

## **Chapter IV**

# **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF RURAL TOURISM**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Rural tourism is a common trend today since many tourists prefer to visit peaceful, beautiful, nature-friendly, attractive, functional, clean and pollution-free areas. Rural tourism is acquiring significance as it generates new ventures and employment opportunities. It leads to an inter-cultural and inter-ethnic mix. It also contributes significantly to the rural economy and the tourism industry as a whole. Judicious management of rural tourism in different rural areas results in sustainable development (Haven-Tang and Jones, 2012).

### **4.2 Role of Rural Tourism in Economic Development**

Tourism generates cash for owners, stakeholders, and locals, which stimulates the economic growth of rural communities. In the long run, this raises national and per capita income. Infrastructure development in terms of roads, building construction, adequate sanitation, correct drainage, and other rural facilities are provided by rural tourism. Rural tourism has been successful in creating employment opportunities for locals and providing a variety of business opportunities for stakeholders. Increasing revenues enable sustainable land-use practices in rural areas.

Sustainable tourism generally contributes to a region's economic development. It manifests itself in increasing income and job possibilities, infrastructural development, and improved living conditions (Joshi and Dhyani, 2009). The massive flow of visitors and subsequent economic output at all native tourist spots in Darjeeling has hastened infrastructure development, providing jobs and revenue.

Rural tourism serves the indigenous communities by giving chances for business and jobs, as well as cash flow, handicraft and heritage preservation. It exposes people to a variety of earning opportunities, livelihood opportunities, cultural exchange, and investment opportunities, allowing them to develop a more holistic perspective on life. It also contributes to the development of cultural, socio-economic and cognitive qualities, in addition to the aforementioned advantages (Meena, 2015).

The long-term viability of rural tourism in many rural destinations is dependent on environmental protection along with economic growth. Local communities are becoming more aware of the idea of sustainability and thus, they should be aware of the negative consequences of the environment and should work to conserve it in order to ensure its sustainability (Richards and Hall, 2000).

Rural tourist development benefits the local population by contributing to local economic growth. To verify the following facts and ideas, a field study was conducted at six rural tourist sites. Ten proprietors from each rural tourism site were interviewed, and their earnings reflect the growth of their economy through homestays. Income growth, on the other hand, is not consistent. Political movements and the occurrence of strikes that shut down homestays for months caused a sharp decline in income between 2013 and 2017. The table given below shows the enhancement in homestay owners' earnings in six rural tourism destinations since 2008:

**Table 4.2: Approximate Earnings of the Homestay Owners (‘000 Rs)**

Destination	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Takdah	-	-	-	-	88.2	30.6	70.8	322.2	410.4	348.0	157.2
Lamahatta	-	-	-	-	10.8	14.4	51.0	194.0	247.2	36.6	127.2
Mineral Spring	126.0	252.0	186.0	504.0	549.0	93.0	144.0	846.0	756.0	90.0	258.0
Lepchajagat	26.4	28.8	39.0	40.8	49.2	12.0	92.4	255.6	296.4	20.4	58.8
Chatakpur	-	-	14.0	27.6	50.4	10.8	81.6	127.2	151.8	20.4	58.8
Sittong	-	-	-	-	122.4	30.6	85.2	196.8	232.2	27.6	141.6

(Source: Compiled by the researcher from registers of homestays)

Despite hindrances and political movements in Darjeeling Himalaya, the growth of the economy is continuously increasing. Per capita income, transportation systems, infrastructure, local job possibilities, the standard of living, diversification of activities, diversification of rural economies, and so on are all indicators of the development of Darjeeling’s rural tourism destinations. Some inhabitants have taken advantage of the potential to prosper as entrepreneurs by utilizing available resources, resulting in the establishment of a permanent location for rural residents. Rural tourism has visibly accelerated economic development in rural areas of Darjeeling Himalaya.

Rural tourism has registered positive growth in all the tourist destinations of the study area despite occasional setbacks. Tourism in rural Darjeeling has expanded and strengthened the base of owners, residents and stakeholders. This has increased the economic value of rural areas.

Rural tourism has brought economic diversity to the region. In Darjeeling Himalaya, it has encouraged villagers to adopt a diversified economy and sustain their livelihoods as most rural people are unskilled. Rural tourism also provides employment opportunities for less-skilled and marginal workers and therefore reduces unemployment to some extent.

Incomes from tourism in the destinations of Darjeeling Himalaya are used for the development of local areas rather than creating more employment opportunities such as funding for education, health, infrastructure, women empowerment, facilities for agricultural extension, socio-economic, cultural development and environmental protection. The indirect benefits of rural tourism are measured by the regional economic impact. However, there are some limitations in rural tourism that can be alleviated to some extent through the effective participation of all interested and the implementation of certain rules and regulations by the government.

**4.3 Homestays in the study area** (The names have been used on receipt of the consent of the respondents)

Homestays are the major sources of tourist attraction in any rural area which not only provide accommodations and services but also provide an opportunity to live a rural life. Some entrepreneurs in the Darjeeling Himalaya started a new homestay, while others transformed an existing house into a homestay. The scenario of homestays in the study area has been depicted in the following table.

**Table 4.3: Homestays in the study area**

<b>Destinations</b>	<b>New Homestays</b>	<b>House turned into homestays</b>
<b>Takdah</b>	i) Bamboo Darjeeling Blossom Ecotourism ii) Abiraj Homestay iii) Anugrah Homestay iv) Gurung Guest House v) Rai Resort vi) Pradhan Homestay vii) Saino Heritage Guest House	i) Shiwani Homestay ii) Norlha Homestay iii) Tinchuley Gurung's Homestay
<b>Lamahatta</b>	i) Dukpa Homestay ii) Mountain View iii) Kanchenjunga View iv) Everest Hut Resort v) Private Lodge	i) Druk Homestay
<b>Mineral Spring</b>	i) Tathagata Farm ii) Gautam Paradise	i) Zimba Homestay
<b>Lepchajagat</b>	i) Pakhrin Homestay ii) Dukpa Homestay	i) Kanchankanya Homestay
<b>Chatakpur</b>	i) Humro Homestay	i) Dhanmaya Niwas Homestay ii) Sherpa Homestay
<b>Sittong</b>	i) Pujan Homestay ii) Mukhia Homestay iii) Chhyalomkyong Homestay iv) Sittong Homestay	i) Hankim Homestay

(Source: Compiled from Field Survey, 2014-2017)

#### 4.4 Tourist Accommodation in the Homestays of the study area

**Table 4.4.1: Accommodation Profile of the Homestays: Takdah, December 2017**

Sample size: 10 Homestays

Sl. No.	Homestay	Year	Room	Accommodation	Room	Accommodation
1	Gurung Guest House		4	8	6	14
2	Bamboo Darjeeling Blossom Eco – tourism	2000	2	4	9	20
3	Abiraj Homestay	2012	9	16	12	22
4	Rai Resort	2013	3	6	7	18
5	Anugrah Homestay	2014	3	6	5	14
6	Saino Heritage Guest House	2014	4	12	6	18
7	Norlah Homestay	2016	2	4	4	10
8	Tinchuley Gurung's Homestay	2016	4	9	6	15
9	Shiwani Homestay	2017	2	4	2	4
10	Pradhan Homestay	2017	3	7	3	7
	<b>Total</b>		34	55	68	122

(Source: Data compiled by the researcher from Field survey)

The Gurung Guest House is the first homestay of this region that started in 2000 with four rooms and accommodations for eight persons. After 17 years, two more rooms have been annexed with a total of 14 accommodations. Then came up the Bamboo Darjeeling Blossom Ecotourism with two rooms and accommodations for four persons. By 2017 seven more rooms have been added with a total of 20 accommodations. After almost 12 years Abiraj Homestay was established in 2012 with nine rooms and accommodations for sixteen persons. Within 2017, three more rooms have been added with a total of 22 accommodations. It is now the largest homestay in the Takdah region. This was quickly followed by the opening up of more homestays, viz., Rai Resort (2013), Anugrah homestay, and Saino heritage guest house (2014), Norlah homestay, and Tinchuley Gurung's homestay (2016), Shiwani homestay and Pradhan homestay (2017). The Bamboo Darjeeling Blossom ecotourism expanded the most with nine rooms and 20 accommodations, while Pradhan homestay remained the smallest. The region's total capacity increased from 34 rooms to 68 rooms with a growth rate of 100%. Accommodations increased from 55 persons to 122 persons with a growth rate of 121.81%. In this region, the average size of homestay increased from 3.4 rooms and 5.5 persons to 6.8 rooms and 12.2 persons respectively.

**Table 4.4.2: Accommodation Profile of the Homestays: Lamahatta, December 2017**

Sample size: 6 Homestay

Sl. No.	Homestay	Year	Room	Accommodation	Room	Accommodation
1	Druk Homestay	2012	4	8	6	16
2	Kanchenjunga View	2012	3	6	4	10
3	Everest Hut Resort	2013	3	6	7	16
4	Mountain View	2014	7	17	8	20
5	Dukpa Homestay	2017	3	6	3	6
6	Private Lodge	2017	3	6	3	6
	<b>Total</b>		23	49	31	74

(Source: Data compiled by the researcher from Field survey)

Druk Homestay and Kanchenjunga View came up in 2012 with a total of seven rooms and accommodations for fourteen persons. This was quickly followed by the opening up of more homestays, viz., Everest Hut Resort (2013), Mountain View (2014), Dukpa Homestay, and Private Lodge (2017). The Mountain View was the largest with seven rooms and 17 accommodations, while the others were relatively small. In 2017, the Everest Hut resort expanded the most with an addition of four rooms and 10 accommodations. It is now the second largest in this region. The region's total capacity increased from 23 rooms to 31 rooms with a growth rate of 34.78%. Accommodations increased from 49 persons to 74 persons with a growth rate of 51.02%. In this

region, the average size of homestay increased from 3.8 rooms and 8.1 persons to 5.1 rooms and 12.3 persons respectively.

**Table 4.4.3: Accommodation Profile of the Homestays: Mineral Spring, December 2017**

Sample size: 4 Homestay

Sl. No.	Homestay	Year	Room	Accommodation	Room	Accommodation
1	Tathagata Farm	2012	5	10	8	21
2	Gautam Paradise	2012	4	8	6	14
3	Zimba Homestay	2013	1	2	2	6
4	Humro Homestay	2014	2	4	3	8
	<b>Total</b>		12	24	19	49

(Source: Data compiled by the researcher from Field survey)

Tathagata Farm was the first one that came up in 2007 with five rooms and accommodations for ten persons. Now it is the largest one with eight rooms and 21 accommodations. After five years Gautam Paradise was established with four rooms and accommodations for eight persons. It is the second largest in this region. After four years Zimba and Humro homestays came up with a total of three rooms and accommodations for six persons that increased to a total of five rooms and 14 accommodations. The region's total capacity increased from 12 rooms to 19 rooms with a growth rate of 58.33%. Accommodations increased from 24 persons to 49 persons with a growth rate of 104.16%. In this region, the average size of homestay increased from 3.0 rooms and 6.0 persons to 4.7 rooms and 12.2 persons respectively.

