

Women's Roles in Homestay Operations in Sayan Village: Everyday Practices and Household-Based Tourism Work

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Article History	Abstract
Received: 28 November 2025 Accepted: 07 December 2025 Published: 10 December 2025	<p><i>This study explores the everyday work practices of women who own and manage family-based homestays in Sayan Village, Ubud, Bali. The research aims to describe the operational roles undertaken by female owner-managers and examine how these responsibilities intersect with their domestic routines. A qualitative descriptive design was employed, involving in-depth interviews and non-participant observations with eight women who have operated their homestays for five to fifteen years. The findings indicate that women carry out a wide range of tasks, including housekeeping, breakfast preparation, guest relations, booking communication, and basic financial documentation. These responsibilities are performed alongside ongoing domestic duties, creating a continuous rhythm of household and tourism work within the same spatial and temporal setting. The study shows that women's hands-on involvement forms the core of homestay service delivery and underpins the personalized atmosphere characteristic of family-run accommodations. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of micro-level tourism labor in rural Bali and highlight the essential role of women in sustaining homestay quality.</i></p> <p>Keywords: <i>women, homestay, tourism work, Sayan village, household-based tourism.</i></p>



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INTRODUCTION

Homestays have become an increasingly important component of Bali's tourism development, especially in rural cultural destinations such as Ubud and its surrounding villages. As Lestari et al. (2020) observe, homestays in Bali provide localized experiences rooted in family traditions and spatial arrangements unique to Balinese household compounds. Sayan Village, located in Gianyar Regency, is characterized by traditional settlements, rice terraces, and a cultural atmosphere that attracts travelers seeking intimate and authentic encounters with rural Balinese life. Village administrative records indicate a steady increase in operational homestays over the past decade, demonstrating rising demand for community-based and culturally grounded accommodation.

Within these family-based homestays, women play a central role in daily operations. Numerous studies have shown that women in rural tourism settings frequently integrate domestic responsibilities with hospitality tasks, often performing both simultaneously (Mahadevan et al., 2017; Saarinen & Rogerson, 2021). Women's roles encompass physical labor, such as cleaning and food preparation, as well as emotional labor, which Hochschild (1983)

identifies as essential for maintaining positive guest interactions. This aligns with Smith's (2012) observation that host-guest engagement in homestays is shaped by cultural intimacy and personalized hospitality. Globally, UNWTO (2019) notes that women's participation in tourism remains concentrated in informal, customer-facing roles, reflecting gendered patterns of labor division long observed in Southeast Asia (Wijayanti, 2021).

Although tourism participation has the potential to improve livelihoods, empowerment is not always guaranteed. Scheyvens (2000) emphasizes that meaningful empowerment requires attention to the socio-cultural structures influencing women's access to resources and decision-making power. Research in Indonesia similarly highlights how local governance dynamics shape participation in tourism (Hampton & Jeyacheya, 2015; Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020). In rural contexts, homestays are often viewed as pathways for livelihood enhancement (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007), yet their success depends heavily on women's continuous, hands-on involvement.

Despite these insights, micro-level accounts of women's everyday operational practices in homestay settings remain limited. Existing Indonesian studies largely emphasize community-based tourism frameworks, empowerment initiatives, or economic impacts (Hilman & Aziz, 2020; Junaid et al., 2022), with relatively little attention given to the routine tasks that sustain homestay functionality. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the operational roles and daily work patterns of female homestay owners in Sayan Village.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What operational tasks do women perform in running their homestays?, (2) How do they navigate dual roles in domestic and tourism-related work?, (3) What do their everyday work patterns look like within the context of homestay management?. By incorporating recent literature on homestays, women's labor, and everyday work practices, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of women's contributions to small-scale tourism enterprises in rural Bali.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to document and analyze the everyday work practices of women who manage homestays in Sayan Village. Qualitative description offers clear, comprehensive accounts of events using everyday language, allowing researchers to portray participants' experiences in a grounded and accessible manner (Sandelowski, 2000). The approach also aligns with naturalistic inquiry, which seeks to understand behavior in real-life environments (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The research was conducted in Sayan Village, Ubud, an area characterized by traditional Balinese family compounds, agricultural landscapes, and a rapidly expanding homestay sector. Eight women who personally owned and managed their homestays were selected as participants. Their ages ranged from early forties to late fifties, and they had managed their homestays for five to fifteen years. Such long-term engagement constitutes what Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe as experiential knowledge, which enhances the credibility of their accounts.

Operational definitions were established to ensure clarity and consistency. "Everyday work practices" refer to routine operational tasks such as housekeeping, guest communication, breakfast preparation, booking coordination, and basic financial documentation. "Domestic

responsibilities” refer to family-related duties carried out within the household compound. Following Creswell (2013), the study emphasizes descriptive variables rather than numerical measurement, and it does not include hypothesis testing.

