Financial Behaviour and Financial Well-being of Tourism Workers in Sauraha, Nepal: A Comparative Study of Spending Patterns between Cash and Bank-based Salary Payments

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
Correspondence bishnupaudel144@gmail.com ***Cite*** Sharma, B. (2025). Financial behaviour and financial well-being of tourism workers in Sauraha, Nepal: A comparative study of spending patterns between cash and bank-based salary payments. *BIC Journal of Management, 2*(1), 196-208. ***Copyright:*** 	This study evaluates the impact of salary payment methods—cash versus bank transfers—on the financial behaviour and financial well-being of tourism workers in Sauraha, Nepal. Financial well-being in this context refers to the ability of individuals to manage savings, control expenditures, and access formal financial services that contribute to economic resilience. Using a mixed-method approach, the research draws on survey data from 365 tourism workers and integrates statistical analysis with qualitative interviews to understand how different payment modes affect saving habits, financial inclusion, and spending discipline. Quantitative findings reveal that 94.2% of bank-paid workers reported regular savings, compared to only 69.8% among those paid in cash. A Chi-square test confirmed a statistically significant association between payment mode and saving behaviour ($\chi^2 = 31.981$, $p < .001$), supported by Fisher's Exact Test. Qualitative narratives further illustrated how digital payments promote financial control, reduce impulsive spending, and foster investment behaviours among previously unbanked workers. Conversely, barriers such as digital illiteracy and mistrust hinder adoption, particularly among field workers like elephant riders. These findings imply that transitioning to bank-based wage systems could enhance financial stability and should be supported by tourism policymakers, local government, and financial regulators through targeted digital financial literacy programs and accessible banking tools. *Keywords:* tourism workers, financial behaviour, digital payments, salary methods, saving habits, Nepalese economy

Introduction

Nepal has long been regarded as a unique travel destination due to its diverse landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and vibrant traditions. The tourism industry plays a vital role in the national economy, contributing goods and services such as Thangka paintings, Pashmina, Khukuri knives, crafts, jewelry, and traditional arts, all of which support GDP growth. Although Nepal's modern tourism sector formally

began in 1951 following the fall of autocratic rule and the opening of borders, its growth accelerated with diplomatic outreach and membership in international tourism organizations, such as the International Travel Association (ITA) in 1951. The establishment of the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) in 1998 as a public-private partnership has further enhanced Nepal's profile as a global tourist destination (Bisht & Sinha., 2015).

Financial well-being is a key determinant of life satisfaction and economic resilience, especially for workers in the tourism sector who are often exposed to income fluctuations due to seasonality and informal employment. The method of salary payment—cash versus bank transfer—can significantly influence financial outcomes. While cash offers immediate liquidity and is common in informal economies, it is associated with lower savings and weaker financial planning. In contrast, digital or bank-based wage payments enhance access to formal financial services and promote structured saving behavior (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2018). Behavioral economics suggests that the form in which money is received affects financial decision-making. Cash, being tangible, tends to be spent more readily due to the heightened psychological "pain of paying" (Soman, 2011). Digital transactions, being less visible and more abstract, often help reduce impulsive spending and encourage delayed gratification (Runnemark et al., 2015). However, these theories have largely been tested in developed financial systems, and their relevance to cash-based economies such as Nepal remains under-researched.

Tourism workers—such as hotel staff, tour guides, and transport operators—often experience job insecurity and unpredictable income. For these workers, receiving wages in cash may present immediate benefits but limit long-term financial security, exposing them to risks such as theft, loss, and lack of access to credit. Bank-based salary disbursements, on the other hand, can support automated savings, credit access, and increased financial control (World Bank, 2021). Despite these advantages, barriers such as digital illiteracy, lack of trust in banks, and limited digital infrastructure continue to deter the adoption of bank transfers, particularly among rural and field-based workers. Tourism is a major driver of employment and economic development in developing countries like Nepal, contributing significantly to national income and job creation (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2023). There are limited studies of financial behavior and financial well-being of tourism workers especially in relation to bank vs cash-based salary payment mode. In many developing countries, there is a dominance of cash-based salary payment due to the informal employment practices, lack of banking access, and preference of the employer. Cash based salary payment is directly related to spending and also reduces saving behavior (Suri & Jack, 2016). Where, bank-based salary payment is directly associated with the financial discipline, higher saving growth and access to financial services (Cole et al., 2017).

