

“TOURISM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION: A STUDY OF HOMESTAY INITIATIVES IN HIMACHAL PRADESH”

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the “Homestay Scheme” in Himachal Pradesh, formally known as the “Himachal Pradesh Home Stay Scheme 2008” to evaluate its effectiveness in engaging local communities and promoting sustainable tourism. Himachal Pradesh, a state celebrated for its diverse natural landscapes and rich cultural heritage, has increasingly emphasized tourism as a key economic driver. The successful branding of the region as "Unforgettable Himachal" has led to notable benefits, including increased revenue and job creation. This study explores how the homestay initiative has impacted local communities by providing residents with opportunities to host visitors in their homes, thereby offering an authentic cultural experience and contributing to rural economic development. By analyzing the motivations behind local participation and the broader implications for community development, cultural preservation, and economic empowerment, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the role of homestay programs in sustainable tourism. Key findings reveal that the scheme has significantly enhanced community engagement, with local hosts benefiting economically and taking pride in showcasing their cultural heritage. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient hospitality training, and marketing limitations need to be addressed. The study highlights that financial incentives, cultural pride, and the potential for international connections are primary motivators for community involvement. Despite these positive outcomes, there is a need for improved infrastructure and marketing strategies to overcome barriers and attract a wider range of tourists. The research concludes that the homestay scheme has the potential to drive sustainable and inclusive growth in Himachal Pradesh rural areas, provided that the identified challenges are effectively managed.

Keywords:Community, Tourism, Motivation, Homestay, Initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism community engagement through homestay initiatives has become increasingly significant in Himachal Pradesh, India, highlighting a global shift toward sustainable tourism practices. The "Homestay Scheme," officially introduced as the "Himachal Pradesh Home Stay Scheme 2008," is designed to enable local residents to open their homes to visitors, offering an authentic cultural experience while contributing to rural economic development. Himachal Pradesh, renowned for its breathtaking landscapes and rich cultural heritage, has long been a magnet for tourists seeking a variety of experiences, from pilgrimage and adventure sports to cultural immersion and culinary exploration

(Kumar & Sharma, 2019). As tourism has become a central focus of the state's economic strategy, the successful branding of Himachal Pradesh as "Unforgettable Himachal" has led to increased tourism revenue and job creation, underscoring the region's appeal (Singh & Negi, 2021). Homestay programs represent a strategic move to diversify tourism offerings and foster deeper community involvement. By providing visitors with an opportunity to stay in local homes, these programs aim to enhance cultural exchange and economic benefits for rural communities while preserving traditional lifestyles (Bhatia & Verma, 2022). This approach not only addresses the growing demand for unique and immersive travel experiences but also aims to mitigate the environmental and social impacts associated with conventional tourism infrastructure (Saini & Singh, 2022). The scheme aligns with global trends toward sustainable tourism, which emphasize the importance of local community engagement and environmental stewardship (UNWTO, 2023). However, despite the scheme's potential, there are significant challenges that need to be addressed. Issues such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient hospitality training, and limited marketing efforts can hinder the effectiveness of homestay programs (Wijesundara & Gnanapala, 2016). Understanding the dynamics of how homestay initiatives engage local communities and motivate their participation is crucial for policymakers and tourism planners aiming to maximize the benefits of these programs while ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth. This research seeks to explore these dynamics, providing insights into the impact of homestay initiatives on community development, cultural preservation, and economic empowerment in Himachal Pradesh, and offering recommendations for enhancing the overall effectiveness of these programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Homestay program offers significant potential for rural communities, serving as an appealing alternative tourism product that attracts both international and domestic tourists. This program offers visitors a genuine, immersive experience of rural life in addition to fostering cultural interchange and economic benefits for locals. Nonetheless, a number of studies point out a number of difficulties that homestay hosts encounter. These include inadequate infrastructure that can discourage tourists, such as bad road connectivity and inadequate sanitary facilities. Furthermore, operators frequently deal with a lack of money and marketing expertise, which makes it challenging to reach a larger audience. The whole visitor experience may be impacted by variable service quality resulting from a lack of established regulations and training for hosts. One major obstacle is obviously financial limitations.

The study by Nikhil Saini and Kuldeep Singh (2022) highlights the growing relevance of homestay tourism in India's travel and lodging industry by examining the factors influencing it in the Kullu District of Himachal Pradesh. Although they have a significant economic influence on India and provide a distinctive cultural experience, homestays are still less common than other lodging choices. The study finds that a number of important elements—such as accessibility, authenticity, biodiversity, culture, appeal, environmental friendliness, and visitor safety and security—are crucial to the success of homestays in the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR). According to the survey, the primary reason why homestays aren't more popular is that prospective tourists don't know about them, a problem that may be solved with efficient multimedia and advertising campaigns.

