

ROLE OF HOMESTAY IN REVIVING TOURISM IN SHIMLA

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ABSTRACT

Background: At seasonal tourist destinations like Shimla, rooms may remain vacant and unoccupied during lean periods. To add on, pandemic has already shut many small lodging facilities. **Objective:** The aim of this study is to improve our understanding of how homestay activities can contribute to revitalize sustainable tourism trends in Shimla, the study assumes particular importance in a period of economic crisis characterized by post covid trauma. **Methodology:** A survey was conducted in Shimla after first wave of corona virus from September 20 to December 20 as soon as the travel restrictions were uplifted. The travel and accommodation preferences of tourists were observed and found to be shifting towards less frequently visited places avoiding mass tourism. To highlight the role of homestays in reviving these tourism trends, three objectives were identified. Two separate questionnaires were developed to get the quantitative and qualitative data for this research. The data was tabulated and evaluated using SPSS tool. **Results:** The findings presented the analysed profile of the potential homestay operators as well as visitors seeking homestay tourism. It also reports the motivations, expectation and experience of the tourists regarding various aspects of homestay. **Conclusion:** Homestays can act as potential vital tool in reviving tourism.

Key Words: Homestay, Covid, Sustainable Tourism, Coronavirus.

INTRODUCTION

A lot of literature has been written on tourism ever since the novel corona virus has hit this world. With the constant change in nature of virus, people are constantly evolving to live in this new world with the virus. The governments of nations keep on updating the covid policies for tourism sector and the travelers are getting accustomed to new regulations and restrictions.

In the past two years, travel and tourism have been adversely affected. Talking about Himachal Pradesh, the tourism sector witnessed an unprecedented fall of 81.4 % in tourist arrivals during 2020 as compared to the previous year. As per an estimate Tourism and allied industries have suffered a loss of 2500 crore (app).

Himachal Pradesh is a state graced with natural beauty, ranging from high altitude cold desserts to dense deodar

jungles, snow covered Himalayas to frozen lakes and flowing rivers. There is no dearth of natural beauty and to compliment this, the natives are simple and hospitable people.

The new tourism policy of the State government has a vision to diversify tourism to regions which are unexplored and have enough potential for tourism. Efforts are being made to promote sustainable rural tourism by diverting tourists to countryside and decongest the over-saturated tourist destinations in urban areas. In addition to the 'Home Stay Scheme' (2008), the Government of Himachal Pradesh has launched another scheme called 'Har Gaon Ki Kahani' (the story of every village. Under 'Har Gaon Ki Kahani', fascinating tales, folklore and anecdotes related to the remote villages in Himachal Pradesh are set to attract and engage the tourists.

In the year 2013, the state had come up with the sustainable

tourism development policy to use sustainable tourism as a means to provide better employment and greater business opportunities for residents, to contribute to the protection of state's unique natural and cultural heritage and to ensure the long-term prosperity and good quality of life to future generations of Himachal Pradesh. (The Himachal Pradesh Tourism Policy, 2019). Role of homestays to achieve this objective has been highlighted in the policy accompanied with agrotourism.

Home stay accommodation is defined as private homes in which unused rooms are rented for the purpose of supplementing income and meeting people (Lanier & Berman, 1993). Unlike commercial hotels and resorts, home stay accommodation helps travellers to experience land, people, culture and cuisine of any place in its real aspect. A variety of houses with a pleasant and comfortable stay are used as home-stay like heritage homes, farm houses, bungalows etc. usually near places of tourist attractions.

While tourism is uniquely suited to provide income generating activities for economically disadvantaged populations (Ashley et al., 2000) homestay programs specifically have been shown to contribute to community development (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013; Ibrahim & Razzaq, 2010). Reported benefits of homestay programs include stronger social networks (Ibrahim & Razzaq, 2010) empowerment of women (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013; Gu & Wong, 2006) and injection of financial capital into the local economy (Truong, Hall & Garry, 2014; Mapjabil et al., 2015).

Home sharing is a new concept of homestay. It is an arrangement in which a guest stays at a privately owned home for free or a fee usually arranged by means of a website or app. Although homestays are arranged through government or third-party intermediary, home shares are arranged through web-based platforms. The perspective of this study is to explore tourism opportunities in rural areas through homestays.