Nepal's tourism sector includes workers from the different cultural background, especially from village and semi-urban area. Most of these workers are illiterate and often lack financial knowledge, which combined with the form of salary payment, which may significantly impact on their saving, spending and borrowing behavior (Shrestha & Shakya, 2019.). Evaluating whether bank-based salary payment promote financial well-being of tourism workers in compared to cash-based salary payment is therefore important for improving payment system, financial inclusion, and improving economics and financial wellbeing of tourism workers.

Objective

The main objective of undertaking this study is to evaluate the impact of different methods of salary payment on spending behavior, saving habits, access of financial tools and services, and overall financial well-being of tourism workers. By evaluating these objectives, we can provide valuable information policymakers, employers and even employees in the tourism sector to improve or increase the financial inclusion and financial well-being of workers.

Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by the principles of Behavioral Economics and Financial Inclusion theories. These frameworks suggest that the method of payment (cash versus bank transfer) influences individuals' financial behaviors, such as saving, spending, and investing.

The variables of the study are defined as follows:

- Independent Variable: Mode of Salary Payment (Cash Payment / Bank Transfer)

- Dependent Variable: Financial Behaviour and Well-being (Saving habits, spending discipline, access to financial services)

The conceptual framework assumes that bank-based salary payments positively influence financial behavior and overall well-being by encouraging structured financial practices and providing access to formal financial systems.

Literature Review

Different studies from south Asia found that useful information about how different mode of salary payment affects the financial behavior of workers in comparable context. Kumar and Sinha (2019) studied the Indian hospitality industry and found that workers who received their salaries through bank accounts were more likely to engage in saving and financial planning compared to those who received their salaries in cash. This study suggests that salary payment from bank is not only secure but also promotes the financial planning among workers. In rural Nepal, Cole et al. (2017) conducted a field experiment where payment of salary of workers were shifted from cash to bank payments. This study found that there is significant increase in the use of formal channel for salary payment which reduced the unnecessary increase in expenses. This experiment concluded that the simple change in the defaulting payments methods into formal channel can significantly impact on long term financial outcomes for low-income earners. Timilsina (2021) found the perception about the digital and bank-based payments in Kathmandu valley due to the ease of use, trust, and familiarity with mobile banking and technology were the main reasons behind the digital adoption. These finding support theory of behavioral finance which suggest digital payments increase the psychological gap between the people and their earning, therefore reduce the unnecessary expenses.

Khadka and Thapa (2024) found that impact of financial literacy on agricultural workers did not examine the direct relationship between the methods of salary payment and digital financial inclusion. However, Paudel et al. (2023) shows that the main reason behind the adoption of digital payments is directly influenced by the various factors such as transaction security, privacy, and system performance. Additionally, these factors are highly relevant while promoting bank-based salary payment system for informal workers. Ghimire et al. (2023) experimented the field study in Lamjung Nepal among migrant households about the financial knowledge and the experiment revealed that for better financial planning the financial awareness and literacy is most important. Their findings show that without financial literacy and the availability of financial intuitions and the trust in the system the behavior of change of the workers may be limited even if there is many digital payment option are available.