Data were collected through three primary techniques:

1. In-depth interviews lasting 45–90 minutes, with eight key informants, all of whom were female homestay owners in Sayan Village. These informants were selected purposively to capture variations in age, education level, household roles, and managerial responsibilities;
2. Non-participant observation of daily routines such as cleaning, cooking, and guest interactions;
3. Review of document notes, including simple financial records and informal booking logs.

These techniques align with gender-sensitive tourism research, which prioritizes lived experience and daily practices (McGehee & Andereck, 2009; Moswete & Lacey, 2015). While not a full case study, the research applied Yin’s (2018) triangulation principles to strengthen credibility. Data were analyzed using descriptive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Miles et al., 2014) phases of familiarization, coding, theme development, and reviewing. The process involved generating initial codes from interview transcripts and observation notes, grouping them into patterned categories, and interpreting these themes to describe women’s roles, challenges, and contributions in homestay management. The coding and theme refinement also drew on Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña’s (2014) interactive model to ensure analytical clarity and consistency.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Demographic Profile of Female Homestay Owners

The eight women who participated in this study are homestay owners who personally oversee the daily operation of their family-based accommodations in Sayan Village. They represent a group of middle-aged Balinese women who balance domestic responsibilities with continuous involvement in hospitality-related tasks within the household compound. Their age range, educational backgrounds, and years of managing their homestay operational experience reflect demographic patterns commonly identified in rural tourism settings, where women frequently assume multiple and overlapping roles in sustaining household-based enterprises (Mahadevan et al., 2017). Such demographic characteristics shape how women navigate their daily routines and contribute to the operational stability of homestays. An overview of their profiles is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of Female Homestay Owners in Sayan Village

Informant Code	Age (Years)	Marital Status	Education Level	Years Managing Homestay	Main Operational Roles
IF1	54	Married	Senior High School	12 years	Housekeeping, guest welcome, daily operational coordination
IF2	52	Married	Senior High School	8 years	Breakfast preparation, guest communication, room setup

IF3	48	Married	Senior High School	10 years	Cleaning, booking coordination, basic financial recording
IF4	45	Married	Vocational High School	6 years	Guest relations, room cleaning, assistance with check-in/out
IF5	50	Married	Diploma (D3)	15 years	Breakfast service, guest communication, daily cleaning
IF6	47	Married	Junior High School	7 years	Room preparation, washing linens, guest assistance
IF7	55	Married	Senior High School	9 years	Booking inquiries (WhatsApp), breakfast cooking, cleaning
IF8	53	Married	Diploma (D2)	11 years	Check-in/out management, inventory control, housekeeping

Source: Fieldwork interviews, 2025.

Viewed collectively, the demographic profiles illustrate the embedded nature of women's labor in rural tourism contexts. As noted by Saarinen and Rogerson (2021), rural women often contribute simultaneously to household reproduction and tourism production, positioning them as central actors in maintaining the continuity of local hospitality sectors. The participants' long-term engagement in homestay management also resonates with findings by Devi and Backman (2019), who emphasize that homestay enterprises frequently rely on women's accumulated experience, tacit knowledge, and daily presence within the household compound. These demographic characteristics therefore provide an essential foundation for understanding the everyday operational work described in the subsequent sections of this study, particularly the integration of domestic and tourism-related responsibilities that defines homestay management in Sayan Village.

Operational Roles Conducted by Women

The participants performed a wide range of operational tasks essential to the functioning of their homestays. These roles include housekeeping, guest relations, breakfast preparation, booking coordination, and simple financial management. Such tasks align with the core responsibilities identified in earlier studies of family-based tourism, where women's labor is central to creating a personalized and culturally embedded guest experience (Girish & Lee, 2020).

Housekeeping and Room Preparation

Housekeeping emerged as the most consistent daily responsibility among participants. Each morning, the women clean guest rooms, change linens, prepare amenities, and ensure that the environment remains tidy and comfortable. These tasks reflect a form of labor that requires attention to detail and emotional engagement, characteristics often associated with women's work in hospitality (Baum, 2015).

"I start cleaning around 6 AM because the guests want the rooms tidy when they come back."

If I have many rooms to prepare, I work faster.” (IF3, interviewed July 2025).

This finding supports Cruz’s (2018) argument that women’s contribution to the hospitality sector is frequently undervalued despite being integral to guest satisfaction and service quality. In Sayan, the meticulous housekeeping provided by women reinforces the intimate and home-like atmosphere that distinguishes homestays from commercial lodging.

Guest Relations and Front-Desk Tasks

The women also play a central role in guest communication, from welcoming visitors to offering local recommendations and assisting with transportation arrangements. Their personal interaction with guests creates a sense of familiarity and hospitality that aligns strongly with cultural expectations of Bali’s family-run accommodations.