Homestay regulations may be initiated by governments, non-government organizations, private firms or a joint effort of different operators. For example, in Peru these programs are run & funded by government, NGOs and private operators. In Thailand, government has been operating homestay programs for more than 16 years (Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2015). The Malaysian government operates one of the most elaborate national home stay programs. In China & Nepal also, the central governments look after the management of homestays. These regulations and control by the governments

has proved as contributing element to economic, social and environmental well – being of host communities. The stipulations vary from standard of accommodations to tariff control. These may extend up to the health backgrounds of the operators which is particularly relevant in prevailing pandemic conditions. For instance, Malaysian government stipulates that homestay hosts cannot be ill in any way (Mapjabil et al., 2015).

A village can be a tourist attraction by itself and most of the villagers are hospitable. Many homestay hosts are farmers which may open up additional opportunities year-round for agrotourism (McIntosh et al., 2011). The new agriculture practices are mechanized and need less manual labour; thus, is leading to an exodus of young people to towns and cities. Homestay tourism provides self-employment and an alternative source of income for rural dwellers.

A homestay in rural location guarantees an agrarian lifestyle. In addition to agriculture, other income generating activities engaged in by host households include fishing, aquaculture, micro-commerce, and professional trades (Tao & Wall, 2009).

Homestay benefits women folk of the community like no other means. The commercialization of home provides employment to the women and unskilled family members as well. As per Gu and Wong (2006), 71% of homestay operators in Yangia Beach China are women. Another example is from Barpak, Nepal where all the hosts are females. In societies where women oversee house hold operations, providing hospitality to visitors overlaps significantly with normal everyday responsibilities. Also, the feminized nature of tourism service jobs allows women who would not otherwise earn income, are able to gain economic and social independence (Chant, 1997; Duffy et al., 2015; Duffy et al., 2015).

A homestay is sometimes referred to as Bed & Breakfast (B&B) accommodation. There is a subtle difference between the two. Bed & Breakfast accommodations may or may not be Homestay. A Homestay offers personal hospitality, informality, an insight into the culture, traditions, history and everyday life of a family. The guest host interaction is the best example for cross-culture exchange. The foreign tourists as well as many local tourists prefer to stay in the comfort of a homely environment where one is not required to adhere to too many protocols.

In Himachal Pradesh, it a huge honour to have guests at their home, and they go out of their way to please them. There's no

match to their hospitality. There are a number of reasons for choosing a homestay over a hotel:

1. Distinctive Accommodations -- There's no better way to experience the beauty of nature staying amidst it. The options vary from orchard bungalows, heritage homes to remote rural traditional houses.
2. Personalized Service - unlike hotel, a homestay only has a few rooms (restriction of 4 rooms per house). The host family runs it which guarantees that guests receive plenty of individual attention. one can spend as little or as much time with the host family as one likes.
3. Local Knowledge -- The wealth of information that the hosts have about their local area is extremely helpful in getting the most from the visit.
4. Home Cooked Food -- By staying at a homestay, one is able to taste authentic home cooked food, which could be made to order. It's a lot lighter and hygienic. Some homestays even let their guest participate in the cooking process.
5. Unique Activities -- The homestay guests get the priority and choice of likes and preferences. The hosts put a great deal of effort into arranging activities that are of interest to them. These activities will vary from farming activities, herding animals in remote areas, village visits, picnics, and temple tours. Guests are often invited to attend weddings and local fairs as well.

Homestay programs give access to rural tourism where large scale tourism development is undesirable. Homestays can benefit both individual home-stay owners and local rural communities on the whole.

The place-based communities have become more interested to the concept of sustainability, which integrates environmental, economic, political, cultural and social considerations (Hall & Richards, 2000). Sustainability is essential for tourism. Tourism industry has both negative and positive impacts on environment, culture and society. Sustainable tourism encourages practices which are more energy efficient, consume less water, minimize waste, conserve biodiversity, promote cultural heritage and generate employment and income for the local economy.