Financial Literacy and Its Impact on Financial Behaviour

The meaning of financial literacy is knowing about the financial concepts such as financial planning, saving, investing and management of debt, which plays an important role in development of financial behavior and long-term financial well-being. Several studies have shown the three is direct relationship between financial planning and financial literacy. The study conducted by Khadka and Thapa (2024) financial literacy had significantly positive impact on saving, spending, and borrowing behavior. Their study among sugarcane farmers also found that there is general deficiency in financial knowledge, indicating the need for targeted educational interventions. Similarly, Chaulagain (2018) studied small borrowers and found that knowledge about finance has a positive relationship with responsible financial behavior he emphasized the importance of relevant knowledge to improve overall financial well-being of the individuals. Subedi (2023) also found the role of financial literacy in investment decisions and stock market participation. His study focuses on how financial literacy became a barrier for investment decisions and called for widespread financial education to empower individuals in making investment decisions.

Outside of Nepal, Thomas et al. (2024) examined financial inclusion among Indonesian students and found that financial literacy, social capital, and financial technology each had a statistically significant positive effect. The researchers stressed the importance of integrated educational programs to close the gap between financial knowledge and financial inclusion.

Payment Methods in Nepal: Cash versus Digital Transactions

Despite global trends toward banking channel, cash remains the dominant mode of salary payment in Nepal. This preference is driven by limited access to finance, low financial literacy, and doubt about online payment systems. The continued belief on cash transactions presents challenges for financial inclusion, savings behavior, and transparent income tracking. Nevertheless, digital adoption is increasing day by day, especially among younger populations. Paudel et al. (2023) found that among youths in Pokhara Metropolitan City, factors such as transaction security, system performance, and privacy concerns significantly influenced the intention to adopt digital payments. Addressing these concerns could increase the adoption of digital payment by the maximum population. Recent advancements in digital payment as the introduction of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in Nepal are intended to facilitate person-to-person and person-to-merchant digital transactions, including cross-border remittances with India. These developments are expected to develop digital financial infrastructure and drive broader adoption of secure, low-cost digital payment methods by maximum people as possible.

Financial Behaviour of Tourism Workers in Nepal

Tourism workers in Nepal including tourist guides, porters, and hospitality staff frequently face income instability due to the seasonal and informal nature of their work. The mode of salary payment plays an important role in shaping their financial habits. Those who receive bank-based salary payments are more likely to use formal financial services, save regularly, and exhibit more prudent financial behavior in compared to cash paid workers may spend immediately due to the lack of structured financial tools. Ghimire et al. (2023) conducted the field work in Lamjung Nepal among the migrant worker families to study the financial literacy and according to them in their study it was revealed that financial awareness and literacy are most important to shape the financial behavior. From all these findings, it can be assumed that occupation specific financial literacy program for tourism workers would contribute to their financial well-being.

Adoption of Digital Payment Systems

The willingness to adopt digital payment systems in Nepal depends on trust, security, and perceived ease of use. Dhami et al. (2024) found that attitudes and perceived behavioral control strongly influence user intentions to adopt digital currency in Kathmandu Valley. For tourism workers especially those with who have limited education or rural backgrounds, built trust and simplifying digital tools will be essential for increase adoption. Timilsina (2021) further confirmed that perceived usefulness, trust, and ease of use were key factors of electronic payment adoption. These results suggest that increasing user confidence through improved digital literacy and system security can increase wider acceptance.

Financial Literacy Initiatives and Their Effectiveness

Recognizing the critical role of financial education, various organizations in Nepal have launched financial literacy programs targeting students, entrepreneurs, salaried employees, and marginalized groups. These programs aim to build essential financial skills and promote economic inclusion. Khadka and Thapa (2024) showed that targeted financial education improved saving, borrowing, and budgeting behaviors among agricultural workers. Similar programs designed specifically for tourism workers could yield comparable benefits by fostering informed financial decisions and long-term well-being.