**Table 4.4.4: Accommodation Profile of the Homestays: Lepchajagat, December 2017**

Sample size: 4 Homestay

Sl. No	Homestay	Year	Room	Accommodation	Room	Accommodation
1	Pakhrin Homestay	2008	6	10	8	18
2	Kanchankanya Homestay	2013	6	10	8	18
3	Salakha Homestay	2016	1	2	2	6
4	Humro Homestay	2016	2	4	3	8
	<b>Total</b>		14	26	21	50

(Source: Data compiled by the researcher from Field survey)

Pakhrin homestay was the first to come up in this region in 2008 with six rooms and accommodations for ten persons. Now it is the largest one with eight rooms and 18 accommodations. After five years Kanchankanya homestay was established with identical capacity and quickly grew to reach the capacity of the former. After three years Salakha and Humro homestays came up with a total of three rooms and accommodations for six persons that increased to a total of five rooms and 14 accommodations. The region's total capacity increased from 14 rooms to 21 rooms with a growth rate of 50%. Accommodations increased from 26 persons to 50 persons with a growth rate of 92.30%. In this region, the average size of homestay increased from 3.5 rooms and 6.5 persons to 5.2 rooms and 12.5 persons respectively.

**Table 4.4.5: Accommodation Profile of the Homestays: Chatakpur, December 2017**

Sample size: 4 Homestay

Sl. No.	Homestay	Year	Room	Accommodation	Room	Accommodation
1	Dhanmaya Niwas Homestay	2009	5	10	6	14
2	Sherpa Homestay	2013	4	8	5	10
3	Tamang Homestay	2016	1	2	2	6
4	Humro Homestay	2016	2	4	3	8
	<b>Total</b>		12	24	16	38

(Source: Data compiled by the researcher from Field survey)

Dhanmaya Niwas homestay was the first to come up in this region in 2009, with five rooms and accommodations for ten persons. Now it is the largest one with six rooms and fourteen accommodations. After four years Sherpa homestay was established with four rooms and eight accommodations. Now it is the second largest one with five rooms and ten accommodations. After three years Tamang and Humro homestays came up with a total of three rooms and accommodations of six persons that increased to a total of five rooms and fourteen accommodations. The region's total capacity increased from 12rooms to16 rooms with a growth rate of 33.33%. Accommodations increased from 26 persons to 50 persons with a growth rate of 92.30%. In this region, the average size of homestay increased from 3.5 rooms and 6.5 persons to 5.2 rooms and 12.5 persons respectively.

**Table 4.4.6: Accommodation Profile of the Homestays: Sittong, December 2017**

Sample size: 4 Homestay

Sl. No.	Homestay	Year	Room	Accommodation	Room	Accommodation
1	Pujan Homestay Homestay	2009	5	10	6	14
2	Hankim Homestay	2013	4	8	5	10
3	Mukhia Homestay	2016	4	8	5	10
4	Chhyalomkyong Homestay	2016	5	10	6	14
5	Hankim Homestay	2017	2	4	2	4
	<b>Total</b>		20	40	24	52

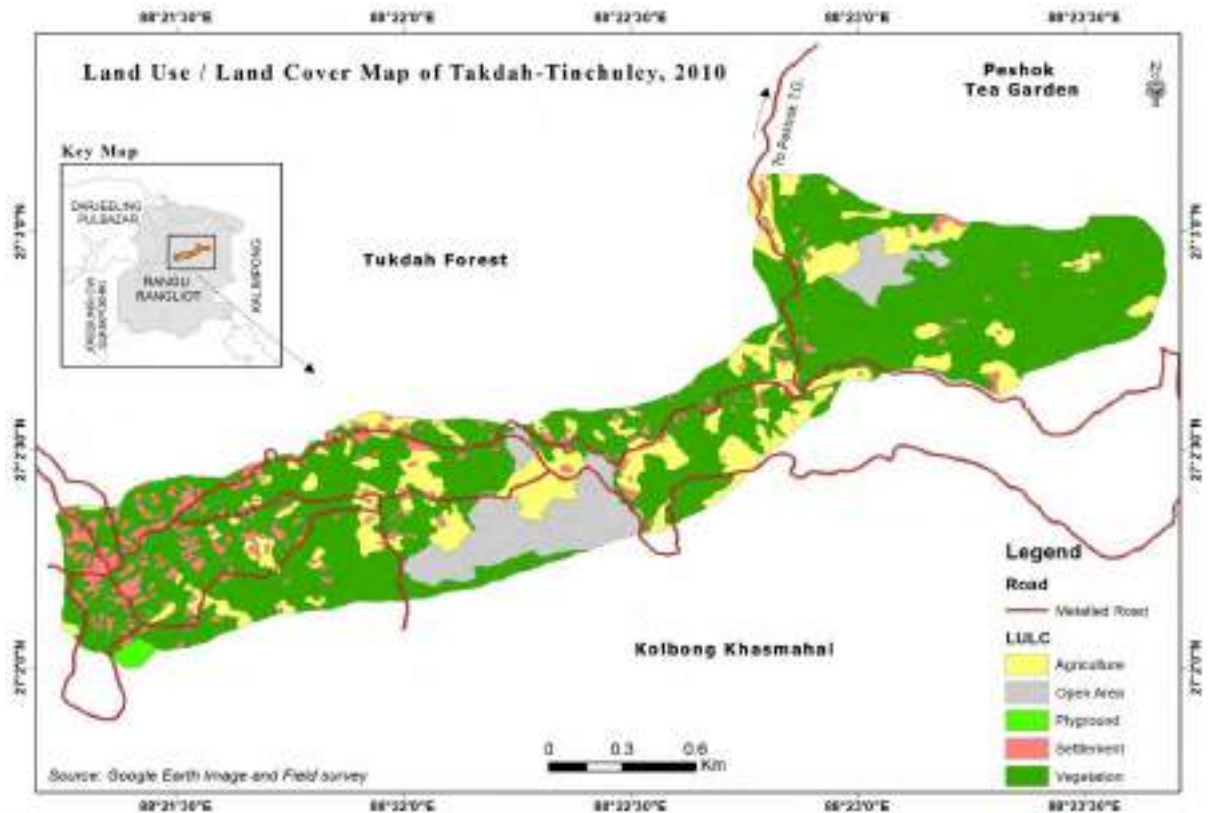
(Source: Data compiled by the researcher from Field survey)

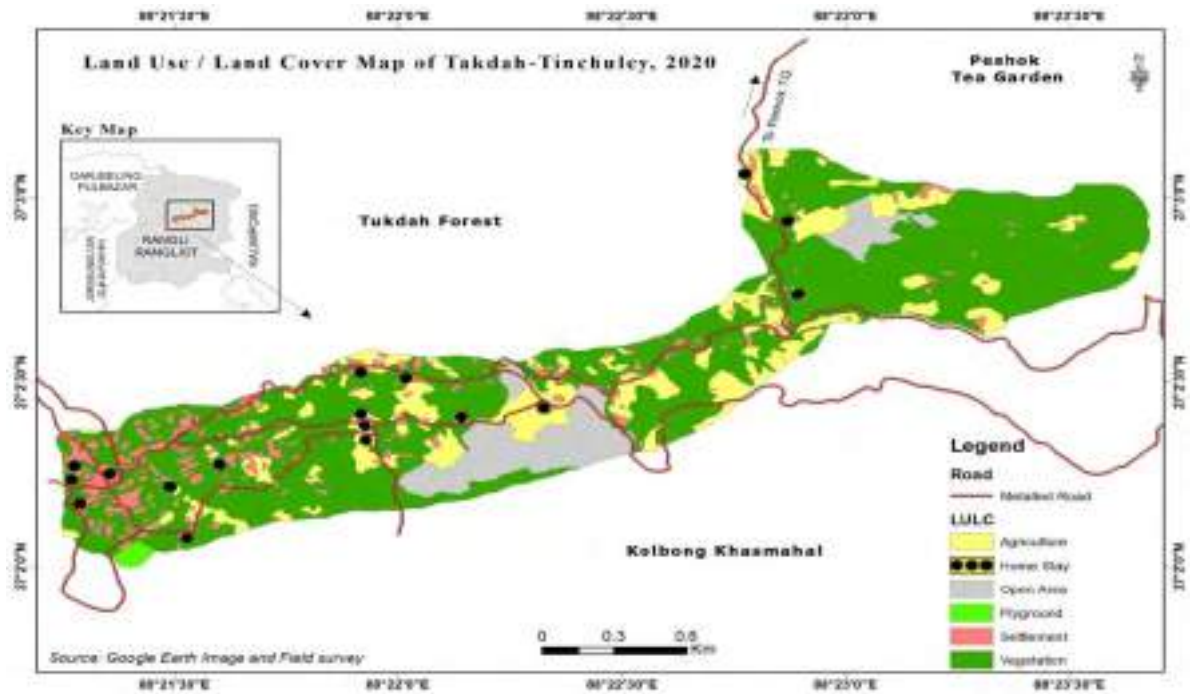
The Pujan homestay was the first one that came up in 2009 with a total of five rooms and accommodations for ten persons. It was the largest one. After five years Hankim homestay was established in 2014 which was quickly followed by the opening up of more homestays, viz., Mukhia, and Chhyalomkyong homestay (2016), and Sittong homestay (2018). Sittong is the smallest homestay with three rooms and 6 accommodations. The region's total capacity increased from 20 rooms to 24 rooms with a growth rate of 20%. Accommodations increased from 40 persons to 52 persons with a growth rate of 30%. In this region, the average size of homestay increased from 4.0 rooms and 8.0 persons to 4.8 rooms and 10.4 persons respectively.

#### 4.5 Development of Infrastructure and Homestays in the study area

The following maps illustrate the growth of infrastructure and homestays in study area in Darjeeling Himalaya from their inception to the present:

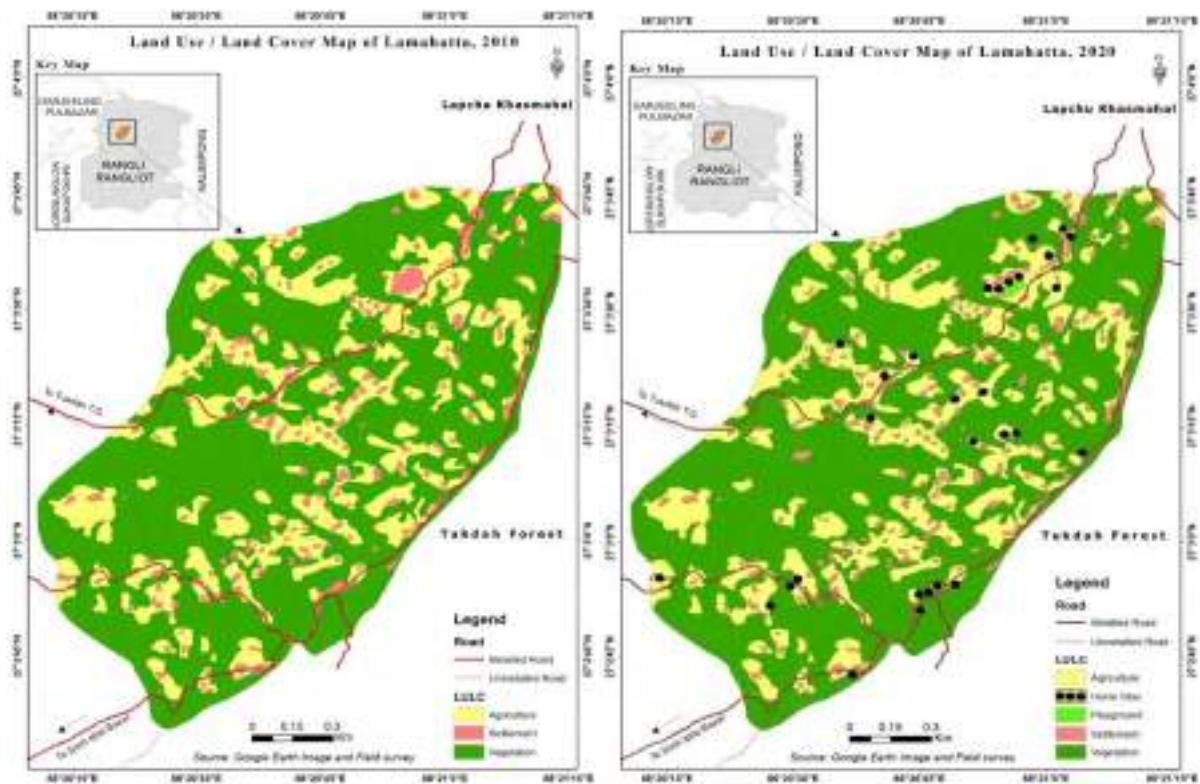
**Figure 4.5.1: Landuse/Landcover Map showing the development of infrastructure and homestays at Takdah from 2010 to 2020**