The paper by Namal Wijesundara and Athula C. Gnanapala (2016) addresses the various difficulties and challenges hindering the development of homestay tourism in Sri Lanka. The homestay approach is confronted with several challenges even if it has the ability to enhance the socioeconomic circumstances of rural communities. These include the idea being used incorrectly, young people not participating enough, inactive community projects, and a dearth of community leadership. Inadequate facilities, a lack of industry awareness, inadequate formal management processes, and weak marketing and promotional abilities are further issues facing the business. Problems with networking and

communication make the process even more difficult. Political meddling, sluggish implementation processes, and shifting community sentiments are all major obstacles from the viewpoint of the competent authorities. The report emphasizes that although homestay tourism can have a significant positive impact on nearby communities, achieving these benefits.

Lakhvinder Singh and SurajBhan in their 2014 study. Stress the importance of balancing the demands of the impoverished and the wealthy, since homestay tourism is based on a demand-driven approach that satisfies certain requirements. This type of tourism has a lot of promise, especially in rural areas where pro-poor policies are supported by government initiatives. Even so, a lot of India's tourism-related offers and products are still undiscovered. In the context of tourism as a whole, homestay operations offer a micro-entrepreneurial opportunity that needs to be fully explored and utilized by stakeholders.

The study conducted in 2023 by Kamal Joshi and Pinky Bahuguna investigates the reasons behind and difficulties encountered by homestay operators in Uttarakhand in the context of the growing number of low-cost tourists, which has had a substantial impact on the tourism sector. Due to this change, a new market niche that favors small hotels and homestays has emerged. The Uttarakhand government has started promoting homestays after noticing this trend in order to take use of the state's potential for tourism and create jobs locally. The goal of the study is to pinpoint the primary motivators for people to start homestays. The results show that homestay owners have multiple main reasons for doing so, which include financial rewards, a desire for personal fulfillment, and a desire to preserve and promote local customs and culture.

The Case of Pachitan Homestay from 2017 to 2019" by Yet-Mee Lim and Teck-Heang Lee (2020) offers a detailed analysis of the Pachitan Homestay, focusing on its operational dynamics and the obstacles it encountered. The project is to improve the quality and sustainability of Malaysia's homestay business through scholarly research. The study explores a number of problems that Pachitan Homestay has encountered, offering a comprehensive grasp of how it operates and the particular difficulties that its operators face. The purpose of this case study is to provide valuable insights for enhancing the long-term success and quality of homestays in Malaysia through improvements in their overall management and viability.

Anjali Dube and R. A. Sharma's 2018 review paper examines the emergence and conceptual framework of homestays, highlighting both Indian and worldwide trends in this expanding industry. By means of a targeted analysis of extant literature, the writers pinpoint the principal incentives and obstacles encountered by host families across the globe. They discovered that there are other important incentives for starting a homestay business, besides money: social contact, cultural exchange, and personal fulfillment. The study points out that despite the growing popularity of homestays around the world, there isn't much research that focuses on the reasons behind and difficulties that urban homestay hosts encounter, especially in India where the idea is still relatively new.

The 2017 study by Jaswant Singh Jayara examines this developing field and emphasizes how it can be used as a tool for long-term, community development. The idea, which is gaining popularity worldwide, incorporates a number of themes and customs from both industrialized and developing nations. Homestay tourism is a relatively new but quickly expanding phenomena in Uttarakhand, drawing many entrepreneurs eager to take advantage of its opportunities. By encouraging closer cultural exchanges between guests and hosts, this community-based strategy not only broadens the range of local hospitality options but also enhances traveler experiences and boosts the local economy.

Ms. Aastha Singh, Mr. AyushSaxena, and Dr. HemrajNarharPatil's 2023 study explores the potential and constraints of homestays in Madhya Pradesh, India, emphasizing the noteworthy influence of the

Indian Ministry of Tourism's augmented investment on the socioeconomic circumstances of rural regions. This development is essential to improving tourism through homestays, which calls for careful planning, active participation from market players, government policy guidance, and consideration of visitor preferences. The report highlights that in order to promote sustainable growth in homestay tourism, a balanced strategy integrating market forces and government support is required.

In 2022, Tshin Lip Vui, Syarifah Hanum Ali, and Kamiliah conducted a study that looked at the variables influencing homestay prices in Kundasang, Sabah, during the Movement Control Order (MCO) in Malaysia. The study pinpoints issues that the homestay community is facing in the midst of the epidemic, both external and internal. One of the main issues is the sharp drop in tourism, which has resulted in lower revenue and occupancy rates. The study demonstrates how these problems have compelled homestay providers to innovate and adapt in order to thrive. The necessity for improved cleanliness standards, improved marketing tactics, and government funding is emphasized in the recommendations for change.