Research Methods

This study primarily adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing descriptive and explanatory methods. Workers from the Sauraha region—recognized as a popular tourist destination and a significant part of Nepal's tourism sector—were taken as the sample. Approximately 7,000 individuals are actively involved in tourism-related occupations, including roles in hotels, restaurants, and bars, as well as positions such as elephant riders and tourist guides. This estimate is based on informal records from the Sauraha Tourism Development Committee and local hotel and restaurant workers' associations, which collectively track employment in the tourism sector. Multiple methods of data collection were employed, including surveys, in-depth interviews, informal discussions, and focus group interviews. The sample size for this research is 365 workers from different working backgrounds where 96 respondents are female and 269 are male. A purposive sampling method was adopted to ensure representation across major tourism occupations such as hotel workers, safari operators, tour guides, and elephant riders.

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout; respondents were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation, and verbal consent was obtained. Data anonymity and confidentiality were ensured during collection and reporting.

Ethical Considerations

All participants provided informed consent before taking part in the study. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing responses and avoiding any collection of personally identifiable information.

The sample size was determined using the following formula:

To determine an appropriate sample size for a population of 7,000 individuals with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, we can use the following formula:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 * p * (1-p)}{e^2} * \frac{N}{N-1+\frac{Z^2*p*(1-p)}{e^2}}$$

Where:

n = required sample size

N = population size (7,000 in this case)

Z = Z-score corresponding to the desired confidence level (1.96 for 95%)

p = estimated population proportion (0.5 if unknown)

e = desired margin of error (expressed as a decimal, e.g., 0.05 for ±5%)

Plugging in the values:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 * 0.5 * (1-0.5)}{(0.05)^2} * \frac{7000}{7000-1+\frac{1.96^2*0.5*(1-0.5)}{(0.05)^2}}$$

$$n = 364.22 \approx 365$$

Therefore, a sample size of approximately **365 individuals** is required to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error for a population of 7,000.

Table 1

Number of Participants Per Occupation Count

		Occupation				Total
		Elephant Riders	Jeep Safari	Tourist Guide	Hotels	Restaurant and Bar	
Gender	Male	17	20	13	83	136	269
	Female	0	0	10	42	44	96
Total		17	20	23	125	180	365

Respondent Demographic Profile

The demographic characteristics of the 365 respondents are summarized below:

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency
Age	Below 25	88
	26-35	142
	36-45	91
	Above 45	44
Educational Qualification	No Formal Education	25
	Primary Education	106
	Secondary Education	147
	Higher Education	87
Years of Experience	Less than 2 years	72
	2–5 years	154
	More than 5 years	139
Monthly Income (NPR)	Below 15,000	102
	15,001–25,000	173
	Above 25,000	90

Statistical Analysis

To examine the relationship between salary payment methods (cash vs. bank transfers) and financial behaviour (such as saving habits, bank account ownership, and financial planning), a Chi-square test of independence was employed. Since both the independent and dependent variables were categorical (typically binary in nature: Yes/No), the Chi-square test was considered appropriate for analyzing associations. During the analysis, it was noted that one cell had an expected count slightly below 5 (4.94). To account for this, and to ensure the accuracy of the results in a 2x2 contingency table, the Fisher's Exact Test was also reported alongside the Chi-square results. This provided a more reliable significance value, particularly given the small, expected frequency in one of the cells. However, this analysis does not control for potential confounding variables such as income level, education, or gender, which may independently influence financial behaviors.

Table 3

	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**
Mode of Payment * Saving Habit	365	100.0%	0	0.0%	365	100.0%

Table 4

Relationship between Mode of Payment and Saving Habits

Saving Habit					
Yes				**No**	**Total**
Mode of Payment	Bank	Count	294	18	312
		%within Mode	94.2%	5.8%	100.0%
	Cash	Count	37	16	53
		%within Mode	69.8%	30.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	331	34	365
		%within Mode	90.7%	9.3%	100.0%

Table 5: *Chi-Square Tests*

	Value	**df**	**Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)**	**Exact Sig. (2-sided)**	**Exact Sig. (1-sided)**
Pearson Chi-Square	31.981[a]	1	.000		
Continuity Correction[b]	29.155	1	.000		

Contd.