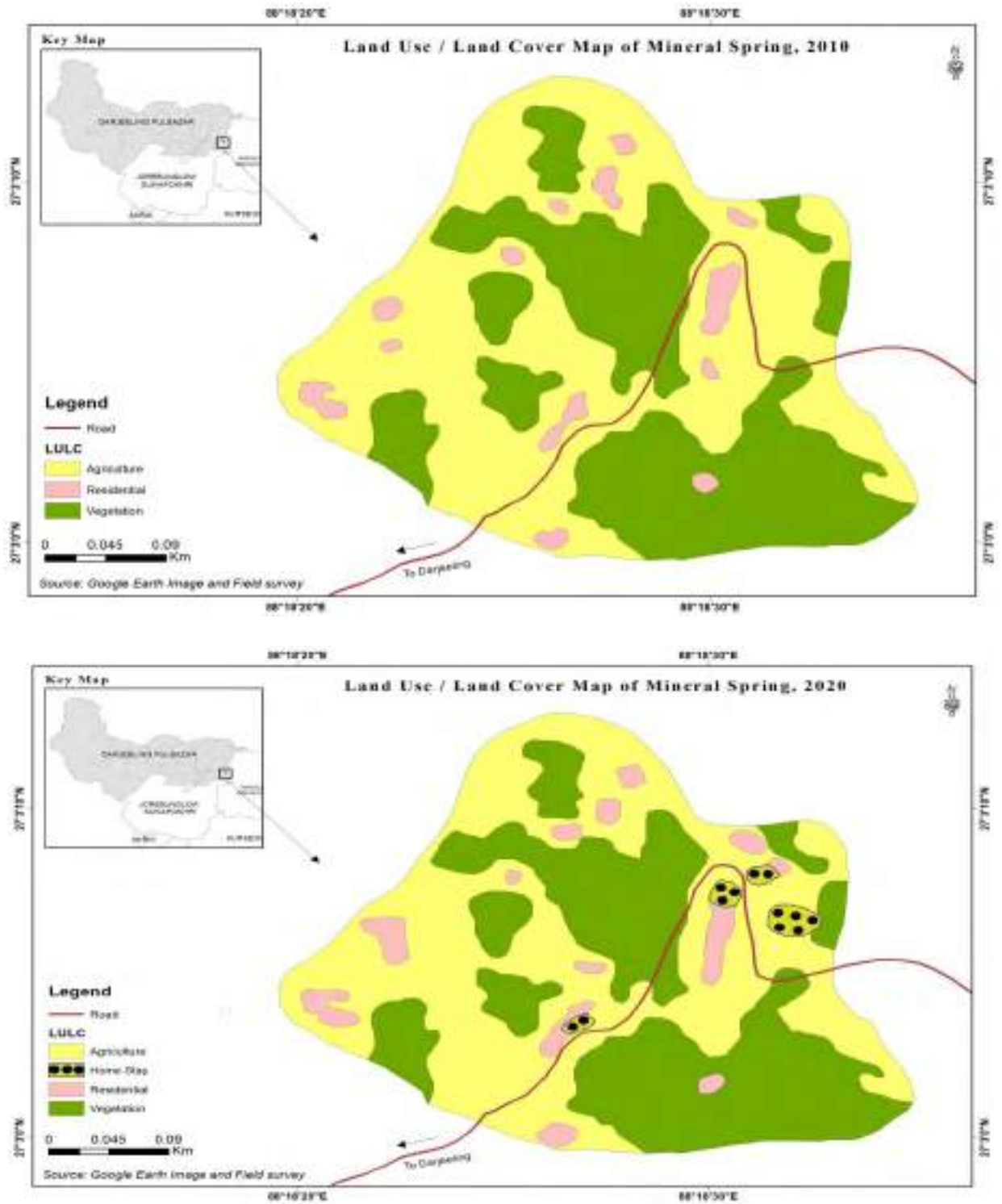


(Source: Google Earth)

**Figure 4.5.2: Landuse/Landcover Map showing the development of infrastructure and homestays at Lamahatta from 2010 to 2020**

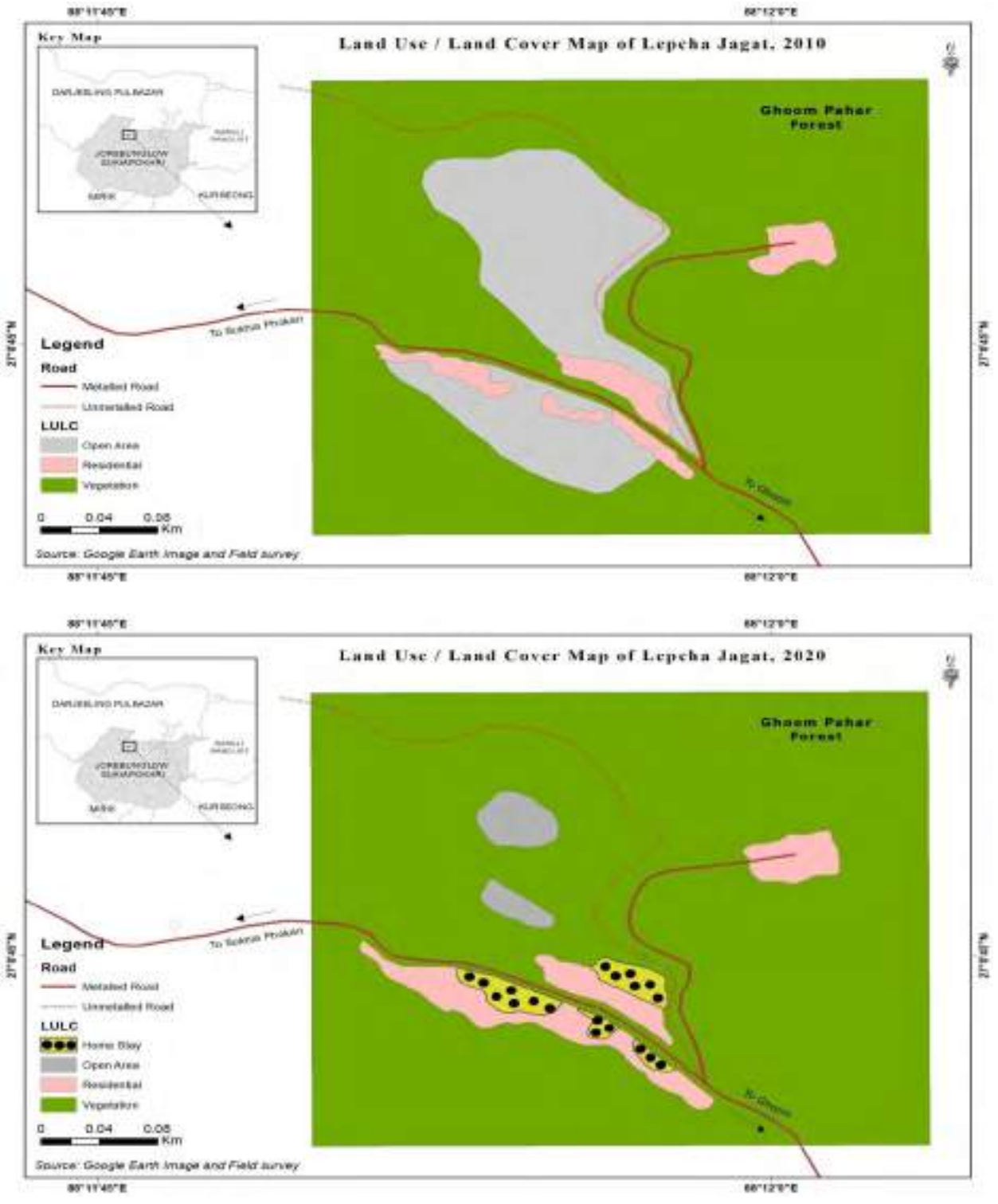


**Figure 4.5.3: Landuse/Landcover Map showing the developmentt of infrastructure and homestays at Mineral Spring from 2010 to 2020**



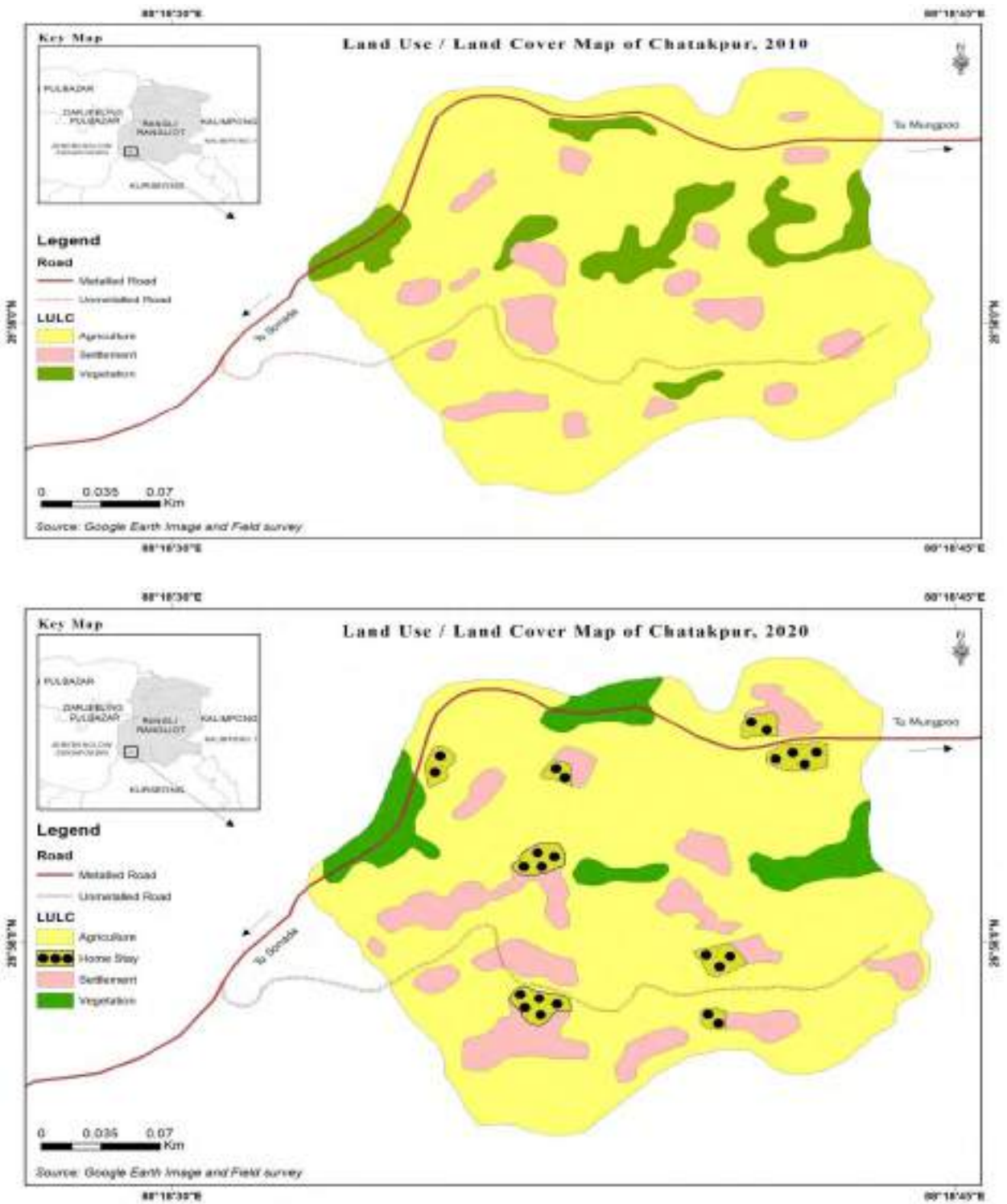
(Source: Google Earth)