The major challenges are need to preserve the environment and

natural resources, the need for education, occupation training, handicraft promotion, proper understanding for both tourists and local people at all levels to participate in sustainable tourism practices. In a simplistic way Keeble (2007) Brundtland Report 1987 defined sustainable development is meeting of presents needs without compromising the needs for future. sustainable destination leads to healthy future that focuses upon the environment protection and the restoration of natural stocks.

The home stays are not just a regular holiday which to spend a few days to exploring the local area, they are a holiday destination in themselves. Acharya and Halpenny (2013) stated, the essence of homestay lies in connects with nature and its aboriginal community inclusiveness to offer access on their unadulterated lifestyle and culture. All these attributes and experiences can be well packaged under Homestay offerings. Similarly, Rural Homestay primarily offers the proximity to natural and access to local cultural attractions (Gu & Wong, 2006; MacDonald & Jolliffe, 2003).

The research aims to evaluate how homestay concept can positively impact tourism in Shimla, with specific focus on sustainable growth; post pandemic. The study is confined to homestay functioning in Shimla.

The objectives of the study were:

- To understand the potential of homestays in promoting sustainable tourism in rural Shimla.
- To study the impact of homestay tourism in reviving tourism sector in Shimla post pandemic
- To understand various impacts (both positive and negative) of homestay in sustainable rural tourism development and suggest measures to promote homestay as a tool to promote sustainable rural tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

METHODOLOGY

The study deploys methodology aimed to highlight the homestay phenomena in the selected region & to evaluate how it can revive the sustainable development of tourism post covid.

Research Design: Majority of the tourism studies adopt quantitative research methods as survey and questionnaires are frequently used tools to gather primary data. However, as per the need of present study, qualitative methods have also been utilised to collect data for specific questions. Although

the concept of homestay has been researched and modified globally, it is fairly a new and unexplored phenomenon in the selected research area. Thus, a descriptive research design with qualitative and quantitative methods was adhered to.

Locale: Shimla region of Himachal Pradesh.

Sampling Design: This paper presents the findings of two surveys carried out in Shimla region of Himachal Pradesh during 2020. As per Agriculture census, more than 90% of state population resides in villages and 62% of total workers get direct employment from agriculture. Since tourism is being diversified to the interiors of the state, it is logical to understand the potential of the place in terms of

- Need of tourism development at these places and
- Availability of resources. No large-scale commercial activities can be induced at such sites, therefore available local resources need to be utilized.

There are 335 registered homestays in Shimla with the department of tourism, Himachal Pradesh. To assess the impact of homestay tourism, total no. of visitors was calculated for the year 2020. Since lockdown was imposed from last week of March 2020 till mid-September 2020, figures reveal tourist inflow for 6 months only.

To accomplish the first objective i.e. To understand the potential of homestays in promoting sustainable tourism in rural Shimla, population information of Shimla along with rural population was identified. The data was taken from the census records and target population (rural) was identified. A sample size of 384 potential operators was calculated at 95% confidence level and random sampling method was adopted.

As per tourist statistics (Department of Tourism, Himachal Pradesh), total 620313 number of tourists visited Shimla, and no separate records are maintained as to how many people stayed at homestays. Therefore, using convenience sampling – sample size of 384 visitors is calculated at 95% confidence level for the second survey. The sample respondents/ visitors have been approached over 180 homestays. The study has been done to find out why tourists chose to stay at homestay accommodations and what their experience has been.

Tools and Technique: Two separate questionnaires were prepared for conducting the surveys as per the objectives. Detailed attention was given on the wording and format of the question so as to make them easy to understand, clear and

unambiguous. The construct of these questions is based on

- ✓ Previous studies
- ✓ Present scenario & demand
- ✓ Inputs from various department heads, government officials, entrepreneurs
- ✓ The questions and their scale included in both the questionnaires were derived from various relevant literature.

Both the questionnaires included the questions aimed at generating the demographic data and in first survey, the profile of respondent is assessed through their economic dependence on their farm incomes.

For second survey, questionnaire was designed after doing a thorough literature search on visitor satisfaction in tourism studies, a set of attributes regarding visitor satisfaction was initially selected. The questionnaire included demographic and tripographic questions, followed by the questions to assess visitor motivations. The other part of this questionnaire had questions with Five-Point Likert Scale regarding their expectations and experiences of homestay.

Content validity of the questionnaires has been assessed by panel of experts followed by pilot test.