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Likelihood Ratio	23.574	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	31.893	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	365				

1. 1 cell (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.94.
2. Computed only for a 2x2 table
3. Test has been done by using SPSS software.

The Chi-square test of independence was employed because both the independent (mode of payment) and dependent (saving behavior) variables were categorical. The Fisher's Exact Test was reported additionally due to small, expected frequencies in some cells, ensuring robust results. Although more advanced models like logistic regression could be used, the Chi-square test provided sufficient inferential power to examine associations for this study's research scope.

Data Validity and Reliability

To ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data collected, a pilot test was conducted with 30 tourism workers in Sauraha prior to the main survey. These participants shared similar characteristics with the target population. The goal of the pilot was to evaluate the clarity, relevance, and reliability of the questionnaire and to make necessary revisions for better comprehension, especially for semi-literate respondents.

Based on feedback from the pilot, several questions were rephrased to improve readability and contextual understanding. The pilot also helped in estimating the average response time and ensuring the usability of the instrument in real-world conditions.

To measure **internal consistency reliability**, Cronbach's alpha was computed for the scaled items related to financial behavior and financial well-being. The resulting alpha value was **0.82**, which indicates high reliability (Field, 2018). This suggests that the items consistently measured the constructs they were intended to capture.

For **content validity**, two academic experts in finance and social research reviewed the questionnaire for its scope and relevance. Their suggestions led to the inclusion of additional questions covering digital literacy and informal saving practices, which were critical for the context of tourism workers in rural and semi-urban Nepal.

Overall, the combination of expert validation, pilot testing, and statistical reliability checks confirms that the research instrument used was both valid and reliable for the study's objectives.

Finding and Discussion

The analysis shows a significant relationship between the method of salary payment and the financial behavior of tourism workers in Nepal. According to Table 2, 94.2% of workers receiving bank payments reported having saving habits, while only 69.8% of cash- paid workers reported the same. The Chi-square test (χ^2 (1, N = 365) = 31.981, $p < .001$) confirmed the statistical significance of this

association. Additionally, Fisher's Exact Test (p = .000) validated the findings despite one cell having an expected count slightly below 5. The data further revealed that female respondents—mostly employed in hotels—were more likely to be paid via bank transfer, suggesting a gender-based divergence in payment modes. Employer preferences, particularly in more formal establishments like hotels and travel agencies, likely play a role in facilitating bank payments. In terms of measurable benefits, approximately 80% of bank-paid workers reported greater control over their finances and savings, compared to only 55% among cash-paid respondents.

These results demonstrate that bank-based salary payments are associated with more disciplined financial behaviors, including regular saving, improved access to financial services, and a greater sense of financial security. This is consistent with existing literature (Suri & Jack, 2016) that shows formal payment systems improve individual financial planning.

The findings also suggest that cash payments correlate with riskier financial behaviors. These include lower saving rates, greater chances of impulse spending, and lack of formal financial engagement. The psychological difference in how individuals perceive money (Soman, 2011) may contribute to this: cash feels immediate and tangible, leading to faster consumption, while digital payments delay spending gratification.

Moreover, occupation and gender data showed that female workers were more likely to be employed in hotels and restaurants, where bank payment systems are more common. This may suggest that gender and job type indirectly affect financial behavior through the mode of salary payment. In addition to the statistical results, qualitative data collected through interviews and informal conversations added depth to the understanding of how salary payment methods impact financial behavior. These narratives provide rich, contextual insight into the lived experiences of tourism workers and reflect the broader patterns observed in the quantitative analysis. Consistent with the findings of Suri and Jack (2016), and Soman (2011), the interviews suggest that the transition from cash to bank payments is not only a shift in transaction method but a transformation in financial discipline, saving behavior, and psychological control over spending.