“I always welcome guests myself. They feel happier when the owner greets them and talks to them directly.” (IF5, interviewed July 2025).

This finding resonates with Lestari et al. (2020), who note that host–guest engagement is a defining feature of Balinese homestays. The emotional labor embedded in these interactions reflects what literature identifies as the invisible yet highly valuable dimension of women’s work in tourism.

Breakfast Preparation and Cooking

Preparing breakfast is another routine responsibility. Women prepare simple meals for guests while simultaneously cooking for their families. This simultaneous workflow exemplifies the fluidity between domestic and hospitality work.

“I cook breakfast for guests while also cooking for my children. It all happens almost at the same time.” (IF2, interviewed July 2025).

These overlapping responsibilities illustrate what Chant and Sweetman (2012) describe as the blurring of productive and reproductive labor. The integration of these tasks confirms that women’s tourism work is deeply embedded in the rhythms of household life.

Booking Coordination and Communication

Despite varying degrees of digital literacy, the women independently manage bookings through WhatsApp, direct messaging, and Online Travel Agencies such as Booking.com. Some participants received occasional support from family members for more technical aspects.

“I can reply to messages on WhatsApp easily, but sometimes I ask my son for help when using the application.” (IF7, interviewed July 2025).

The ability to manage bookings reflects women’s managerial agency in small-scale tourism enterprises, an aspect highlighted in research on rural tourism entrepreneurship (Saarinen & Rogerson, 2021).

Simple Financial Recording

Financial tasks were managed using handwritten notebooks. Although simple, these practices show women’s responsibility in ensuring operational continuity and household economic stability. This supports findings by Mahadevan et al. (2017), who argue that women often function as both caregivers and financial managers within family-based tourism businesses.

Dual Role: Domestic and Tourism Work

The findings demonstrate the participants' dual responsibilities in both domestic and tourism-related domains. Throughout the day, the women move seamlessly between household chores, childcare, ritual obligations, and homestay operations.

"After finishing the guest rooms, I continue cleaning my own house. There is no real break between the two." (IF4, interviewed July 2025).

This uninterrupted flow between roles is consistent with the concept of household-based tourism labor, in which domestic and commercial activities coexist within the same physical and temporal space (Chant & Sweetman, 2012). It also reflects the gendered division of labor commonly observed in rural communities, where women shoulder both care responsibilities and income-generating activities (Girish & Lee, 2020).

Everyday Work Pattern in Homestay Context

The participants' daily routines reveal a clear work structure shaped by guest needs, household priorities, and cultural practices. Early mornings are dedicated to food preparation, followed by housekeeping tasks. Midday activities involve guest communication and supply purchases, while evenings are filled with domestic duties and preparation for the next day. During high occupancy periods, the workload intensifies significantly, with some women working from early morning until late evening. This dynamic rhythm illustrates how time in homestay settings is not strictly segmented but shaped by overlapping domestic and hospitality demands, consistent with Devi & Backman's (2019) findings on family-based tourism enterprises.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the central role of women in sustaining the daily operation of homestays in Sayan Village. Their responsibilities encompass both routine domestic duties and essential hospitality tasks, reflecting what Chant and Sweetman (2012) identify as the merging of reproductive and productive labor within gendered household economies. This combined workload forms a labor system that is deeply embedded in the cultural and social structure of Balinese family life, where women are traditionally positioned as caretakers, ritual practitioners, and managers of household order. The participants' ability to move fluidly between these overlapping domains enables homestays to function smoothly and consistently, creating the personalized and home-centered hospitality that distinguishes family-based accommodations from commercial lodging.

The integration of domestic and tourism-related activities reinforces the conceptualization of homestays as household-based tourism enterprises, a theme noted in studies by Devi and Backman (2019) and Lestari et al. (2020). Unlike larger hospitality establishments with specialized divisions of labor, homestays rely heavily on the unpaid, continuous, and often invisible work of women. Baum (2015) emphasizes that such invisible labor is a defining feature of the hospitality sector, where emotional engagement, attention to detail, and interpersonal interaction are often gendered expectations placed on women. In Sayan Village, women directly contribute to guest relations, room preparation, meal preparation, and informal financial management, all of which strengthen the trust-based

relationship between hosts and visitors. These findings align with Cruz (2018), who argues that women's affective and emotional labor significantly enhances the guest experience in small-scale tourism settings.

This study contributes to broader scholarly discussions on women's labor in rural and community-based tourism by illustrating the micro-level, everyday practices that enable homestays to operate effectively. Research by Mahadevan et al., (2017) and Girish and Lee (2020) similarly underscores the vital contributions of women to small tourism enterprises in Southeast Asia, noting that their labor often sustains household economies while remaining undervalued or unrecognized. The lived experiences of the participants in Sayan reflect these observations. Their practical skills, tacit knowledge, and continuous presence within the household compound play a critical role in ensuring operational stability and guest satisfaction. These findings reinforce existing arguments that women are essential contributors to the resilience and sustainability of rural tourism enterprises.