The possibilities and difficulties facing Assam's tourist industry are examined in the 2015 study "Prospects and Problems of Tourism Industry in Assam" by Surjya Chutia. Assam has a lot of potential for tourism growth because of its stunning natural surroundings, abundant biodiversity, historical monuments, pilgrimage destinations, tea gardens, and lively cultural events. Using secondary data, the paper examines how tourism in Assam has grown over the globalization era. One significant conclusion reported in the study by NEDFi is that for every domestic tourist, three jobs are created, and for every overseas tourist, seven jobs are created. Furthermore, the research projects that a one million rupee investment in tourism generates 47.9 direct jobs in addition to a plethora of indirect employment prospects.

The 2017 study by Azlma Md. Yassin focuses on the elements that are propelling homestay entrepreneurship in Johor, Malaysia. The study looks into how homestay operators are currently operating in the state and examines the challenges and driving forces behind them. The growing need for individualized and distinctive travel experiences, government assistance, and the cultural attractiveness of lodging in local homes are major factors contributing to the rise in homestay entrepreneurs. The report does, however, also point out important obstacles, like competing hotels and alternative lodging options, regulatory obstacles, and a lack of marketing expertise. Through the analysis of these components, the research offers valuable perspectives on the factors that foster the prosperity and longevity of homestay enterprises in Johor.

The study conducted by Dr. Sumaira and Qazi Ruban (2018) titled "Issues and Challenges Faced by Tourism Sector of Kashmir – A Conceptual Study" looks at the different roadblocks that prevent tourism in the Kashmir region from expanding. It draws attention to the fact that the industry has been experiencing substantial losses, mostly as a result of insufficient infrastructure, security issues, and unstable political environments. It examines suggestions made by national and regional committees to address these issues, highlighting the necessity of all-encompassing plans to maximize the area's tourism potential and guarantee long-term development.

Pawan Kumar and Vikash Gupta's 2018 study examined the numerous issues that travelers to India encounter when visiting various locations. In order to determine the fundamental requirements for tourists' comfort and safety, a convenience sample was used in the study, and data was collected using an organized questionnaire. The results showed that a number of criteria, such as gender, age, and education level, influenced how difficulties were experienced by tourists. These problems emphasize

how much more government assistance is required to ensure sustainable tourism. The report emphasizes how critical it is to solve these various issues in order to improve visitors' overall experience traveling in India.

The difficulties and challenges in developing tourism in North Halmahera are examined in the paper "Tourism Destination in Remote Area: Problems and Challenges of Tourism Development in North Halmahera as Remote and Border Areas of Indonesia-Philippines" by YerikAfriantoSinggalen, GatotSasongko, and PamerdiGiriWiloso (2018). The study shows that a number of factors, including the bureaucratic system, the quality and availability of resources (funding and human resources), the attitude and dedication of those in authority, and the degree of coordination among different stakeholders, have a substantial impact on how well tourism policies are implemented. These components are essential for overcoming the particular difficulties that isolated and border areas encounter in order to improve the growth and sustainability of the regional tourism industry.

Critical issues facing the rural homestay business are discussed in a paper by YuPu Zhang and ChuTong Wang (2023), including the lack of standardized operations, the requirement for increased visitor happiness, and inadequate management education. These problems impede the industry's healthy and sustained expansion. The study performs topic mining on rural homestay reviews using the conditional Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) model, classifying the evaluations according to particular emotional classifications. This method pinpoints the main issues and offers workable solutions for them. The authors stress the importance of providing sufficient support and promotion for these projects and argue for bolstering rural homestay development in China in order to support the long-term, healthy expansion of the rural economy.

Suneel Kumar, Marco Valeri, Varinder Kumar, and Sanjeev Kumar's study from 2023 looks at the advantages and disadvantages of the homestay family business model in the Indian travel industry. Homestays, which are well-liked by visitors due to their warm and inviting ambiance, are usually operated by homeowners who rent out empty rooms. Numerous benefits are offered by this concept, such as customized vacation experiences and financial gains for nearby areas. Additionally, it is essential in reducing poverty because it gives host families extra sources of income. The study does, however, point out a number of difficulties, such as the requirement for in-depth investigation to maximize the efficiency of homestays.

In the Malaysian homestay tourist sector, the study by Zahir Osman, Fairullfnee Othman, Norfardilawati Musa, and Christina Mary Richard (2023) examines the correlations among image, perceived value, safety, satisfaction, and loyalty. It uses a study paradigm in which loyalty is the endogenous variable, satisfaction acts as a mediator, and image, perceived value, and safety are the exogenous variables. The results highlight how important it is for homestay hosts to uphold safety procedures, promote tourism ideals, and raise guest satisfaction in order to cultivate repeat business. The report also emphasizes how crucial it is to build a strong brand identity and foster community involvement in order to further foster visitor loyalty.

