reduces transportation costs and also supports local farmers and businesses."

These views demonstrate that participants understand sustainability as a shared responsibility involving hotels, employees, guests, and the local community. Environmental initiatives were not described as isolated activities but as part of a broader commitment to responsible tourism.

Across the interviews, participants repeatedly emphasized that economic success, cultural preservation, and environmental protection are closely connected. They believed that sustainable tourism cannot be achieved through financial growth

alone but requires maintaining authentic hospitality values while protecting the natural and cultural resources that attract visitors to Pokhara.

Overall, the findings suggest that hospitality culture acts as a driving force for sustainable tourism by creating memorable visitor experiences, strengthening local livelihoods, preserving cultural traditions, and encouraging environmentally responsible behaviors. Participants viewed these interconnected practices as essential for ensuring that tourism continues to benefit both present and future generations. Their experiences demonstrate that genuine hospitality is not only a reflection of Nepalese culture but also an important contributor to the long-term sustainability of Nepal's tourism industry.

2.4 Challenges and Future Directions for Sustaining Hospitality Culture in the Tourism Industry

Although participants expressed a strong commitment to preserving Nepal's hospitality culture, they also acknowledged that maintaining these values has become increasingly challenging in a rapidly changing tourism environment. The findings suggest that sustaining hospitality culture requires balancing traditional values with modern business demands, technological advancements, and changing visitor expectations. Participants believed that while the philosophy of Atithi Devo Bhava (The Guest is God) remains relevant, its long-term sustainability depends on continuous adaptation, staff development, and collective efforts from both the hospitality industry and government agencies.

A recurring concern among respondents was the changing nature of guest expectations. Participants explained that today's travelers expect faster services, modern facilities, and the use of digital technology while still seeking authentic cultural experiences. Meeting these diverse expectations was viewed as one of the greatest challenges facing hotels in Pokhara.

One hotel manager explained:

"Guests today expect modern services, online booking, and quick responses, but they also want genuine hospitality. Finding the right balance is not always easy."

This response reflects the changing demands of the tourism industry. Participants recognized that technological improvements are necessary, but they also emphasized that these developments should not reduce the personal interaction and warmth that define Nepalese hospitality.

Several respondents also highlighted the difficulty of maintaining service quality because of the shortage of experienced and committed employees. They explained that staff turnover and limited professional training often affect the consistency of hospitality practices within hotels.

One hotel owner stated:

"Training new employees takes time because hospitality is not only about technical skills. They also need to understand how to treat guests with patience, respect, and sincerity."

Similarly, an employee shared:

"Many young people leave the hospitality sector for better opportunities. It becomes difficult to maintain the same level of service when experienced staff are constantly replaced."

These responses indicate that preserving hospitality culture depends not only on organizational policies but also on investing in human resources. Participants believed that technical knowledge alone is insufficient unless employees also understand the cultural values that shape meaningful guest experiences.

Another challenge identified by participants was the increasing commercialization of the tourism industry. Some respondents felt that intense competition among hotels has shifted attention toward financial performance, sometimes at the expense of genuine hospitality.

One participant remarked:

"Competition is necessary, but sometimes hotels become more concerned about making profits than building relationships with guests. Hospitality should never lose its human touch."

This perspective highlights participants' concern that authentic hospitality may gradually be replaced by standardized business practices. Respondents believed that maintaining personal connections with guests is essential for preserving the uniqueness of Nepal's tourism industry.

Participants also discussed the importance of environmental responsibility in the future of hospitality. They acknowledged that climate change, waste management, and increasing pressure on natural resources require hotels to adopt more sustainable operating practices. Many believed that environmental conservation should become a shared responsibility among hotel owners, employees, tourists, and government institutions.

One respondent explained:

"Tourism depends on nature. If we do not protect our environment today, future generations will not enjoy the same opportunities."

Another participant added:

"Hotels should continue using environmentally friendly practices, but government support and public awareness are equally important."

These responses demonstrate that participants view sustainability as a collaborative effort rather than the responsibility of individual hotels alone. They emphasized that long-term success depends on cooperation among tourism stakeholders in protecting both cultural heritage and natural resources.

Looking ahead, respondents consistently recommended greater investment in hospitality education, professional development, and cultural awareness programs. They believed that introducing regular staff training, promoting Nepalese hospitality values, supporting local communities, and strengthening partnerships between government and the private sector would help preserve authentic hospitality while allowing the tourism industry to adapt to future challenges.