In this descriptive study, the collected primary data collected from first questionnaire mainly contains the demographic profile of the rural residents of region who could be the potential homestay operators. In the demographic section, the income category question was accompanied by the 'level of dependency on the farm income'. To enhance the potential of the destination, local sightseeing and places of interest can play a vital role. This study being focused in the rural areas- natural attractions, pilgrimage centers and local places of significance have been identified using information from the locals themselves.

From the perspective of second survey, analysis of demographic variables is common in most of the visitor satisfaction studies. It helps operator to understand the needs of the market and serve them accordingly. Tripographic data is required to identify and analyse the details of tourist behaviour and significant pattern.

The preferred ranking given by the respondents to different motivations for undertaking homestay tourism was assessed using weighted Mean Ranking method. This list of probable

motivations was listed based on researcher's observation and previous studies.

Understanding visitor satisfaction and future behaviour is very important. It has strong bearing on tourism development and expansion in the state. Therefore, analysing these facts using Expectancy disconfirmation theory (EDT) is both theoretical and practical solution.

The EDT holds that consumer first form expectations of products or service performance prior to purchase or use. Subsequently, purchase and use convey to the consumer beliefs about the actual or perceived performance of the product(s) or service(s). The consumer then compares the perceived performance to prior expectations. Consumer satisfaction is seen as the outcome of this comparison (Clemons & Woodruff, 1992).

The source of information on tourism products and destination is important from marketing perspective as well.

To understand various impacts (both positive and negative) of homestay in sustainable rural tourism development and to suggest measures to promote homestay as a tool to promote sustainable rural tourism in Himachal Pradesh; secondary data was collected using various policies, publications, articles and research papers on relevant themes. The interpretations are summarized as:

A) Socio-cultural impact: Social and Cultural sustainability relates to the Impact of home stays and sustainable rural Tourism in Himachal Pradesh. It indicates development along with the maintenance of people's culture and value.

Positive Impact:

- Modernization of the society.
- Improved Education system and healthcare in the rural community -with the development in tourism, literacy rate will increase. Locals will be familiar with smart technology and will be independent gradually.
- Higher standard of living of the rural people.
- Cultural exchange through fairs and festivals.
- Reduce migration from rural villages to urban areas. The migration can be controlled when locals get the employment opportunity.
- Development of Market and boards for local agro

products and handicrafts

- Preservation of local culture and values of the region

Negative Socio-Cultural Impact:

- Modernization may adversely affect the traditional and cultural practices, agriculture and other allied activities of rural areas.

B) **Economic Impact:** Sustainability contains economic profitability along with maintenance of the quality in physical, social and environmental resources.

Positive Impact:

- Employment opportunities for the rural people and generate income.
- Generate foreign exchange and revenue for the government.
- Increase in Demand for local products.
- Improved public services i.e., water, electricity and sanitation etc.
- Modernization of agriculture and other rural activities.
- Reduce the dependence on agricultural activities alone.
- Diversify and stabilize the local economy. Economic benefits to the locals through handicrafts, organic food, souvenirs etc.
- Investment in rural areas will increase.

Negative Economic Impact:

- Rural people may be under paid and thus exploited.
- Increase in the price of local agro products can adversely affects their demand.
- Revenues in the forms of taxes and fees do not go to rural communities directly, but return to the state or central government.
- Weak linkage between tourism and local production does not provide desired benefit to handicraft and agro products.
- high cost of living for local residents.

C) **Environment Impact:** ecological sustainability means tourism development with the maintenance of natural resources.

Positive Environment Impact:

- Locals may learn the importance of preservation of natural resources and ecology
- They can learn to use modern tools and technology. Also, how to preserve the natural habitats, biodiversity and historical monuments.
- The rural people can learn to develop the healthy environment with proper sanitation, roads, electricity, telecommunication etc. for better living.

Negative Environment Impact:

- The visitors tend to overexploit natural resources and it has a negative impact on the environment.
- creation of infrastructure, transportation and other facilities can cause environmental degradation.
- Some tourism activities such as trekking and camping causes environmental pollution from unhygienic disposal of human waste, discharge of sewerage into water sources, and littering.
- unprescribed regulations on appropriate land use and number of tourists results in congestion and spoiling of the local environment.