Moreover, the results shed light on the broader gendered dynamics that shape tourism labor in homestay environments. The women's capacity to manage multiple tasks simultaneously demonstrates a high level of adaptability and resilience, qualities identified by Saarinen & Rogerson (2021) as significant to women's entrepreneurship in developing regions. Their work also reflects elements of emotional labor, as described by Hochschild's foundational theory, where women engage in warmth, empathy, and interpersonal care to enhance guest experiences. Although not always formally recognized, this emotional labor plays a substantial role in shaping the authenticity and hospitable character of homestays in Sayan Village.

The discussion further suggests the importance of acknowledging and valuing women's contributions within tourism development frameworks and local governance structures. Capacity-building programs that enhance digital literacy, basic financial management, guest service skills, and sustainable homestay operations could support women's roles and increase the competitiveness of community-based accommodations. Similar recommendations have been emphasized in studies on rural tourism development across Indonesia (Junaid et al., 2022; Hilman & Aziz, 2020). Understanding the realities of women's daily work is therefore essential for designing tourism policies and community-based initiatives that genuinely reflect the needs, strengths, and contributions of women homestay owners.

Overall, the findings underscore that the success and sustainability of homestays in Sayan Village are closely intertwined with the everyday labor of women. Their work not only shapes guest experiences but also reinforces the cultural identity and familial values that define Balinese community-based accommodation. Recognizing and supporting this labor at both policy and community levels is crucial for ensuring the long-term resilience of homestay enterprises in rural Bali.

CONCLUSION

This study advances current understanding of women's labor in small-scale tourism by offering one of the few empirical accounts that examine the micro-level, everyday work practices of female homestay owners in Bali. By documenting how domestic responsibilities and tourism-related tasks are integrated within a single household setting, the study provides nuanced insight into a dimension of homestay operations that has received limited scholarly

attention.

This study examined the everyday work practices of eight women who manage family-based homestays in Sayan Village, Ubud, Bali. The findings reinforce the body of literature that identifies women as central actors in rural tourism economies, particularly in contexts where family enterprises and household activities are closely intertwined (Mahadevan et al., 2017; Saarinen & Rogerson, 2021). The participants' continuous involvement in housekeeping, guest relations, meal preparation, booking coordination, and basic financial management illustrates a complex set of responsibilities that merge domestic and tourism-related work within the same temporal and spatial environment. This pattern aligns with Chant & Sweetman's (2012) conceptualization of gendered labor, where productive and reproductive roles overlap in ways that often remain undervalued yet essential to household survival.

The study provides important insight into the nature of homestay labor in rural Bali by documenting how women's practical knowledge, emotional engagement, and everyday routines sustain the personalized and culturally grounded service that distinguishes family-based accommodations. These insights contribute to the broader scholarship on women's work in tourism, supporting earlier observations by Cruz (2018) and Baum (2015) that women's labor, although often invisible, forms the backbone of small-scale tourism enterprises. By shedding light on the micro-level realities of homestay operations, this research enriches the understanding of how rural tourism is shaped not only by community structures and visitor demand but also by the continuous, often unrecognized contributions of women within the household compound.

From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the need for tourism development initiatives that explicitly recognize and support women's central role in homestay operations. Capacity-building programs that enhance digital literacy, service quality, guest communication, and financial management could support women's roles and increase the competitiveness of community-based accommodations. Similar recommendations have been emphasized in studies on rural tourism development across Indonesia (Junaid et al., 2022; Hilman & Aziz, 2020). Understanding the realities of women's daily work is therefore essential for designing tourism policies and community-based initiatives that genuinely reflect the needs, strengths, and contributions of women homestay owners.

However, this study also acknowledges several limitations. The research was conducted in a single village and involved a small sample of eight participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or cultural contexts. Furthermore, the focus on daily operational tasks does not fully capture broader structural issues such as access to economic capital, negotiation of gendered decision-making within the household, or the influence of tourism governance at village or district levels. Addressing these themes would require a more extensive analytical framework.

Future research could therefore benefit from comparative studies across multiple villages or regions in Bali to examine how women's roles in homestay management vary across different cultural, spatial, or socio-economic settings. Additional studies involving husbands, children, or extended family members could also provide a more holistic perspective on household labor distribution. Exploring themes such as women's empowerment, digital technology adoption, and community participation may offer deeper insights into the evolving

dynamics of rural tourism. Such avenues of inquiry would strengthen the understanding of women's contributions to the long-term sustainability of family-based accommodations and the broader development of rural tourism in Bali.

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