Overall, the findings indicate that the sustainability of hospitality culture depends on the ability to balance tradition with innovation. Participants recognized that modernization is inevitable, but they stressed that technological progress and business growth should complement rather than replace the cultural values of respect, kindness, and genuine care for guests. Their experiences suggest that preserving these values will strengthen the resilience, competitiveness, and sustainability of Nepal's tourism industry in the years to come.

2.5 Summary of Findings

This study explored the contribution of hospitality culture to sustainable tourism development in selected hotels in Pokhara through semi-structured interviews with ten participants, including hotel owners, managers, and employees. The thematic analysis identified three major themes that explain how hospitality culture contributes to sustainable tourism development.

The first finding revealed that the philosophy of Atithi Devo Bhava (The Guest is God) continues to be the foundation of hospitality culture in Pokhara hotels. Participants consistently emphasized that hospitality extends beyond providing accommodation and services; it is deeply rooted in Nepalese cultural values of respect, kindness, sincerity, and genuine care for guests. They believed that

welcoming guests warmly, listening to their needs, treating them with dignity, and building personal relationships create memorable visitor experiences, strengthen guest satisfaction and loyalty, and preserve Nepal's unique cultural identity. Experienced staff also play an important role in transferring these traditional hospitality values to younger employees, ensuring that authentic hospitality practices continue across generations.

The second finding showed that hospitality culture serves as an important driver of sustainable tourism development. Participants explained that quality hospitality encourages tourists to stay longer, revisit Pokhara, and recommend the destination to others, thereby contributing to the long-term growth of the tourism industry and the local economy. The study also found that hospitality culture supports cultural preservation by encouraging hotels to introduce visitors to local traditions, foods, festivals, and cultural heritage. In addition, respondents highlighted the growing adoption of environmentally responsible practices such as reducing plastic use, conserving water and electricity, improving waste management, and purchasing products from local suppliers. These practices demonstrate that hospitality culture contributes to the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism development.

The third finding identified several challenges affecting the sustainability of hospitality culture. Participants reported that changing tourist expectations, rapid technological advancement, staff shortages, employee turnover, increasing commercialization, and environmental pressures make it difficult to maintain traditional hospitality values. They emphasized the need to balance modern hotel services with genuine human interaction and cultural authenticity. Respondents further recommended regular staff training, hospitality education, cultural awareness programs, stronger environmental practices, and greater collaboration between hotels, local communities, and government agencies to preserve Nepal's hospitality culture while ensuring the sustainable development of the tourism industry.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that hospitality culture is a key contributor to sustainable tourism development in Pokhara. The philosophy of Atithi Devo Bhava strengthens service quality, enhances visitor satisfaction, promotes cultural preservation, supports local economic development, and encourages environmentally responsible practices

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This presents the concluding part of the study and provides an overall synthesis of the research. It brings together the key aspects of the study by summarizing the research purpose, methodology, and the major findings derived from the thematic analysis. The chapter then draws conclusions based on the evidence collected from the participants and discusses how the findings address the research objectives.

In addition, this chapter offers practical recommendations for hotel operators, tourism stakeholders, and policymakers to strengthen hospitality culture and promote sustainable tourism development. Finally, it outlines the broader implications of the study and identifies areas for future research. Together, these sections provide a comprehensive understanding of the study's contribution to knowledge and practice regarding hospitality culture and sustainable tourism in selected hotels in Pokhara.

3.1 Core Empirical Findings

The thematic analysis generated three interrelated themes that explain how hospitality culture contributes to sustainable tourism development.

The first theme, Preserving Hospitality Values through the Philosophy of Atithi Devo Bhava, revealed that participants considered hospitality to be an important cultural value rather than simply a service provided by hotels. Respect, kindness, sincerity, and personal attention were consistently identified as qualities that strengthen guest satisfaction and create memorable experiences. Participants believed that these traditional values distinguish Nepalese hospitality and contribute to the positive image of Pokhara as a tourism destination.

The second theme, Hospitality Culture as a Driver of Sustainable Tourism Practices, demonstrated that hospitality culture extends beyond guest service. Participants explained that authentic hospitality supports local economic development by encouraging repeat visits, creating employment opportunities, promoting local products, and strengthening community participation. They also highlighted the importance of preserving local traditions and adopting environmentally responsible

practices, showing that sustainable tourism depends on balancing economic growth with cultural preservation and environmental stewardship.

The third theme, Challenges and Future Directions for Sustaining Hospitality Culture in the Tourism Industry, highlighted several issues affecting the long-term sustainability of hospitality culture. Participants pointed to changing tourist expectations, increased competition, workforce shortages, commercialization, and environmental concerns as major challenges. Despite these difficulties, they remained optimistic that continued staff training, stronger collaboration among tourism stakeholders, and greater commitment to cultural preservation would help maintain authentic hospitality values while adapting to changing industry demands.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that hospitality culture is not merely a traditional practice but an essential component of sustainable tourism development. Participants consistently viewed cultural values, community engagement, and responsible management as interconnected elements that support the long-term success of the tourism industry.