Data Analysis and Statistical Analysis: Paired sample t- test was used to compare the expected value with the perceived value / experienced value for various homestay attributes. These attributes have been identified in light of prevailing covid regulations.

In case of Shimla, during the peak season, environmental degradation indicative of over utilization of resources is evident.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents demographic variables of the prospective host population sample. Adult and young respondents are majority (69%) in number than the elder respondents. Most of the respondents (51%) were graduate. Being educated they have basic hospitality knowledge and are in a position to enhance their skills through training. Most of the families have significant number of family labour available to use in parallel business-like home stay tourism. Large scale farmers are very few (1%). 99% farmers are small and medium scale which re- emphasize the need of subsidiary source of income. 68% respondents are exclusively dependent on their farm incomes. Only 32% people undertook farming as part time activity or hobby. From the data on annual household income,

it is revealed that lower and medium income groups (2.5 – 7.5 lakh per annum) are more dependent on the farm income alone. 88% respondents are keen to undertake homestay as significant source of income.

From the local's perspective, there are many tourist sites suggested which remain unexplored and can further be developed to attract more no. of visitors.

Table 1: Profile of respondents (potential homestay operators)

| Variable | Total respondents=384 | |
|---|-----------------------|----|
| | No. | % |
| Age group (in years) | | |
| 20 – 35 young | 89 | 23 |
| 36 – 50 adults | 176 | 46 |
| 51 – 65 old | 119 | 31 |
| Education level | | |
| Primary | 67 | 17 |
| Graduate | 196 | 51 |
| Post graduate / others | 121 | 32 |
| Family size | | |
| Small (3- 5 members) | 139 | 36 |
| Medium (6 -8 members) | 164 | 43 |
| Large (more than 8 members) | 81 | 21 |
| Scale of farming | | |
| Small <2 acres | 306 | 80 |
| Medium 2 – 10 acres | 74 | 19 |
| Large > 10 acres | 4 | 1 |
| Dependency on farming | | |
| Full | 263 | 68 |
| Part time | 110 | 29 |
| Hobby /Interest | 11 | 3 |
| Annual household income (in Indian Rupees) | | |
| <2.5 lakh | 20 | 5 |
| 2.5 – 5 lakh | 39 | 10 |
| 5 – 7.5 lakh | 135 | 35 |
| 7.5 – 10 lakh | 142 | 37 |
| >10 lakh | 48 | 13 |
| Interest in homestay tourism | 336 | 88 |

Results of the descriptive analysis of important demographic characteristics of visitors are presented in table 4. Of the total respondents, 66% were male and 34% female. 68% tourists

were in the age category of 20-44 years, followed by 23% in 45-54 years age group. Only 9% tourists were above 54. Because of the prevailing pandemic scenario 100% visitors were Indian. 86% visitors in these destinations were North Indian primarily from Punjab, Haryana and Delhi.

Table 2: Shimla details

| District | Total population | Rural population | Percentage | Farming population | Percentage |
|----------|------------------|------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|
| Shimla | 814010 | 612659 | 75.2% | 249786 | 30.6% |

Table 3: Potential sightseeing places/ attractive areas as suggested by the locals

| District | Religious places | Natural attractions | Historical/ cultural places | Any other places of significance |
|----------|--|---|---|----------------------------------|
| Shimla | Kali Bari, Tara Devi, Jakhoo Hanuman Temple, Bhima Kali temple Sarahan, Hatkoti Temple, Sankat Mochan temple, Mahunaag mandir, Monastery Sanjauli, Dhingu mandir | Hatu Peak Narkanda, Naldehra golf course, Giri Ganga – Kupar, Chanshal peak | Vice regal lodge, Christ church, St. Michael's catholic church, Himachal state museum | Chaal kali |

The distribution of the tourists in this survey represents that 51% tourists are employed, 11% self-employed and 28% are students. In terms of educational qualifications, 61% respondents are graduate and 30% are post graduate. Most of the visitors 72% among this sample belong to middle income group (3-9 lakh pa), 17% followed by next level of income group (9-12 lakh p.a). Most of the tourists spend (48%) Rs. 1501-2000 and (23%) Rs. 2001-2500 per person per day on these trips. Average length of stay of 63% visitors was 3 days and 2 nights. It is evident that family and friends 72% are the most preferred company for people travelling outstation. These tourists travelled in groups of 2-4 (41%) and 5-7 (39%). 41% used reference of family and friends whereas 34% relied on e-media.