**Figure 4.5.4: Landuse/Landcover Map showing the development of infrastructure and homestays at Lepchajagat from 2010 to 2020**



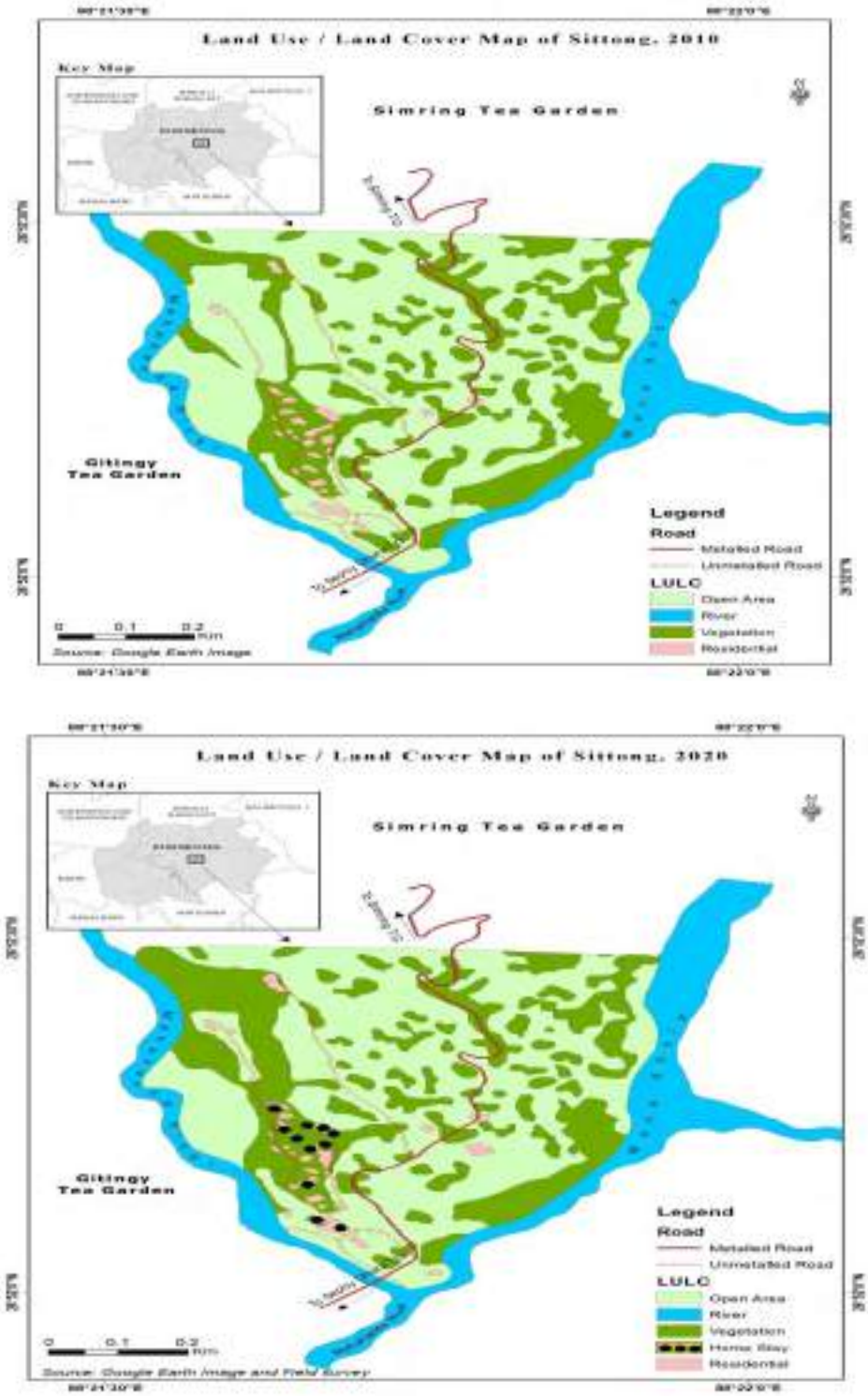
(Source: Google Earth)

**Figure 4.5.5: Landuse/Landcover Map showing the development of infrastructure and homestays at Chatakpur from 2010 to 2020**



(Source: Google Earth)

**Figure 4.5.6: Landuse/Landcover Map showing the development of infrastructure and homestays at Sittong from 2010 to 2020**



(Source: Google Earth)

#### **4.6 Stakeholders networking model for sustainable rural tourism development**

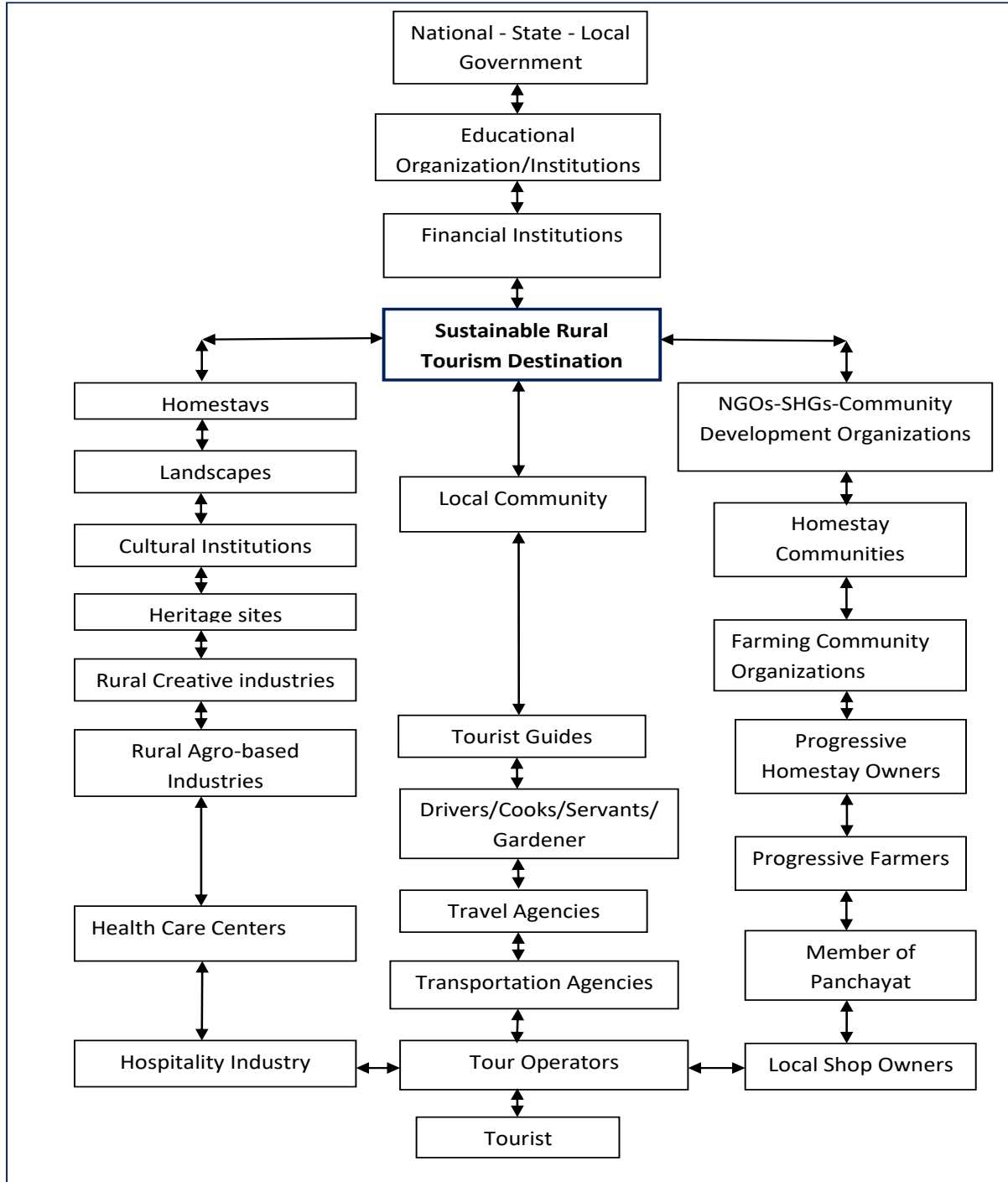
Stakeholders are some group of individuals who have an impact on the company's ability to achieve its objectives. They can be primary, usually direct influencers who are economically active, or secondary, usually non-direct influencers who are not directly involved in financial transactions but are influenced and indirectly affected by the company (Freeman, 1984).

The first and most crucial stage in developing inter-stakeholder networking is to identify stakeholders since they can be a part mostly of project development. Following their identification, they must be contacted to inquire about their interest and opinions in order to learn more about the number of tourists and their possible involvement in upcoming sustainable tourism.

The diagram below depicts the schematic stakeholder networking for long-term rural tourist development.

**Figure 4.6 Stakeholders' Networking**

**Stakeholders' Networking for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development**



(Source: Joshi, Paresh Vidyadhar and the researcher)

According to the aforementioned model, national, state, and high-level stakeholders play a critical role in planning and formulating policies for sustainable tourism development that take into account the destination's socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural principles. The scientific and educational organizations/ institutions play an important role in providing necessary training to stakeholders, informing them of government policies and controlling the use of natural resources. To encourage sustainable tourism, educational institutions can provide skilled manpower.

Rural tourism is reliant on the smooth operation of homestays, the presence of magnificent landscapes, social and cultural attractions, and various rural industries. Local communities play a vital role in rural tourism by providing cooks, servants, drivers, gardeners, and other services. Stakeholders are based on the various tourist agencies and tourists.