3.4 Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that hospitality culture plays a significant role in supporting sustainable tourism development in selected hotels in Pokhara. The philosophy of Atithi Devo Bhava continues to influence how hospitality is practiced, encouraging respectful relationships between service providers and guests while reinforcing Nepal's cultural identity.

The study also shows that hospitality culture contributes to sustainability in multiple ways. It strengthens the local economy by encouraging repeat visitation and supporting local businesses, promotes socio-cultural sustainability through the preservation of cultural traditions and meaningful interactions between visitors and host communities, and encourages environmental responsibility through resource conservation and sustainable operational practices.

At the same time, the study recognizes that preserving hospitality culture requires continuous commitment. Hotels must adapt to technological advancement, changing market expectations, and increasing competition without losing the traditional values that define Nepalese hospitality. The long-term sustainability of the tourism industry therefore depends on maintaining a balance between innovation and cultural preservation.

Overall, the study concludes that hospitality culture should be recognized as a strategic resource for sustainable tourism development. By protecting traditional values while embracing responsible innovation, the hospitality industry can continue to contribute to the economic, social, cultural, and environmental well-being of tourism destinations.

3.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

For Hotel Management

- Provide regular training programmed that combine professional hospitality skills with traditional Nepalese hospitality values.
- Encourage employees to deliver personalized and culturally authentic guest experiences while maintaining high service standards.
- Continue implementing environmentally responsible practices such as waste reduction, energy conservation, water management, and reduced plastic consumption.

For Government and Tourism Authorities

- Develop policies that recognize hospitality culture as an important component of sustainable tourism development.
- Support capacity-building programmed, hospitality education, and cultural preservation initiatives through collaboration with tourism institutions.
- Promote Pokhara as a destination that offers authentic cultural experiences alongside natural attractions.

For Local Communities

- Strengthen partnerships between hotels and local producers, artisans, cultural groups, and tourism entrepreneurs.
- Encourage greater community participation in tourism activities to ensure that local residents benefit from tourism development while preserving their cultural heritage.

For Future Researchers

- Conduct similar studies in other tourism destinations across Nepal to compare experiences and identify regional differences.

- Employ mixed-method or comparative research designs to examine the relationship between hospitality culture and sustainable tourism from multiple perspectives.
- Explore tourists' perceptions of Nepalese hospitality to complement the perspectives of hospitality professionals.

3.6 Final Reflection

Hospitality has long been one of Nepal's greatest cultural strengths. The findings of this study demonstrate that genuine hospitality is more than a professional responsibility; it reflects the values, traditions, and identity of the communities that welcome visitors. As the tourism industry continues to evolve, preserving these values while embracing innovation will be essential for ensuring that tourism development remains economically beneficial, socially inclusive, culturally meaningful, and environmentally responsible. In this way, hospitality culture will continue to play a vital role in shaping a sustainable future for tourism in Pokhara and Nepal as a whole.

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APPENDIX

Dear respondent, Greetings,

We are the students of BHM VI in Bachelor of Hotel Management from Nepal Tourism and Hotel Management, Chinnendanda-14, Pokhara conducting a survey entitled "Exploring the contribution of Hospitality culture to sustainable tourism development in Pokhara hotels." The purpose of this survey is to understand how hospitality culture contributes to sustainable tourism development in Pokhara. The information provided will be used only for this research and will remain confidential. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Section A: Background Information

1. What is your position in this hotel?
2. How many years have you worked in the hospitality industry?
3. What are your major responsibilities in the hotel?

Section B: Hospitality Culture

4. How do you define hospitality culture in your hotel?
5. What does the philosophy of Atithi Devo Bhava mean to you?
6. How is this philosophy reflected in your daily work?
7. How do you ensure guests feel welcomed and respected?

Section C: Hospitality and Sustainable Tourism

8. In your opinion, how does hospitality culture contribute to sustainable tourism?
9. How does your hotel support local communities and local businesses?
10. What role does your hotel play in preserving local culture and traditions?
11. What environmental practices are implemented in your hotel?

Section D: Challenges

12. What challenges do you face in maintaining traditional hospitality values?
13. How have changing tourist expectations affected hospitality practices?
14. What improvements would help strengthen hospitality culture in Nepal?

Section E: Closing Question

15. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding hospitality culture and sustainable tourism?