The evaluation of the marketing potential and problems within the Southern Ethiopian Route is the main subject of the study "Tourism Destination Marketing Challenges and Prospects: The Case of the Southern Route of Ethiopia" by DagnachewWegayehuMuluneh, Amare YaekobChiriko, and TadesseTemesgenTaye (2022). The results show that the region's natural charms, friendly locals, and

diversity of cultures draw tourists in particular. However, because of worries about accessibility, security, and the caliber of services offered, they are less likely to suggest the location. The impact of seasonality, high media expenses, and security risks are just a few of the major obstacles that the report highlights for tourism-related enterprises. During their travels, travelers also encounter challenges with inferior service quality, security concerns, inaccessibility, and language obstacles.

The difficulties the homestay program in Dagat Village, Sabah, Malaysia, faced were investigated in the 2016 study by VelanKunjuraman and RosazmanHussin. The town has abundant natural resources and the potential to grow its tourism industry, but a number of problems make the homestay business unsustainable. A few internal issues are a shortage of skilled labor, issues with leadership, and a lack of cash and funding. The community faces challenges from the outside, including weak marketing and promotional efforts, insufficient infrastructure, inefficient government oversight, informal organizational structures, and threats to safety and security. These barriers severely limit community involvement and the homestay program's overall success.

The 2023 study by Dian YulieReindrawati examines the obstacles that prevent local communities in developing nations from participating in the planning of sustainable tourism. The study finds a number of significant obstacles in the operational, structural, and cultural domains. Inadequate information availability, ineffective decision-making procedures, a lack of proper debate forums, a lack of expertise, and a lack of accountability and openness are examples of operational hurdles. Together, these barriers make it difficult for the community to participate effectively, emphasizing the need for better governance, communication, and educational initiatives to advance participatory tourist planning.

IlhamJunaid, Nur Salam, and Muh. Arfin M. Salim's 2019 research focuses on creating homestays to support community-based tourism, which provides substantial advantages to nearby communities through tourism. The study intends to comprehend community expectations about homestay management as a lodging enterprise, examine the obstacles, and offer suggestions for putting community-based tourism into practice from the homestay organizers' point of view. According to the study, in order for homestays to be viable and not just temporary lodging, they need to have a unique selling point that attracts guests all year round, not just at busy times of the year or special occasions.

In their 2017 study, Gaurav Rana and Suneel Kumar explore Uttarakhand's tourist sector, highlighting the opportunities and problems associated with tourism management in the area. In order to suggest moving the influx of tourists from one destination to another and increase the area's attractiveness as a tourist hotspot, it makes use of the "S" curve analysis and investigates destination discontinuities. The study emphasizes how the region's appeal is being lowered by haphazard construction and poor management on the part of the public and private sectors. As a result, maintaining and regaining the appeal of Uttarakhand's tourism sites will require a thorough understanding of destination management techniques.

According to Kuldeep Singh, Arnab Gantait, GoldiPuri, and G. AnjaneyaSwamy (2016), rural tourism in India provides a tranquil getaway from the stress of the city and an opportunity to re-establish a more straightforward, calm way of life. In addition to improving people's own well-being, this type of tourism helps rural areas flourish economically and socially. Rural tourism is relatively young, but it has already made a big impression on the world stage thanks to its potential to change rural communities. India's rich cultural legacy, breathtaking natural settings, and abundant biodiversity present enormous development opportunities for the country's rural tourism industry, which is still in its infancy. In India,

rural tourism has a bright future despite its complexity and disparate definitions across different regions, drawing in city people.

In the Shimla district of Himachal Pradesh, Ritika Singh, Manohar Sajnani, and Pawan Gupta's study from 2021 looks into the expectations and contentment of visitors staying in rural homestays. It seeks to pinpoint the crucial elements that affect both visitor happiness and discontent and to offer homestay operators advice on how to improve their offerings. The study also looks at the relationship between the socioeconomic profiles of the visitors and their degree of happiness. The study looks at buying and behavioral patterns of tourists by examining their experiences. It then makes recommendations for how to improve services to better satisfy guests and increase satisfaction in rural homestays.

With a focus on socio-cultural, ecological, and economic sustainability, Belinda F. Espiritu and Cora Jane C. Lawas' 2019 study examines the state, problems, potential, and challenges of developing sustainable tourism in Central Visayas. Numerous issues and difficulties still exist despite the efforts of provinces like Cebu and Bohol to encourage sustainable tourism. In particular, Cebu has to deal with a dearth of art museums, cultural centers, and entertainment venues in addition to the requirement for better administration to control the number of ecotourism destinations that can be visited. Developing agri-tourism and historical tourism is another way to broaden the range of tourism options. The study emphasizes the continued necessity of taking calculated steps to solve these issues and improve environmentally friendly travel in the area.