Table 5 shows the preferred rating given by the respondents on different motivation factors for making home stay choices. The prime reason to choose home stay would be being close to nature, to escape city life and stress (present covid uncertainties) and mental and physical rejuvenation. A significant weightage is given to excursion with family/ friends and to experience rural culture.

Table 4: Demographic and tripographic characteristics of the sample respondents (visitors/ tourists)

| Characteristics | No. Of respondents (384) | | % |
|--|--------------------------|-----|---|
| | | | |
| Gender | | | |
| Male | 253 | 66 | |
| Female | 131 | 34 | |
| Age (in years) | | | |
| <24 | 79 | 20 | |
| 25-34 | 68 | 18 | |
| 35-44 | 114 | 30 | |
| 45-54 | 90 | 23 | |
| 54 and above | 33 | 9 | |
| Educational qualification: | | | |
| <10 th | - | - | |
| 10 th | - | - | |
| 12 th | 8 | 2 | |
| Graduation | 234 | 61 | |
| Post-graduation | 115 | 30 | |
| Diploma/other technical education | 27 | 7 | |
| Nationality | | | |
| Indian | 384 | 100 | |
| Others | - | - | |
| Profession | | | |
| Students | 106 | 28 | |
| Employed | 197 | 51 | |
| Self-employed/ business person | 43 | 11 | |
| House wife | 31 | 8 | |
| Retired | 7 | 2 | |
| Income (in lakhs) | | | |
| <3 | 7 | 2 | |
| 3 to 6 | 136 | 35 | |
| 6 to 9 | 141 | 37 | |
| 9 to 12 | 67 | 17 | |
| >12 | 33 | 9 | |
| Residential sector | | | |
| Urban | 303 | 79 | |
| Rural | 81 | 21 | |
| Source of information | | | |
| Family/friends | 157 | 41 | |

| | | | |
|--|-----|----|--|
| Newspaper/magazine/ Travelogues | 65 | 17 | |
| E media (specify) | 131 | 34 | |
| Travel agency / tour operator | 23 | 6 | |
| Any other | 8 | 2 | |
| No. of people travelling together | | | |
| 2 – 4 | 158 | 41 | |
| 5 – 7 | 149 | 39 | |
| 8 – 10 | 42 | 11 | |
| More than 10 | 35 | 9 | |
| Accompanied by | | | |
| Family | 146 | 38 | |
| Friends | 131 | 34 | |
| Relatives | 69 | 18 | |
| Colleagues | 31 | 8 | |
| Alone | 7 | 2 | |
| Duration of stay | | | |
| One day trip | - | - | |
| 2 days/1night | 100 | 26 | |
| 3days/2 nights | 242 | 63 | |
| 4 days/3 nights | 42 | 11 | |
| More than 3 nights | - | - | |
| Average expenditure per person/ day | | | |
| <1000 | 35 | 9 | |
| 1001-1500 | 69 | 18 | |
| 1501-2000 | 184 | 48 | |
| 2001-2500 | 88 | 23 | |
| > 2500 | 8 | 2 | |

Table 5: Purpose/motivation to undertake this trip assessed using weighed mean ranking

| S. No. | Factors | Weighted mean | Rank |
|--------|--|---------------|------|
| 1 | Being close to nature | 4.27 | 1 |
| 2 | An escape from city life stress | 4.10 | 2 |
| 3 | Mental and physical rejuvenation | 4.08 | 3 |
| 4 | Excursion with family/ friends | 4.03 | 4 |
| 5 | To experience rural culture/countryside life | 3.95 | 5 |
| 6 | Novel/different holiday experience | 3.77 | 6 |
| 7 | To experience local food and drinks | 3.71 | 7 |