Economy and finance are the backbones of any business activity, so it is necessary to have sufficient funds at the right time for the development of infrastructure. A financial institution's role is concise as to financially support the people. The system should perform policies and partnerships to fund the tourism development initiatives. For significant tourist activities, the funding flow should reach numerous organizations and individuals engaged in tourism. The local community's participation too enhances the smooth function of tourism.

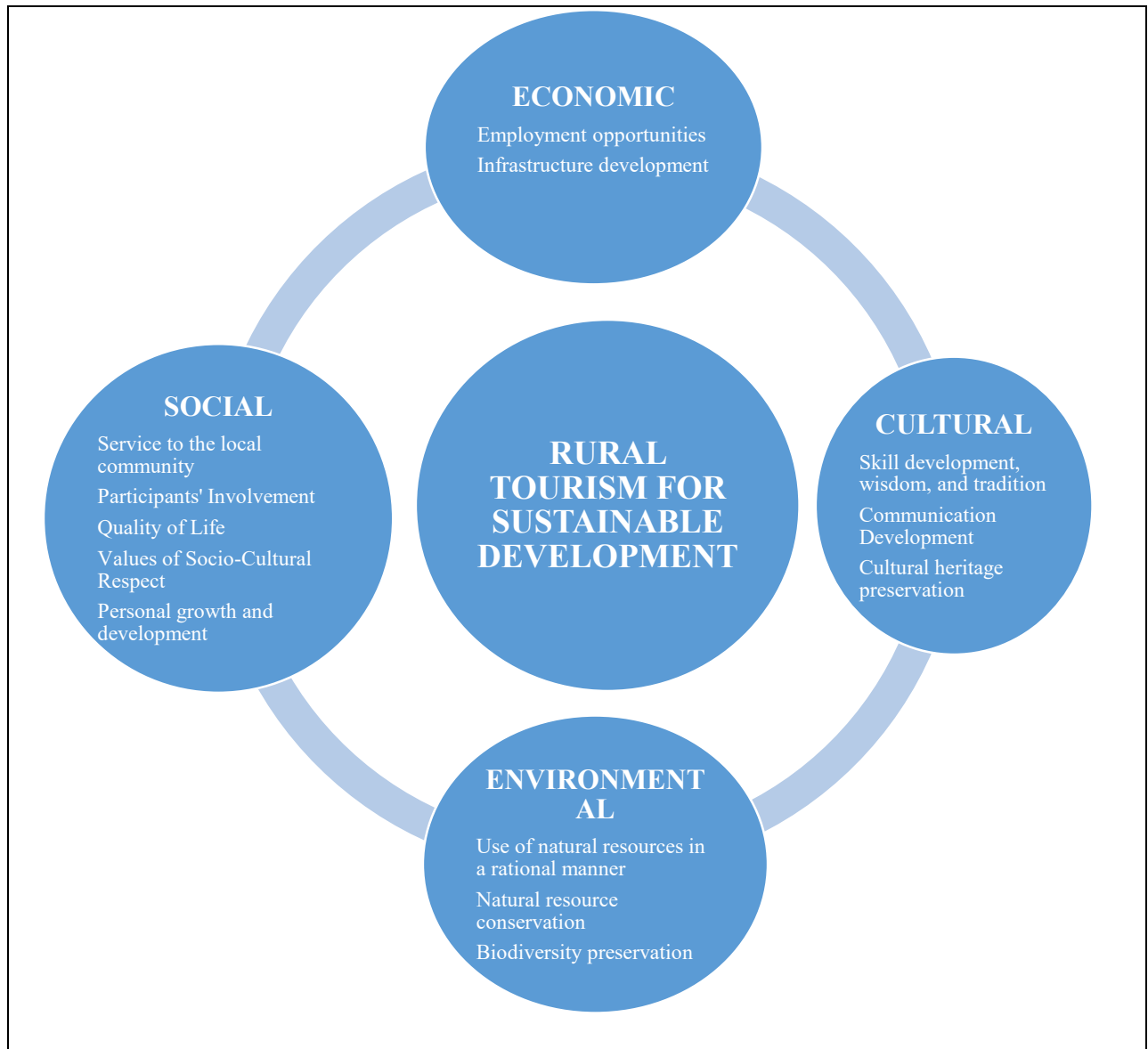
Tourists are the ultimate stakeholders and consumers of tourism activities, and their actions in the tourist region can influence the numerous stakeholders involved in tourism development's viewpoints. To attain total tourism growth stability, tourists should be responsible tourists.

Eventually, it is suggested that good networking of all stakeholders involved in rural tourism development in Darjeeling Himalaya is required to enhance the destination's profile as well as to attain sustainability in the tourism development process.

#### 4.7 Model for sustainable development of rural tourism

A model was developed to reflect the four essential pillars of rural development: economic, social, cultural, and environmental, all of which lead to the growth of rural tourism.

**Figure 4.7 Model showing Rural Tourism for Sustainable Development**



(Source: Hall, 1998 and researcher's conceptualization)

In the Darjeeling Himalaya, the study also assisted in recognizing constraints to rural tourism strategy. All stakeholders have a vital role to play, but the responsibility of the local community should never be overlooked. Rural tourism's success is determined by how much financial gain is transmitted to the broader residents and how often they participate in rural tourism's administration and governance.

The importance of rural development and carrying capacity cannot be ignored. Tourist taxes and economic benefits are welcomed by the local population in order to save tourist landmarks and properties. However, if they are unable to utilize the available resources, they will be in confrontation with the visitors. Therefore, a personal impression is essential in the social phase of the host-guest conversation. It is important to manage this individual belief in the local community through planning, management and research. Since the goals and agendas of the local community are different from the goals of the tourists, their satisfaction and positive attitude towards tourism, whatever the type of tourism, is very helpful in the development of tourism.

#### **4.8 Case Studies: Local Stakeholders' Perspectives**

##### **4.8.1 Takdah**

At an elevation of 1400 feet, Takdah is a cantonment site situated under the Kurseong district's Rangli-Rangliot block. Takdah has become a popular rural tourism destination due to the presence of the Teesta River, orange garden, Rungli tea garden, rock climbing, hanging bridge as well as numerous viewpoints.

Takdah is a place having numerous tourist attractions. The Rangli-Rangliot Homestay Owner Association, which oversees roughly 75 homestays in Takdah and Lamahatta, is responsible for Takdah. There are 56 homestays in Takdah and 14 in Lamahatta. Rural tourism in Takdah has now become a viable source of income for the locals. Takdah has prospered from the growing

popularity of rural tourism, which includes not just homestays but also forest reserves and floriculture.

Orchid plantations of various varieties are well-known in the area as far as floriculture is concerned. Orchids grown in this location are sold across the nation as well as overseas. *Eulophia spectabilis*, *Appendicular cornuta*, *Micropera obtuse*, *Chasiloschista parishii*, *Anthogonium gracile* are some of the known species of orchids in Takdah. It is typically open to tourists during spring and autumn.

The Rangli-Rangliot Homestay Owner Association (founded in 2017 to address various problems of all homestays in Takdah and Lamahatta) has a long-term strategy to make the region into a heritage site, according to Narbuji Lama, the association's president. He went on to remark that rural tourism must have the potential to benefit the especially of the rural area's growth, not just economically, but also socially. The proprietor and locals should treat tourists with the utmost respect. To allow for social, cultural, religious, and linguistic exchange, tourist relationships should be well-maintained. Tourists who are welcomed as guests, he believes, may go back as members of the family, and the interpersonal relationship with them will continue to deepen.

Buddhiraj Rai, a resident of Takdah and 46-year-old, is a driver who possesses a car and makes a living from rural tourism. He leads guests on sight-seeing tours of the surrounding locations and offers them relevant and extensive information about the area. His kind nature and well informative talks encourage visitors to come back again to Takdah under him as a driver and a good guide.

M.K. Pradhan, a 65-year-old respondent, claims to be the pioneer of rural tourism in Tinchuley, Takdah. He was a science graduate with a passion for medicinal plants conservation. In 1998, he began rural tourism in Chhota Mangwa, Takdah, because the agro-climatic conditions in the area encouraged the floral environment. However, he did not succeed in attracting tourists until the year

2000. After repeated travels to Kolkata, he was able to attract eight tourists to the city in 2001, and his tourist trade has been steadily developing since then. He put in a lot of effort to help his village's tourism thrive. He began with ecotourism, then moved on to homestay tourism, and is today known for his Bamboo Darjeeling Blossom Eco-tourism. In order to ensure the long-term viability of rural tourism, he established a homestay program, which has since been a source of inspiration for the entire community of Takdah and Tinchuley. M.K. Pradhan believed that rural tourism may help to improve his society. His commitment to community growth, environmental protection, water conservation, and energy conservation aided the society's long-term viability. Around 25 families in Chhota Mangwa rely on his homestay as a source of income. Aside from their income, employees receive additional bonuses of Rs. 15,000 each year, as well as medical benefits.

Diwas Gurung, a 27-year-old Takdah youngster, claims that rural tourism has allowed people to boost their livelihood. Rural tourism in Takdah provides them with the opportunity to work independently, operate additional homestays, boost their earnings, and enhance their performance. They don't have to leave their hometown to find work because rural tourism has given them the opportunity to work for themselves.

#### **4.8.2 Lamahatta**

A forest village, Lamahatta, situated at an elevation of roughly 1,500 meters in the Darjeeling subdivision, is some 24 kilometres from Darjeeling's main centre.

Lamahatta is a popular rural tourist site in the Kurseong block, featuring scenic splendour and a glimpse of the majestic Kanchenjunga. Mamata Park, Lamahatta's eco-park, is well-known which impart immensely to the ecotourism's success as a means of community development in harmony with nature. The mission of this ecologically responsible park is to engage local residents in environmental preservation and conservation. As a consequence of different park pursuits and a

rise of mass tourism, the locals got an opportunity to earn their livelihood as homestay owners, shopkeepers, restaurant owners, distributors, photographers, vendors and farmers.

Rural Tourism and ecotourism have played a major role in achieving a sustainable livelihood and a good standard of living for the local people. Lamahatta is well-known for the cultivation of organic vegetables, especially carrots.

The earnings from homestay have allowed Samten Dukpa, the owner of Druk Homestay, to not only earn a living but also to contribute to the local economy. He has provided opportunities for his villages to work as cooks, servants, drivers, gardeners, and guides. He further said that he and his brother were the first to initiate tourism in the area using tents and that they have made significant contributions to tourism marketing through their knowledge of local medicinal herbs, birds, and butterflies.

Rai, a 42-year-old woman, explained that she supports herself by selling her vegetables to the homestay owners. She grows cabbage, cauliflowers, carrots, saag, peas, tomatoes, cauliflower, and simi, which she sells to locals and sends to Darjeeling's market. Tourists are welcome to visit her agricultural area and sample the freshness of her produce. She cares about her child using the proceeds from the vegetable sales. She is now able to run her family's business due to rural tourism.

Various park activities and an increase in tourist influx have enhanced livelihood opportunities to many other local people who are not regular employees of eco-park but beneficiaries as local homestay owners, photographers, small shopkeepers, restaurant owners, vendors, including local farmers producing seasonal vegetables and fruits, etc.

### **4.8.3 Mineral Spring**

Located at the periphery of Darjeeling at around 16 kilometres, Mineral Spring is a tiny rural revenue village as a part of the Panchayat of the Pulbazar Bijanbari block.