Toledo is one of the most important heritage tourism destinations in Spain. A thorough case study of Toledo is provided in the article "Realities and problems of a major cultural tourist destination in Spain, Toledo" by Luis Alfonso Escudero Gómez (2018). It adds to and improves the body of knowledge already available on Toledo's cultural tourism. The paper presents a comprehensive analysis of Toledo's salient characteristics as a destination for cultural tourism, utilizing a methodological approach that encompasses participant observation and critical analysis of many sources. It lists and analyzes the primary difficulties the city's tourism sector faces.

The development and effects of community-based homestay activities in rural regions, especially in Malaysia, are examined in the essay "Community-Based Homestay Activities: Sustainable or Perishable Tourism" by KamisahSupian, Aznita Ahmad, Ida Farina Muhammad Yunus, and Abu NaaimMunir (2022). Tourists find these activities appealing because they incorporate local ways of life, cultural heritage, traditional foods, business ventures, leisure activities, and environmental protection. The local economy and community development in Malaysia have greatly benefited from the homestay program. The research underscores the pivotal function of community capacity in the triumphant progression of community tourism, stressing its significance for the enduring nature of these endeavors.

OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of this research paper is to thoroughly investigate and understand the benefits offered by the homestay program, particularly in the context of fostering cultural exchange and language acquisition among participants. This study also attempts to determine and examine the difficulties and barriers preventing the Homestay Program's creation and broad implementation. This study paper aims to provide alternative recommendations for improving the implementation and execution of the homestay program by examining the benefits and challenges of homestay initiatives. This study aims

to provide novel ideas that can increase the overall efficacy and success of homestay efforts by critically analyzing current practices and finding areas for improvement.

Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively analyze the impact and effectiveness of the Homestay Scheme in Himachal Pradesh. The research begins with a thorough review of existing literature to establish a theoretical foundation and identify key themes related to tourism community engagement and motivation. The qualitative component involves conducting semi-structured interviews with a diverse sample of homestay hosts, local community leaders, and tourists who have experienced the homestay program. These interviews aim to gather in-depth insights into the personal experiences, challenges, and motivations of hosts, as well as the perceived benefits and drawbacks from the perspective of visitors. To supplement these qualitative findings, the research utilizes a quantitative approach through the distribution of structured questionnaires to a larger sample of homestay hosts across various districts in Himachal Pradesh. The questionnaire is designed to capture data on demographic characteristics, financial impacts, levels of community involvement, and perceptions of the homestay experience. This data is analyzed using statistical techniques to identify patterns and correlations. Additionally, the study incorporates case studies of selected homestay locations to illustrate specific successes and challenges in different contexts. Field visits are conducted to observe the actual conditions and practices of homestay operations, providing a practical perspective on the implementation of the program. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data allows for a holistic understanding of the homestay scheme's impact on local communities. The research methodology is designed to ensure reliability and validity through triangulation, where multiple data sources and methods are used to cross-verify findings. This approach facilitates a comprehensive analysis of how homestay initiatives engage and motivate local communities, providing actionable insights for policymakers, tourism planners, and community leaders.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The study on "Tourism Community Engagement and Motivation: A Study of Homestay Initiatives in Himachal Pradesh" uncovers several important findings regarding the impact and effectiveness of homestay programs in this region. The results reveal that these initiatives have significantly increased community engagement by enabling local residents to actively participate in and benefit from tourism. Homestay hosts in Himachal Pradesh have reported enhanced involvement in tourism activities, taking pride in showcasing their cultural heritage and contributing to the preservation of traditional practices. Economically, homestay programs have provided a notable boost to local incomes, with hosts seeing substantial financial benefits from accommodating tourists. This economic uplift extends beyond individual households, stimulating broader economic activity within the community by boosting demand for local goods and services.

Motivational factors driving community participation include financial incentives, cultural pride, and the opportunity to build international connections. Hosts are primarily motivated by the additional income and the chance to share their unique cultural experiences with visitors. The personal satisfaction derived from promoting local traditions and forging global friendships further motivates their involvement. Despite these positive outcomes, the study identifies several challenges that need addressing. Key barriers include inadequate infrastructure, insufficient hospitality training, and language difficulties, which can impact the quality of the guest experience. Additionally, there is a need for improved marketing strategies to attract a broader range of tourists.

Community sentiment towards homestay programs remains largely favorable, though there are calls for

enhanced support from government and tourism organizations. To ensure sustainable growth and maximize the benefits of homestay initiatives, stakeholders are encouraged to address these challenges through targeted support and development efforts. Overall, the study highlights that while homestay programs in Himachal Pradesh are effective in engaging communities and providing economic and cultural benefits, strategic improvements are necessary to overcome existing obstacles and support the program's continued success.