Table 6: Tourist expectation and experience values (Comparison of mean differences of visitors using paired T test)

| S. No. | Aspects / Attributes | MPV | MEV | MD | T value | SD | Satisfaction level |
|--------|--|------|------|--------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| | Place | | | | | | |
| 1 | Destination characteristics | | | | | | |
| A | Easy accessibility of accommodation | 3.87 | 3.93 | -0.059 | -1.819 | 0.8999 | JS |
| B | Cleanliness of accommodation | 4.06 | 3.94 | 0.118 | 5.203 | 0.75433 | S |
| C | Sanitization of accommodation | 3.67 | 3.61 | 0.054 | 1.771 | 0.4533 | JS |
| D | Adequate safety and security | 3.10 | 2.95 | 0.147 | 3.312 | 1.2344 | S |
| E | Opportunity to experience Authentic rural culture (food, costumes, lifestyle) | 4.26 | 4.08 | 0.186 | 6.076 | 0.4333 | S |
| | Product | | | | | | |
| 2 | Services and facilities | | | | | | |
| A | Quality of food and beverage | 4.19 | 4.04 | 0.147 | 5.502 | 0.78983 | S |
| B | Variety of activities (cooking, fruit plucking & processing, farm maintenance etc) | 3.14 | 3.11 | 0.025 | 0.928 | 0.8992 | JS |
| C | Customized service | 3.77 | 3.67 | 0.108 | 4.954 | 0.7882 | S |
| D | Entertainment facilities like TV, internet | 3.51 | 3.55 | -0.039 | -1.033 | 0.8772 | JS |
| | People | | | | | | |
| 3 | Staff members | | | | | | |
| A | Helpfulness | 4.40 | 4.26 | 0.137 | 5.683 | 0.8233 | S |
| B | Efficiency | 3.39 | 3.38 | 0.010 | 0.294 | 1.233 | JS |
| C | Friendliness | 2.86 | 2.88 | -0.020 | -0.371 | 1.345 | JS |
| D | Courtesy | 3.30 | 3.35 | -0.049 | -1.315 | 0.4566 | JS |
| | Promotion | | | | | | |
| 4 | Surrounding environment | | | | | | |
| A | Natural beauty and greenery | 4.12 | 4.00 | 0.118 | 4.771 | 0.788 | S |
| B | Road conditions | 3.04 | 3.15 | -0.108 | -4.515 | 0.899 | DS |
| D | Health services and medical facilities | 3.65 | 3.61 | 0.039 | -1.267 | 1.455 | JS |
| E | ATM, banking, postal | 3.03 | 3.05 | -0.020 | -0.706 | 1.2334 | JS |
| F | Hygiene and sanitation of the vicinity | 2.87 | 2.88 | -0.010 | -0.198 | 0.566 | JS |
| G | Effective waste disposal system | 2.27 | 2.48 | -0.206 | -4.764 | 0.677 | DS |
| | Price | | | | | | |
| 5 | Price level | | | | | | |
| A | For accommodation | 3.75 | 3.61 | 0.147 | 5.502 | 1.344 | S |

The results (table 6) indicate that respondents were satisfied with following attributes of 5 different aspects namely- cleanliness of accommodation, Opportunity to experience authentic rural culture, customized services, quality of food and beverage, adequate safety, helpfulness of staff, natural beauty and greenery, price level of accommodation and food and beverage. The operators were able to provide these general facilities adequately making visitors happy. 10 attributes showed neutral/ indifferent values – easy accessibility of accommodation, sanitization of accommodation, variety of activities, entertainment facilities, efficiency, friendliness and courtesy of staff, hygiene and sanitation, health and medical facilities, ATM, banking and postal services. All these are important attributes and significant for improving the visitor satisfaction in home stay.

The consumer level of expectancy couldn't exceed on neutral/ indifferent attributes probably due to lack of facilities, skill and awareness. Thus, regulatory bodies and operators must improve on these attributes to attract more visitors. The most significant dissatisfying attributes are - Road conditions and waste disposal system. Most of these tourist destinations are in rural locations. The condition of roads in these places are poor owing to weather and terrain. It is an essential pre requisite for any tourist destination to have good accessibility. It is inferred that most of the visitors undertaking this tourism are urban well educated, working – salaried or self-employed, family and friends travelling for 3days/ 2 nights expecting safe, easy and quick access to these destinations.