The bulk of the people is farmers. They raise potatoes, round chilies, millets, tree tomato, cardamom, corns, tomatoes, ginger, other vegetables as well as tea on their fields, for sale in a close market that is Lebung and even to the market of Darjeeling. Animal husbandry is also used to supplement this. Goats, sheep, pigs, cows and poultry additionally help them get by on a daily basis. According to the 2011 census, Mineral Spring has a total of 40 households. Thirty percent of these households are involved in rural tourism.

Mineral Spring has become a well-known rural tourism attraction owing to its beautiful natural landscapes, serene environment, orange garden, organic farming, river Yanku, hiking routes, and some viewpoints. Locals have turned to rural tourism as a source of income. People need not look for work outside of their area. Their earnings may rise two to three lakhs during autumn when tourists visit their native place for a home stay. Apart from agriculture, Mineral Spring has benefited from the expansion of rural tourism. Its rich and traditional culture is given adequate respect and well preserved as well.

In 2007, Navin Tamang, a native trader, resigned his office of a Non-Government Organization to launch Tathagata Farm as an organic farm. Collaborating with the Tathagata Farm has provided residents with the option to make a living. Tathagata Farm is not just a homestay in the hamlet, but it also produces organic tea. This farm's organic tea is even offered in Darjeeling's marketplaces. This farm's high-quality tea generates a healthy profit. The preparation of this tea is done by hand by the local residents. The tourists' purchases of the farm's tea have contributed to the improvement of the locals' socioeconomic situation.

Rural tourism, according to Rajesh Chettri, 36 years of age has had a significant impact on local people's livelihoods. He is in charge of the Tathagata farm, which has provided him with not just a job but also the opportunity to improve his talents. Within a year, he received Permaculture Training twice that assisted him in addressing tourists, coping with their concerns, and honing his Permaculture expertise. Local people, he claims, are given preference and opportunities to work as cooks, caretakers, gardeners, guides, cleaners, drivers, service providers, and trekkers. Since the farm only has one car, it's obliged to hire several cars from the community and adjacent communities.

Mineral Spring is a sustainable community. The majority of farm production remains organic. Residents are prohibited from using pesticides and agrochemicals in their fields. They are restricted in using bleaching powder, phenyl, or other similar substances. Tourists are drawn to sustainably grown items as a bonus. Cash crops such as cardamom, oranges, and brooms are among the farm produce. As a result, the hamlet has made significant improvements. All participants are accomplishing long-term growth.

Tourism provides several options for locals to continue their livelihood, according to Pratima Sherpa, a female respondent, who is 32 years old. She is engaged in the distribution of vegetables like saag, coriander leaves, cauliflower, radish and cash crops like cardamom and brooms to the owners of the farm and the entire village encourages her to cultivate additional vegetables and crops increasing her agricultural profitability.

Lendup Lepcha, a 34-year-old man, operates a restaurant that is his sole earning. The majority of Tathagata farm visitors go to his shop for various local fast foods. Tourists are attracted to his shop because of his welcoming demeanor. His family's livelihood is supported by the revenue that

he receives from the visitors. As a result, rural tourism has provided chances for many villagers to earn a sustainable living.

As a driver by profession, 36 years of Ambar Thami drives Tathagata farm's vehicle during peak season time with an earning of around Rs. 50,000, enough to support his family which inspires the majority of Mineral Spring's drivers to help grow tourism in the area.

The addition of cottages, swimming pools, tents, and other facilities, as well as new homestays, buildings, roads, small markets, floriculture, plantations, and other infrastructural development in Mineral Spring's rural sector, have all contributed to the area's long-term development. Because of the establishment of capacity-building programs, people in this area have been able to encourage tourism.

The region is undergoing changes as far as social development is concerned. People's viewpoints have shifted toward growth. Everyone works together to improve their social relationships. With the tourists, the locals maintain a friendly attitude. Good interactions and relationships with the local population lead to societal well-being. In this area, rural tourism has offered opportunities for the preservation of traditions and culture and expanded chances for socialization.

In terms of cultural development and interchange, the village has the opportunity to meet new people, learn new languages, discover new thinking, gain new ideas, and experience different life experiences.

In terms of the environment, all participants, tourists, and locals are acutely aware of the importance of maintaining the rural area safe and clean. The majority of the surroundings have been carefully conserved. Plantations and afforestation are prioritized. Rural tourism has aided in the conservation of natural resources. Hence, Mineral Spring's rural tourism is attracting a large number of worldwide tourists.

#### **4.8.4 Lepchajagat**

At an elevation of about 2,120 meters, Lepchajagat is a small forest village in Sukhia block, Darjeeling along the highway connecting Ghoom and Sukhia. With a beautiful environment, a quiet atmosphere, and a breathtaking landscape, Lepchajagat is an excellent destination for nature enthusiasts and bird photographers. Located amidst the wilderness, it provides an opportunity to see wild creatures as well as beautiful foliage, mainly rhododendron.

Rural tourism, according to Rabin Pakhrin, 29 years of age, owner of Pakhrin Homestay, has not only enhanced their revenue and moreover contributed a significant improvement to their area. As the number of visitors grew steadily, he opened his debut homestay, followed by several others in his hamlet, which is a good indication for the inhabitants' livelihood. For the benefit of society, they established the Lepchajagat Homestay Welfare Association. It has established several norms for the proprietors and residents to follow in order to preserve the society's tranquility, safety, and prosperity. As a result, a community or cooperative act was intended to accomplish some degree of sustainability.

As the majority of the homestays within the region lack automobiles for sightseeing and exploring adjacent locations, drivers from the neighboring regions are usually hired for site-seeing. Buses and taxis from Pokhriabong, Nagari, Mirik, Pashupati, and Sukhia occasionally convey tourists to Siliguri and Darjeeling.

In the village, some new firms have emerged. Economic stability has resulted from the growing importance of local goods and services. Local residents have been motivated to participate as local tour guides, cooks, maids and painters, and to open stores, restaurants, and other businesses by Pakhrin homestay. Pakhrin claims that if surplus visitors are coming to his homestay, he somehow manages their stay in his neighbours' homes and provides them with a warm reception.

The remainder of the villagers will profit economically as a result of this. The people of Lepchajagat have seen a visible improvement in income success as a result of rural tourism.

For the preservation of the area's cleanliness and proper hygienic conditions, the association of the village is responsible. The residents have become more conscious of the sanitation and cleanliness condition of the community and area as a result of the talks and assessment of visitor needs.

Subash Tamang, aged 57, a native of Sukhia avails short-term employment at Pakhrin Homestay as a painter. He works on a lump sum basis at least for one month and earns Rs.50,000 in one month. He earns his livelihood through painting as his main occupation.

Bikkey Darjee, aged 33 works as a cook at Pakhrin Homestay. He earns Rs. 10,000 per month. He provides room service to the tourists as well.

Thus, Pakhrin Homestay serves as a model homestay in the region. The committed villagers ensure that tourists visit their village time and again.

In this area, rural tourism has aided in the conservation of regional identity, heritage, and diverse artwork. Residents' feedback is accorded importance in attaining sustainability since they can supply the most up-to-date information on environmental related issues.

#### **4.8.5 Chatakpur**

At a height of 2,403 meters, Chatakpur is a tiny forest community. It's a quiet village with only 88 residents and 19 residences, the majority of those are being turned to homestays.

Chatakpur, located within the Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary in West Bengal's Darjeeling District, is a small eco-friendly community. Since Chatakpur is a preserved area, steps were taken to keep the environment in good shape in order to attract more visitors. Chatakpur's attractive natural features, diverse vegetation and wildlife, typical herds and native culture befit the foundation for the area's

prosperity. In Chatakpur, rural tourism has centred on studying the ecosystems, the varied landscape, different species of animals and plants, among other things, and has thus been capable of supporting environmental preservation. Chatakpur has achieved and maintained a long-term balance of commercial, societal, and environmental concerns.

Rural tourism in Chatakpur, according to B. B. Thapa, the proprietor of Dhanmaya Niwas Homestay, has enhanced their revenue and has contributed evident progress in the area as well. Since the number of visitors grew regularly, he opened his first homestay, followed by some others in the area. The homestay entrepreneurs, concerned about their individual as well as social development, organized an association to help the community. It has established several norms for the proprietors and residents to follow in order to ensure peace, safety, security, and socio-economic development. As a result of the residents' collaborative attitude, they are on the verge of attaining sustainability.

In the area, some small firms have opened. Economic stability has resulted from the increased demand for the village's goods and services. Residents have been eligible to function as caretakers, cooks, guides and maids due to the opportunities given by homestay owners. Few small restaurants and shops have emerged due to the growth of tourists' demand. The majority of homestays lack automobiles for travellers to use for sightseeing and exploring surrounding attractions for which neighbouring areas' drivers are approached particularly from Sonada and Ghoom-Jorebunglow.

According to the proprietor of Sherpa Homestay of Chatakpur, the residents have raised funds and began road construction on their own for easy accessibility, demonstrating their intentional willpower for the development of the area's long-term infrastructure.

Chatakpur is considered an ideal village for rural tourism in Darjeeling Himalaya. Having been located in the wildlife sanctuary, the village is privileged to have forest dwellers who keep an eye on the sustainability and conservation of the natural environment.

#### **4.8.6 Sittong**

Sittong is a revenue village in the Kurseong subdivision located at altitudes ranging between 300 m and 1,200 m from valleys to uplands. It is located at the foothills of Darjeeling Himalaya. It is one of the Lepcha villages endowed with a picturesque landscape and a beautiful environment. Well known as Orange Valley, Sittong is an ideal rural tourism destination.

Rural tourism in Sittong has been supported by the Tourism Department of West Bengal which offered five tourism buildings. Pujan Homestay run by Anil Mangar has given a good opportunity to the entire village to earn a good livelihood by converting their homes into beautiful homestays. His family is engaged in most of the activities of serving tourists. He has hired three village youths for cleaning and serving. Mohan Rai, a local, aged 26 got the opportunity to serve the tourists with a monthly wage of Rs.4,000 and other incentives. Sudeep Biswakarma, aged 29, a resident has been hired as a cleaner with a monthly wage of Rs.3,000. Chandan Subba, aged 25 too got the opportunity to provide his service to the tourists at a monthly wage of Rs.3,500. Homestays of Sittong mostly remain clean and hygienic. Most of the tourists are quite satisfied with the service and cleanliness.

The owner of Hankim Homestay, Mahendra Rai, aged 46 was inspired by his friend to open a homestay in 2010. He has hired two local people as workers in his homestay. Rohan Mukhia, aged 30, male, is a cook who is an expert in cooking local food as well as Chinese food. His food is appreciated by most of the tourists. He earns Rs.5,000 per month along with other incentives. Saran Rai, aged 29, male, provides service to the tourists. Tourists feel quite happy with his service which

allows him to earn extra tips (incentives) from the tourists along with an average income of Rs.5,000 per month. Most of the locals are hired as drivers with their vehicles for sightseeing in nearby beautiful places. Thus rural tourism in Sittong has overall benefitted most of the residents and to some extent has brought sustainable development.

The case studies and viewpoints of local stakeholders show that the introduction of homestays and other rural tourism paraphernalia has benefited all six rural tourist destinations in the Darjeeling Himalaya in more than one way.

People prosper particularly when economic development is evident, as they have the opportunity to entertain tourists, sell fresh produce, and some consumer applications, among other things. The village's income has expanded significantly as a result of tourism activities.