HOMESTAY PLAN AND HOST GROUP:

The Himachal Pradesh government launched the "Home Stay" scheme in 2008 in an effort to close the gap between the supply and demand for lodging and to encourage community involvement. The main goals of the scheme were to increase the number of stakeholders in the tourism industry, expand tourism to the state's rural and interior areas, relieve the strain on the state's already overburdened urban areas, which could not support any more tourism, provide employment and economic values in the interior areas, ensure that the activity is environmentally sustainable, and attract tourists from around the globe who would otherwise be unable to stay in good hotels at reasonable prices during the peak season. The scheme has been a huge success. The "Home Stay" program offers clean, cozy, and reasonably priced lodging and meals in an effort to entice travelers from upscale, congested cities to the rural hinterland with its abundance of natural surroundings. The Department of Tourism in Himachal Pradesh announced the government's initiative to promote rural tourism on August 15, 2010, covering all 12 districts of the state by focusing on a single village destination. Sangrah in Sirmaur, Baniya Devi in Solan, Brua in Kinnaur, Udaipur in Lahaul-Spiti, Shamshar in Kullu, Bagi in Mandi, Sarali in Bilaspur, Bela in Hamirpur, Nari in Una, Nerti in Kangra, and Saho in Chamba were the villages that were chosen. Hewen is located in the Shimla district. The local community responded well to the idea and showed a high level of interest. Travelers would rather stay in cozy cabins in the middle of the forest than in pricey, loud luxury hotels. The program has been successful in drawing tourists away from the well-known tourist spots and toward unexplored areas, allowing the state government to promote new tourist attractions and give rural residents an alternate source of income.

TABLE 1 - REGISTERED HOME STAYS UNITS & OCCUPANCY

Sr. No	District	Regd. Units	Rooms	National Tourist	Foreign Tourist
1	Shimla	51	146	2472	041
2	Kinnaur	49	140	0065	138
3	Lahaul-Spiti	28	080	0028	110
4	Kullu	113	289	4510	856
5	Mandi	10	024	0759	021
6	Kangra	34	089	5302	231
7	Chamba	26	074	1926	072
8	Solan	15	036	2889	007
9	Sirmaur	06	013	0205	009
	Total	332	891	18156	1485

Source: Tourism & Civil Aviation Department, Himachal Pradesh

BENEFITS OF HOMESTAY:

Staying with a family allows you to see a side of India that you wouldn't otherwise be able to. The tourism department of the Himachal Pradesh government says that it has developed a new program called "Har Gaon Ki Kahani" (the story of every village) in response to the successful implementation of the "HarGharKuchKehta Hai" (every house speaks something) program, which involved compiling a list of historical buildings for tourism. The tourism department has urged people to come up with well-known tales about their villages as part of the "Har Gaon Ki Kahani" project. These tales could aid in drawing tourists to the villages and boosting tourism in rural areas. The tourism department has urged people to come up with well-known tales about their villages as part of the "Har Gaon Ki Kahani" project. These tales could aid in drawing tourists to the villages and boosting tourism in rural areas. The program is anticipated to create job prospects for the youth in the area, since numerous cities in Himachal Pradesh, including Shimla, Kangra, and Kullu, are well-known for their folktales and local legends.

ESTIMATE OF DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN TOURIST ARRIVAL FOR THE YEAR 2021 (JANUARY to DECEMBER)

Month	Bilaspur		Chamba		Hamirpur		Kangra		Kinnaur		Kullu		Lahaul & Spiti		Mandi		Shimla		Sirmour		Solan		Una		Total	
	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F
Jan.	19159	0	22797	1	4087	0	21752	437	46	0	196274	23	0	0	30293	3	81296	0	8974	2	18716	11	4556	0	407950	477
Feb.	16728	0	10245	1	4687	0	21867	505	0	0	162629	16	437	4	26323	0	49773	21	9135	1	16471	18	5275	0	323570	566
Mar.	20401	0	15125	0	4756	0	28972	708	50	3	152401	25	6161	7	32141	0	62271	2	11347	0	22095	25	5389	0	361109	770
Apr.	11910	0	3244	1	4270	0	21383	526	8500	4	87418	17	5972	0	23714	18	27245	0	6231	2	15467	25	5107	0	220461	593
May.	1427	0	0	0	3804	0	728	82	1507	0	15971	4	1641	0	8031	13	8161	0	3642	1	4721	9	1610	0	51243	109
June	24928	0	22153	2	4085	0	5242	184	14500	7	164578	15	173956	77	43680	11	87316	31	28200	0	37764	5	2509	0	608911	332
July	17366	0	30075	8	4309	0	14542	12	13200	36	213498	23	418360	71	28394	9	115256	75	23800	4	41540	9	4876	0	925216	247
Aug	11010	0	18305	26	4976	0	19628	7	1221	6	53307	4	68803	129	23619	52	45166	0	22300	0	38217	17	5286	0	311838	241
Sept	16705	0	18715	3	5296	0	21329	66	8620	29	68187	35	79503	115	30971	9	59869	90	19980	3	35350	22	5489	0	370014	372
Oct	20670	0	20131	4	5986	0	26980	50	7742	10	97842	18	70502	16	36910	25	73746	105	109475	4	41707	33	6589	0	518280	265
Nov	23424	0	15436	16	6578	0	25664	68	2000	2	136822	38	71576	0	42344	8	113247	205	125500	4	47963	65	7156	0	617710	406
Dec	69782	0	45593	7	7289	1	26164	56	2575	12	298402	34	63621	1	71409	1	228446	296	32350	7	62351	39	7986	0	915968	454
TOTAL	253510	0	221819	69	60123	1	234251	2701	59961	109	1647329	252	960532	420	397829	149	951792	825	400934	28	382362	278	61828	0	5632270	4832