SUGGESTIONS

Essential elements for development of homestays and sustainable rural tourism are:

- 1) Addressing Legislative Problems and Restructuring of Policies: Existing tourism policies must be reviewed to provide legislative framework to sustainable tourism development which is concerned with tourism impacts, human resource development and coordination and monitoring amongst various agencies and bodies of tourism. Plan should include all stakeholders in sustainable tourism development approach. The government should take strict measures to check haphazard and unplanned growth in the accommodation sector. Integrated Tourism planning and its implementation is desired because it considers each and every aspect of economy, society and environment. One of the major problems in this business is the poor coordination among the main segments of the business i.e., government, stakeholders, intermediators and NGOs
- 2) Creation of infrastructure: Proper development of basic infrastructure, tourist facilities, production and supply of the needed goods and services, enhanced communication networks, better Medicare facilities, Improvement of the roads and transport facilities, electric power supply and sanitation etc at the extreme and interior locations round the year is mandatory.
- 3) Insufficient Financial Support -Encouragement for investment and participation -Private sector partnerships and public-private partnerships should be incorporated
- 4) Law and Order must be reinforced.
- 5) Tourist Police could be an alternative for additional support.
- 6) Complaints Handling must be quick and fast.
- 7) Standardization of goods and services
- 8) Lack of Trained Manpower - No plan can be successfully implemented without public participation Providing adequate training to locals through short term courses to raise the villager's awareness on the advantages of home stay and rural tourism. Also, educative programmes on waste disposal system. rainwater harvesting and recycling of water, zero wastage and environmental protection may be conducted.
- 9) Lack of Local Involvement The role of cooperative system in homestay management and community based integrated tourism (CBIT) can be an effective approach in bringing positive impact in rural areas. Local people and regional authorities can monitor and control the negative impacts of tourism on their own society, if they have an equal stake and authority. Community involvement in planning, implementation and decision-making phase of destination development is helpful for the tourism sustainability. Setting up balance between the interests of residents, visitors and place would be of paramount importance for future benefits.

- 10) Enhancement of the role of media in promoting tourism.
- 11) Carrying Capacity: carrying capacity of destination in terms of physical, natural and social capacity should be determined and positive and negative impacts be assessed through prescribed framework.
- 12) Timeline: Ritchie (2007) stated sustainable development as a concept implies forever, but for policy implementation, time factor should be considered.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that effective monitoring system and techniques should be introduced which can consider usage pattern of tourism resources. Preparing an adequate plan and strategy for the homestay business and for the local community is crucial. Without preparation and technical assistance homestay development is impossible. Local people are vital component for Community based tourism and they are in direct contact with guest. For enhancing their skills, they need proper training on hospitality, good communication and Business Planning. The government must provide financial aid to create basic infrastructure to the host community, Loan subsidy and other fiscal incentive. Tourism stakeholders and also tourism entrepreneurs should promote and do marketing campaign for the homestay tourism. Government should encourage Leave Travel Concession (LTC) along with homestay accommodation at destination sites to their employees. While planning for strategy, benefit sharing mechanism should be implemented. A community fund must be established from where local can invest money on capacity building and infrastructural development. A proper database must be maintained where necessary information should be uploaded, so that tourist can choose and reserve at their convenience. Apart from tourism department, there are other platforms like Airbnb which are facilitating and promoting homestay tourism.

CONCLUSION

Developing the sustainable rural tourism is most important to restore the cultural values and tradition for the future generations. The proper planning and strategy formulation will enable the sustainability of the culture through tourism. Homestays are considered as a micro entrepreneurship tourism business. Homestay programs promote rural tourism

where large scale tourism development is not possible. Homestays can benefit both individual home-stay owners and local rural communities on the whole. Corona virus paralysed travel and tourism in its first wave itself leading to closures and unemployment. The revival could be witnessed during relaxation in lockdown within a short span of time. It is indicated that tourism needs to be diversified to the rural and countryside from tourist and operator; both perspectives. There is need of tourism development as an alternative economic source and enough human resource available to use in parallel business-like home stay tourism. It is revealed that lower and medium income groups which are more dependent on the farm income are keen to undertake homestay as significant source of income. Thus, homestays can act as potential vital tool in reviving tourism.

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