Literacy and Digital Fear among Workers

Despite having bank accounts, some respondents—particularly field workers such as elephant riders—preferred cash payments due to digital illiteracy and trust issues. One elephant rider expressed:

"………………..I have a bank account, but I prefer to get my wage and salary in cash

because I am not literate. I can't read the letters on my mobile, and I don't use

banksmart or any digital banking channel. I fear fraud—someone might say they paid

Rs. 500 when they only paid Rs. 100. Since I cannot verify, I feel safer with c*ash."*

This statement reflects the findings of Dhami, Thakur, and Tamang (2024), who emphasized that trust and perceived control significantly influence the adoption of digital payments. While digital systems offer transparency, users unfamiliar with mobile technology or unable to read notifications are hesitant to rely on banking channels. This highlights the urgent need for financial and digital literacy programs, especially targeted at semi-literate and rural tourism workers.

Digital Payments and Spending Control

Conversely, a respondent with basic numerical literacy reported gaining control over his spending habits through the use of mobile-based transactions:

……………………I can't read full messages, but I can read numbers. Earlier, people would pay less and make excuses about not having change. Now, I ask them to scan my QR code and pay directly to my bank. My kids don't see physical cash at home anymore, so they don't beg me for money. With digital payments, I also spend less. When I had Rs. 1,000 in cash, I'd spend it without realizing where it went. Now, if the bill is Rs. 587, I pay exactly Rs. 587. No more being told, 'take candy instead of Rs. 13 change.' Hahaha!"

This story reinforces the behavioral economics theory proposed by Soman (2011), which suggests that digital payments reduce impulsive spending by increasing the psychological distance between the

buyer and the money. The lack of physical currency helped the respondent maintain spending discipline, enhance savings, and manage family- related financial pressure more effectively.

From Zero Savings to Investment: A Transformation

Another worker shared a compelling account of how receiving a salary via bank transfer dramatically transformed his financial habits—from zero savings to regular investments:

> I used to get Rs. 18,810 in cash and spent it all. Saving was just a word.

> Then I started getting my salary through the bank. I now withdraw only Rs. 18,000, and the remaining Rs. 810 stays in my account. After a year, I had saved Rs. 9,900. Then I learned about DEMAT accounts and started applying for IPOs. I got three IPOs, invested Rs. 3,000, and now they're worth Rs. 13,000. I even received a Rs. 97 dividends. I told my colleagues, and now they've started doing it too. These days, I withdraw only what I need, and the rest remains in my account. You know what? I've started investing regularly now."

This narrative represents a real-world example of behavior akin to a Systematic Investment Plan (SIP)—a structured, disciplined approach to saving and investing. The respondent's journey showcases how formal banking access enables accumulation of wealth, not just through saving but also through participation in the financial market. It aligns with World Bank (2021) findings that digital wage systems contribute to long- term financial security and economic mobility, especially when paired with access to financial education and tools like IPOs or SIPs.

These narratives highlight that the mode of salary payment deeply influences financial behavior, not only in terms of saving habits but also in spending control, digital engagement, and investment practices. Workers with access to bank-based payment systems reported:

- Increased control over money
- Reduced impulsive spending
- Greater savings accumulation
- Entry into capital markets via IPOs

However, digital and financial illiteracy remain key barriers for full adoption, particularly among older or less educated workers. This study found that adoption of bank-based salary payments can be improved by providing financial training, and financial awareness programs to ensure inclusiveness.

Conclusion

This study investigates the impact if different modes of salary payment mainly, cash vs bank deposit on the financial behavior and financial well-being of tourism worker in Sauraha Nepal. By analyzing both quantitative data and qualitative response from participants, the finding of this study reveal that the methods of salary payment have significant impact on workers' saving and spending behavior, access to financial services, and long-term financial planning. The data clearly indicated that workers who receive their salaries through bank transfers are more likely to save regularly, avoid unnecessary expenditures, and engage in planned financial activities such as IPO investments. Where, those paid in cash reported higher chance of unnecessary spending and difficulty in record expenses. To adopt the bank-based salary payment effectively, stakeholders such as the Nepal Tourism Board, local governments, and employers must coordinate with telecom, financial institutions and fintech companies to simplify mobile banking tools, as well as must conduct different financial literacy program. Gender specific outreach may also be beneficial, given occupational disparities in payment methods.