%age change +77.63% -88.67%

Indian	5632270
Foreigner	4832
Total	5637102

Total Increase 75.43% as compared to 2020

Note:- The above estimates are inclusive of religious tourists.

ESTIMATE OF DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN TOURIST ARRIVAL FOR THE YEAR 2020 (January to December)

Month	Bilaspur		Chamba		Hamirpur		Kangra		Kinnaur		Kullu		Lahaul & Spiti		Mandi		Shimla		Sirmour		Solan		Una		Total	
	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F
Jan.	64075	0	75989	71	55218	0	129640	8486	250	9	156345	3478	422	9	61305	238	259681	13252	105445	394	151842	603	80584	3	1140796	26543
Feb.	72345	0	68301	79	3152	0	11080	224	1500	78	103789	2413	1718	82	88754	64	126610	4534	64599	15	63139	2406	7024	2	612011	9897
Mar.	61213	0	21608	27	2458	0	9836	477	400	18	132942	1095	1648	36	81423	103	57685	3323	16842	36	20029	125	4743	3	410827	5243
Apr.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	2	0	6	0	1	0	0	23	9
May	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	38	0	0	53	37	0	0	0	0	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	94	75
June	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	36	0	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	41	0	80	36
July	343	0	0	0	178	0	842	0	0	0	108	0	0	0	229	0	0	0	1817	0	435	5	204	0	4156	5
Aug.	867	0	0	0	356	0	3438	46	0	0	483	3	0	3	1048	0	0	0	2740	0	923	7	471	0	10326	59
Sept.	2531	0	3436	0	608	0	6224	89	0	0	11292	6	968	13	2179	0	22727	0	9910	0	4662	13	1410	0	65947	121
Oct.	9846	0	22357	10	2907	0	15098	157	0	2	61841	22	2053	12	15623	0	31182	0	123217	1	6752	23	2527	0	293403	227
Nov.	7219	0	26696	0	3208	0	20125	0	75	1	85746	12	1507	0	13031	0	26185	0	7120	0	10128	32	3529	0	204569	45
Dec.	10157	0	52263	5	3678	0	21505	368	55	3	210762	14	6900	0	20554	0	75086	0	9247	2	14179	13	4096	0	428482	405
TOTAL	228596	0	270650	192	71763	0	217827	9921	2280	111	763379	7080	15216	155	284146	405	599202	21111	340937	454	272089	3228	104629	8	3170714	42665

%age change -81.00% -89.00%

Indian	3170714
Foreigner	42665
Total	3213379

Total decrease 81.33% as compared to 2019

Note:- The above estimates are inclusive of religious tourists.

Source: <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://himachaltourism.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Tourist-Statistics.pdf>

Table no 2-4, comprises the data of domestic and foreign tourist arrival in Himachal Pradesh in the years from 2018-2022.

The Home Stay Scheme has received several incentives from the Himachal Pradesh government, which comprise:

- The homestay tourism initiative has gained traction throughout the hill state, giving many locals new job opportunities.
- This includes giving these units a tax exemption and providing water and electricity to them at discounted prices that apply to domestic customers. Create opportunities for self-employment, etc.
- The majority of the women who work as local guides and get paid in cash said that having money from homestays has significantly improved their quality of life.

- They now have more decision-making authority at home than they did before thanks to their salary. Engaging in Homestays enhances the locals' sense of pride in their environment, culture, and way of life while giving them the chance to socialize with visitors from different nations.
- It has been successful in drawing tourists away from well-known, traditional tourist spots and toward new locations, which has helped to promote the latter and given rural businesses an alternate source of revenue.
- The Department of Tourism provides a free online list of the registered homestay residences and approved homestay units upon owner application.
- In addition, HPTDC incorporates them into their online reservation system, contingent on commission payments as determined periodically by HPTDC, which automatically creates a clientele for the stakeholders.