Tourism-related events and interactions with qualified and experienced tourists have contributed to the growth of people's attitude, opinion, information and competence, as far as social development is concerned. Various agencies deliver assistance to the communities in order to help them establish their rural tourist businesses.

Rural communities have witnessed favourable advances in regards to cultural development and interchange. The majority of the locals communicate with visitors, sharing and expressing thoughts, learning languages and cultural exchange. During festivals and events, people get the opportunity to showcase their local cultural dance and perform local music to attract tourists.

There has also been significant progress in terms of the ecology, due to the increased awareness of educated tourists. They discourage littering, motivate cleaning of the area and dispose of trash in designated bins. As the majority of the visitors are foreigners, they prefer a hygienic environment. As a result, environmental sustainability is maintained by all participants and visitors.

In all six tourism areas, sustainable development was identified as a vital element of rural tourism, ensuring the most eco-friendly use of environmental assets. So far, rural tourism has been successful in maintaining the ecology, preserving heritage and sustainably promoting tourism communities' economies.

#### **4.9 Rural Tourism and Sustainable Development in Study Area: A Comparative Analysis:**

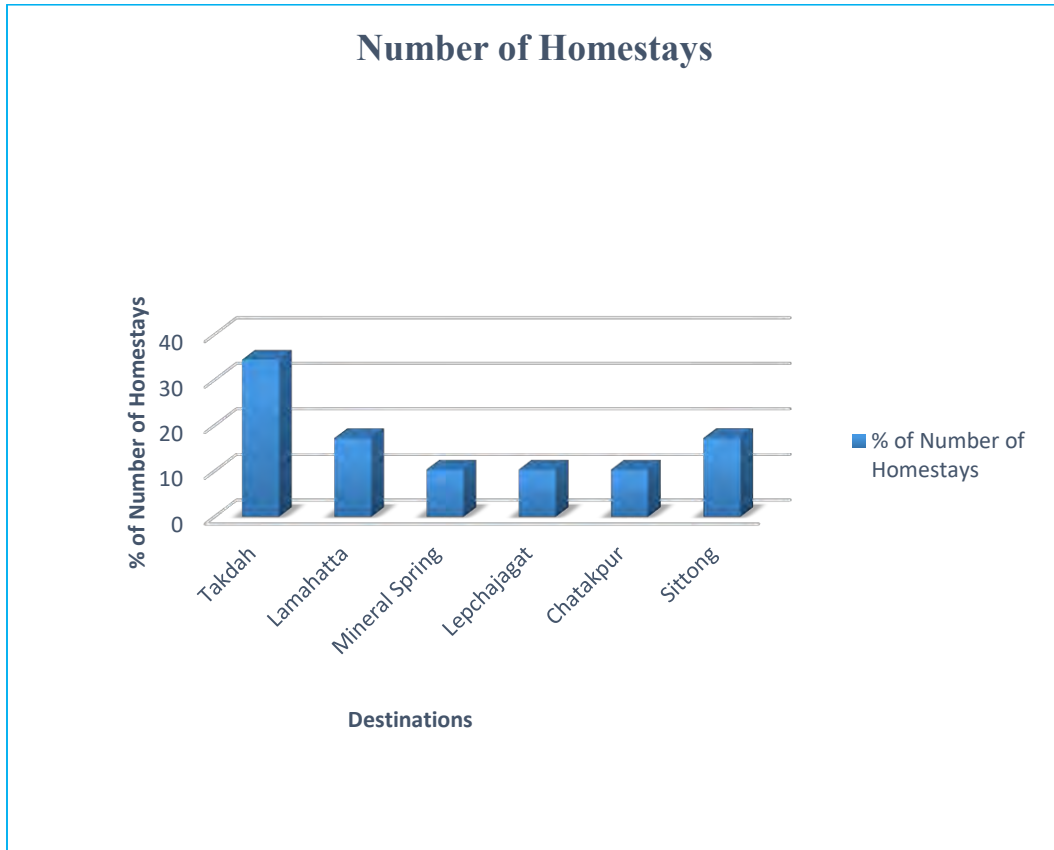
According to primary data obtained from field research performed from 2014 to 2017, a complete comparative assessment of six rural tourism locations has been done.

**Table 4.9.1: Distribution of Homestays in Rural Tourism Destinations of Study Area**

Sl. No.	Destinations	No. of Homestays	% of No. of Homestays
1	Takdah	10	34.48
2	Lamahatta	05	17.24
3	Mineral Spring	03	10.34
4	Lepchajagat	03	10.34
5	Chatakpur	03	10.34
6	Sittong	05	17.26
	Total	29	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2014 – 2017)

**Figure 4.9.1: Distribution of Homestays in Rural Tourism Destinations**



(Source: Field Survey, 2014 – 2017)

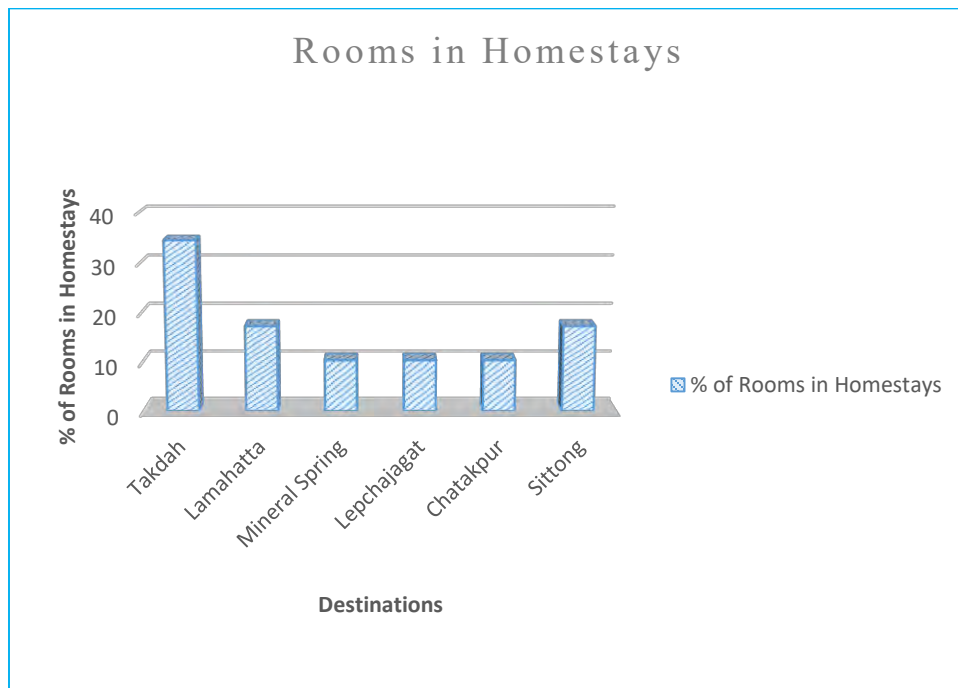
According to the findings, the number of homestays in Takdah is 10 (34.48%) which is more than any other rural tourism destination in Darjeeling. Since the area of Takdah is larger compared to other rural tourism destinations, the scope for building more homestays is bigger. Hence, the volume of arriving tourists from around the world is higher in Takdah, implying a higher inflow of revenue, which will eventually result in more employment for the residents. The other destinations such as Lamahatta have 17.24%, Sittong has 17.26% of total homestays, while Mineral Spring, Lepchajagat and Chatakpur have 10.34% each of total homestays.

**Table 4.9.2: Number and Percentage of Rooms in Homestays**

Sl. No.	Destinations	No. of Rooms in Homestays	% of Rooms in Homestays
1	Takdah	68	37.99
2	Lamahatta	31	17.32
3	Mineral Spring	19	10.61
4	Lepchajagat	21	11.73
5	Chatakpur	16	08.94
6	Sittong	24	13.41
	Total	179	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2014 – 2017)

**Figure 4.9.2: Rooms in Homestays**



(Source: Field Survey, 2014 – 2017)

Since the number of homestays in Takdah is more than the other rural tourism destinations in Darjeeling, the number of rooms to accommodate tourists is highest in Takdah. The availability of

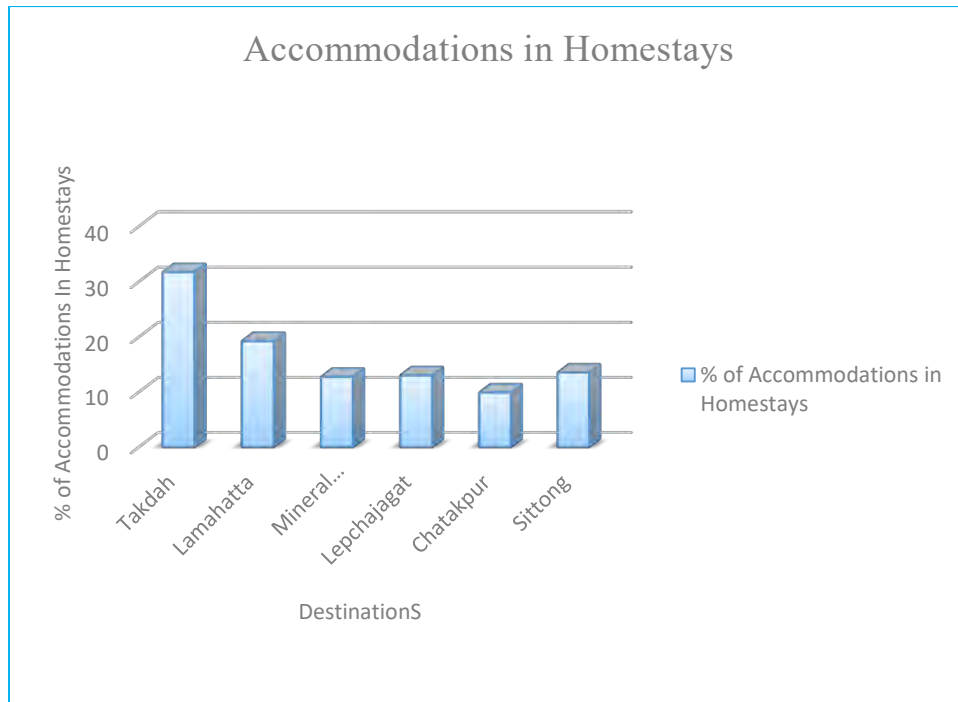
68 (37.99%) rooms indicates that Takdah has a much higher capacity to attract and accommodate tourists compared to other rural tourism destinations in the study area. The other destinations such as Lamahatta have 31 rooms, i.e. 17.33% of the total number of rooms in homestays while Mineral Spring has 10.61%, Lepchajagat 11.73%, Chatakpur only 8.94 % and Sittong has 13.41% of the total number of rooms in homestays of the study area.