Stories from participants further supported these findings, with some participants shared about how digital salary payments helped them build saving habit and even led them to provide the opportunities in investment. One of the participants, tell us that he started saving Rs. 810 per month automatically due to bank payments, within a year, had not only accumulated savings but also invested in IPOs and received dividends. This kind of change shows the positive impact of structured, formal payment systems on individual financial behavior. However, the study also found that challenges such as digital illiteracy, mistrust in digital systems, and limited mobile banking knowledge especially among field workers like elephant riders continue to be a barrier of the full adoption of bank-based payment methods.

Overall, the research concludes that while cash payments may provide short term convenience, bank-based salary transfers are more effective in promoting financial discipline, enabling savings, and contributing to the long-term well-being of tourism workers. To improve this transition, different stakeholder such as tourism board, employers and bank must put some efforts to increase financial literacy, ease use of banking tools and services, and must ensure equitable access to banking channel across the tourism sectors

Limitations of the Study

While this study founds meaningful insights into the relationship between different mode of salary payment and the financial behaviour of tourism workers in Nepal, there are several limitations which must be acknowledge. First, the research was geographically limited to the Sauraha region, which may not fully represent the diversity of tourism workers across Nepal. Different tourism hubs may have varying levels of digital infrastructure, banking access, and financial literacy, which could influence the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, regional disparities in digital infrastructure—especially in remote tourism hubs—could affect adoption rates and financial behavior, but were not explicitly analyzed. Self-reporting may also inflate perceived savings behavior, particularly among bank-paid workers.

Second, the study primarily relied on self-reported data, which can be subject to social desirability bias and inaccurate recall—particularly in responses about saving, spending, and investment habits. Participants may have over-reported positive behaviours, such as saving or using mobile banking, to align with perceived expectations.

Third, the qualitative responses, while rich in narrative depth, were collected through informal discussions and interviews, which may lack the structured consistency of formal ethnographic or longitudinal studies. The study also did not control for income level variations, family size, or educational background, all of which could impact financial decision-making.

Finally, due to time and resource constraints, the study did not incorporate employers' perspectives or analyze systemic challenges faced by organizations in adopting digital salary systems, which could be crucial for holistic policy development.

Scope for Future Study

Future research could expand upon this study by exploring the topic in a broader national context, including multiple tourism hubs such as Pokhara, Lumbini, and Kathmandu to compare regional differences in digital wage adoption. A longitudinal study design could also be adopted to track changes in financial behaviour over time, particularly after the transition from cash to bank payments. Advanced statistical methods such as multivariate regression could be employed to control for demographic confounders. Additionally, collecting employer perspectives could uncover institutional barriers to digital salary implementation. Future interventions might also involve fintech startups, digital wallet providers, or cooperatives acting as intermediaries for wage distribution.

Another promising direction would be to explore the employer side of digital payment adoption, understanding operational barriers, attitudes toward digital systems, and the cost-benefit perception of moving away from cash payments. Additionally, a study focusing on gender-specific impacts of digital salary systems could yield valuable insights, especially since women in the tourism sector may face unique challenges in accessing financial tools due to socio-cultural constraints.

Future studies might also explore the role of microfinance institutions, cooperatives, and fintech platforms in promoting saving and investment behaviour among tourism workers. Furthermore, the introduction of structured financial products like Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs) or mobile-based micro-savings could be analyzed for their impact on long- term wealth accumulation and financial security among informal workers.

Lastly, integrating financial literacy interventions as part of the study and evaluating their effectiveness before and after digital wage system adoption would provide a more action- oriented approach to bridging the gap between access and meaningful usage of banking systems.

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