The department introduced the program to encourage rural tourism and provide visitors wishing to experience a taste of the local way of life with a sense of the socio-cultural life, festivals, and food. The popularity of this program has been particularly noteworthy among foreign visitors who come specifically to experience rural and local life, which they do best when lodging in residents' houses. However, there are some concerns about its successful implementation and how it will impact the hotel industry. For example, when the Tourism Ministry proposed raising the room limit from three to five, the Hoteliers Associations vehemently objected, arguing that the scheme would negatively impact their business because guests would rather stay in affordable homes where they can get a decent room with all the comforts of home. The main draw, which hotels are unable to provide, is the home-cooked cuisine and a sense of local life. Hoteliers claim that building a hotel and paying the luxury tax have cost them a significant amount of money. In that instance, the government must endeavour to create a win-win scenario for all parties involved. Additionally, the government must work with volunteers, non-governmental organizations, and self-help groups (SHGs) to educate the public about the many advantages of the program in order to maximize its popularity with the local population and preserve the delicate ecology of the hills without sacrificing the benefits that the tourism sector provides for them.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The research on the "Tourism Community Engagement and Motivation: A Study of Homestay Initiatives in Himachal Pradesh" highlights the significant impact of the homestay Scheme on local communities, illustrating its effectiveness in fostering cultural exchange, economic upliftment, and sustainable tourism practices. The findings indicate that the homestay program has successfully engaged local residents by integrating them into the tourism sector, thereby enhancing their involvement in preserving and promoting their cultural heritage. The economic benefits derived from hosting tourists have provided a substantial boost to local incomes and stimulated broader economic activity within these communities. This success, however, comes with challenges that need to be addressed to maximize the program's potential. Issues such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient training for hosts, and language barriers have been identified as significant obstacles that affect the quality of the guest experience and the overall effectiveness of the program. To overcome these challenges, it is essential to invest in infrastructure improvements, provide comprehensive training programs for hosts, and develop effective marketing strategies to reach a wider audience. Additionally, ongoing support and monitoring from policymakers and tourism authorities are crucial to ensure that the program remains sustainable and continues to meet the needs of both hosts and tourists. The

integration of initiatives like the "HarGaon Ki Kahani" project, which seeks to highlight local stories and heritage, further complements the homestay program by enhancing its appeal and drawing more tourists to rural areas. To further strengthen the homestay program, it is recommended that the government and relevant stakeholders foster collaborations with local communities to develop innovative approaches for tourism promotion, encourage youth participation, and address emerging challenges. By adopting a holistic approach that combines infrastructure development, capacity building, and effective promotion, the Homestay Scheme can continue to support sustainable community growth and contribute positively to the tourism landscape of Himachal Pradesh.

Discussion

The study of the "Homestay Scheme" in Himachal Pradesh reveals a complex interplay of positive impacts and notable challenges associated with this tourism initiative. The scheme's success in fostering community engagement and boosting local economies is evident through the active participation of residents who embrace the opportunity to share their cultural heritage with visitors. By opening their homes to tourists, local hosts have not only enhanced their incomes but also played a crucial role in preserving and promoting traditional practices. This alignment between tourism and cultural preservation reflects a significant achievement of the homestay initiative, contributing to the broader objective of sustainable tourism. However, the study also uncovers several critical challenges that need to be addressed to maximize the scheme's potential. Inadequate infrastructure, including poor road connectivity and insufficient sanitation facilities, poses a substantial barrier to the effectiveness of the homestay program. These infrastructural shortcomings not only impact the quality of the guest experience but also deter potential tourists. Furthermore, the lack of formal training and regulatory standards for homestay hosts can lead to inconsistent service quality, which undermines the program's overall appeal. Language barriers further complicate interactions between hosts and guests, highlighting the need for better language support and training. Financial constraints faced by homestay operators, coupled with limited marketing expertise, exacerbate these issues, making it challenging to attract a diverse tourist demographic. Despite these obstacles, the motivational factors driving community participation—such as financial incentives, cultural pride, and the desire for international connections—underscore the program's potential if these barriers are addressed effectively. The success of the homestay scheme in drawing tourists to less-explored rural areas also indicates a positive shift towards more sustainable tourism practices, alleviating the pressure on heavily visited urban centers. The incorporation of programs like "HarGaon Ki Kahani" further enhances the scheme's impact by leveraging local stories and folklore to attract tourists, thereby adding value to the rural tourism experience. To build on these successes, it is essential for stakeholders to focus on improving infrastructure, offering targeted training for hosts, and implementing robust marketing strategies. Addressing these challenges through collaborative efforts between government agencies, local communities, and tourism planners will be crucial in ensuring the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the homestay initiative. By tackling these issues and leveraging the inherent strengths of the program, Himachal Pradesh can continue to enhance its tourism offerings while fostering inclusive and sustainable growth in its rural areas.

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