**Table 4.9.3: Number and Percentage of Accommodations in Homestays**

Sl. No.	Destinations	No. of Accommodations in Homestays	% of Accommodations in Homestays
1	Takdah	122	31.69
2	Lamahatta	74	19.22
3	Mineral Spring	49	12.73
4	Lepchajagat	50	12.99
5	Chatakpur	38	09.87
6	Sittong	52	13.50
	Total	385	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2014 - 2017)

**Figure 4.9.3: Accommodations in Homestays**



(Source: Field Survey, 2014 - 2017)

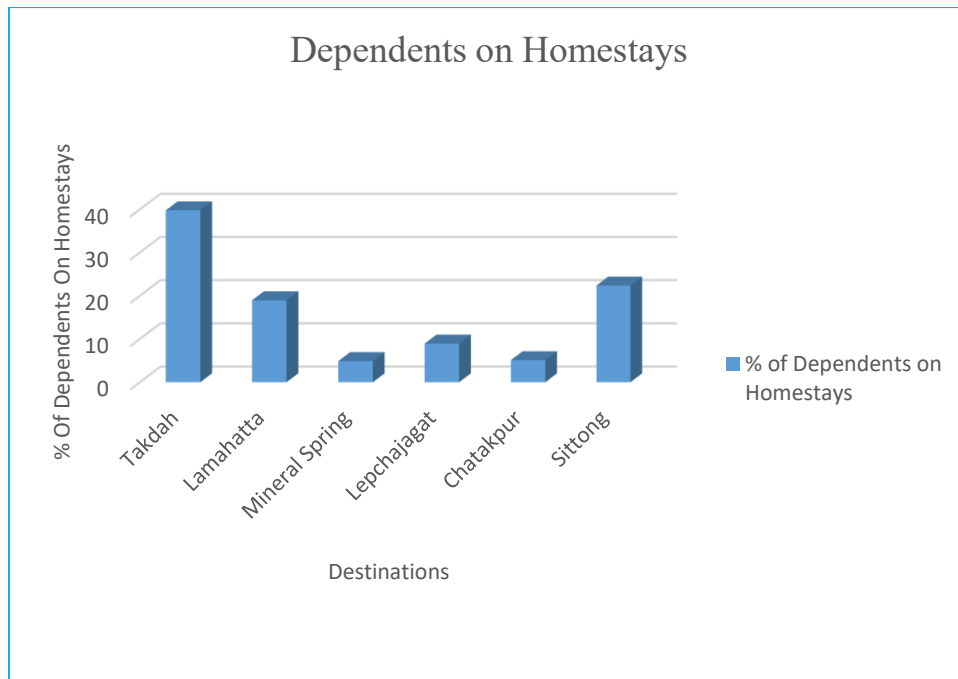
As the number of accommodations in rooms of homestays in Takdah is more than the other rural tourism destinations in the study area, the capacity to accommodate guests is more in Takdah. The availability to accommodate 122 (31.68%) persons indicates that Takdah has a high capacity to attract and accommodate a larger number of tourists compared to other rural tourism destinations. Other destinations such as Lamahatta have (74) 19.22% of total accommodations in of rooms in homestays in Darjeeling while Mineral Spring has 12.73%, Lepchajagat 12.99%, Chatakpur has only 9.87 % and Sittong 13.50% of total accommodations in rooms in homestays of Darjeeling.

**Table 4.9.4 Number and Percentage of Members Dependent on Homestays**

Sl. No.	Destinations	No. of Dependents of Homestays	% of Dependents of Homestays
1	Takdah	187	39.79
2	Lamahatta	89	18.94
3	Mineral Spring	23	04.89
4	Lepchajagat	42	08.94
5	Chatakpur	24	05.10
6	Sittong	105	22.34
	Total	470	100

(Source: Field Survey, 2014 - 2017)

**Figure 4.9.4: Dependents on Homestays**



(Source: Field Survey, 2014 - 2017)

According to the findings, it is noted that among the six destinations, Takdah homestays earn more and generate more employment opportunities for the locals compared to other destinations. The number of dependents including cooks, guides, gardeners, servants, room cleaners, caretakers, painters, etc. is more in Takdah. Around 187 (39.79%) of the total dependents earn their livelihood from the homestays of Takdah. The number of dependents in Lamahatta is 18.94%, in Mineral Spring it is 4.89%, Lepchajagat 8.94%, Chatakpur 05% and Sittong 22%.

#### **4.10 Environmental, Social and Cultural Impact Assessment and Sustainability**

##### **4.10.1 Environmental Impact Assessment of the Rural Tourism Destinations**

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) can be explained as the way toward recognizing, foreseeing, assessing and alleviating the biophysical, social, and other applicable impacts in terms of air and water quality, noise pollution, disturbance of eco-system, depletion of resources, modification of flora and fauna, loss of wildlife habitat, deforestation, solid waste littering, socio-economic and health environment.

The rating scale for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been the values ranging from 1 to 10 which is as follows:

1 to 5.0 – Low

5.1 to 7.0 – Moderate

7.1 to 10 – Good

**Table 4.10.1: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)**

<b>Sittong</b>	<b>Chatak</b>	<b>Lepcha</b>	<b>Mineral</b>	<b>Lama</b>	<b>Takdah</b>	<b>Destinations</b>
Moderate	<b>Pur</b> Good	<b>Jagat</b> Low	<b>Spring</b> Good	<b>Hatta</b> Moderate	Moderate	<b>Air quality</b>
Moderate	Good	Low	Good	Moderate	Moderate	<b>Water Quality</b>
Moderate	Good	Low	Good	Moderate	Moderate	<b>Noise Pollution</b>
Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	<b>Disturbance of ecosystem ( Biological environment)</b>
Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	<b>Depletion of resources</b>
Low	Low	Low	Low	High	High	<b>Modification of flora and fauna</b>
Low	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	<b>Loss of wildlife habitats</b>
Moderate	Low	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	<b>Deforestation</b>
Low	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	<b>Solid waste and littering</b>
Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	<b>Socio-economic and health environment</b>

(Source: Field Survey, 2014-2017)

The Environmental Impact Assessment has shown moderate influence residents and tourists on the environment in all the selected rural tourism destinations namely Takdah, Lamahatta, Mineral

Spring, Lepchajagat, Chatakpur and Sittong. The pollution by vehicles in the destination has moderately influenced the air and water quality. Tourists have been able to maintain noise thereby controlling noise pollution. Proper disposal systems and good sanitation helped residents to moderately influence the environment. All six rural tourism destinations have maintained a positive relationship with the environment, putting little strain on it and preserving the environment.

#### **4.10.2 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SIA)**

Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SIA) is necessary to ensure socio-economic viability and consistency in the long run.

The rating scale for Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SIA) has been the values ranging from 1 to 10 which is as follows:

1 to 5.0 – Low

5.1 to 7.0 – Moderate

7.1 to 10 – Good

**Table 4.10.2: Socio-Economic Impact Assessment**

	<b>Destinations</b>	<b>Takdah</b>	<b>Lamahatta</b>	<b>Mineral Spring</b>	<b>Lepchajagat</b>	<b>Chatakpur</b>	<b>Sittong</b>
	<b>Employment</b>	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate
	<b>Increase in the value of local property</b>	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Moderate
	<b>Improvement in Education</b>	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	<b>Infrastructure development</b>	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	<b>Improvement in Standard of Living</b>	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	<b>Increase in Income Level</b>	Moderate	Moderate	Minimum	Minimum	Minimum	Minimum
	<b>Flow of Foreign Capital</b>	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	Low	Low

(Source: Field Survey, 2014-2017)

The Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SIA) has shown a positive impact of rural tourism on the local community, the owners and the tourists. It had a moderate impact on the livelihood of

the people. From a socio-economic perspective, it was seen the income generated by rural tourism helps local governments and local communities improve physical infrastructure, which in turn strengthens the overall local economy. It was noticed that families who had no known source of income were able to maintain a decent livelihood through rural tourism, while those who already had a sustainable source of income could significantly increase their income. With regards to the six rural tourism destinations: Takdah, Lamahatta, Mineral Spring, Lepchajagat, Chatakpur and Sittong, it has been noted that women and youth are engaged more in rural tourism activities as they work as cooks, guides, drivers and managers in the host family. According to them, the standard of annual income generated by rural tourism is gradually increasing every year. Subsequently, more and more members of the local community showed their interest and they actively participated in rural tourism projects which made the initiative an important source of livelihood.

Tourism activities in rural tourism destinations of Darjeeling Himalaya have been able to increase the per capita salary of the owners and the local community, thereby improving the financial capital for infrastructural advancement.

Rural tourism has been able to ensure social contact between the owners, residents and tourists. Both the hosts and the tourists are benefitted from rural tourism due to social exchange. Rural tourism additionally impacts nearby networks when the income created from it is used to improve the social framework like schools and colleges, human services establishments, technical institutions, libraries, and so on.

### **4.10.3 Cultural Impact Assessment (CIA)**

Cultural Impact Assessment (CIA) is necessary to observe the cultural impact of rural tourism on cultural exchange between the hosts including the local community and the tourists. Local societies and customary lifestyles might be debilitated and even devastated; however, the effect of tourism is high in neighbourhood life convention and social uniqueness. In another manner, contacts may bring unwanted social impacts on the tourism industry in regions where expectations for everyday comforts may make social turmoil. As tourist interacts with people of a particular place he visits, a social exchange of culture takes place (Bukhart and Medlik, 1974).

The rating scale for Cultural Impact Assessment (CIA) has been the values ranging from 1 to 10 which is as follows:

1 to 5.0 – Low

5.1 to 7.0 – Moderate

7.1 to 10 – Good

**Table 4.10.3 Cultural Impact Assessment (CIA)**

<b>Destinations</b>	<b>Change in attitude and culture of local youths</b>	<b>Impact of foreign culture and tradition</b>	<b>Development of ideas, custom, knowledge and skills</b>	<b>Preservation of Cultural identity</b>	<b>Revival of traditional arts</b>	<b>Changes in arts, crafts and festivals</b>
<b>Sittong</b>	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Chatakpur</b>	Good	Good	Good	Low	Low	Moderate
<b>Lepchajagat</b>	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Mineral Spring</b>	Good	Good	Good	Low	Low	Moderate
<b>Lamahatta</b>	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate
<b>Takdah</b>	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

(Source: Field Survey, 2014 – 2017)

The Cultural Impact Assessment revealed that rural tourism had a moderate impact of rural tourism on hosts and tourists regarding cultural exchange. The local, as well as foreign tourists, have been able to bring a change in the attitude and behaviour of local communities in all the six rural tourism

destinations of Darjeeling Himalaya. Both the locals and the tourists were influenced by each other's cultural traditions, languages and ideas. The locals have been able to exchange and preserve their culture.

#### **4.11 Sustainable measures adopted by the owners of homestays at the tourist destinations**

- Preventing the use of chemical fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides, toilet fresheners, phenyl and disinfectants by the rural tourism destination's authority.
- Checking of water usage regularly.
- Checking of toilet water regularly.
- Construction of proper drainage system.
- Use of bio-degradable bins.
- Using plastics as little as possible.
- Saving energy using alternative sources of energy such as solar energy.
- Use of rechargeable materials.
- Sustainable activities are carried out to sustain the environment.
- Preservation of culture, heritage and environment.

#### **4.16 Conclusion**

Finally, it can be concluded that the establishment of tourism has benefitted the socio-economic development of all the selected rural tourism destinations of Darjeeling Himalaya. Rural tourism has succeeded in creating jobs, incomes, cultural development, social benefits and environmental development and awareness. Rural tourism has been able to maintain its viability as far as socio-economic development is concerned. It has flourished in all the selected destinations. To ensure long-term viability, the socio-economic advantages of rural tourism, initiatives must be shared with the local population. Rural tourism development is possible through careful planning and

implementation of projects with strong governmental initiatives, tourism officials and the public. In the future, rural tourism will continue to be a lucrative way of life if all the measures are followed properly.

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