## Abstract

India, as a tourist destination provides an array of attractions, ranging from popular beaches, hill stations, forests, lakes and other places of scenic beauty to the caves of Ajanta and Ellora, magnificent monuments like the Taj Mahal and Qutub Minar, the palaces and forts of Rajasthan, the monasteries of Sikkim, the tea plantations of Assam, the coffee plantations of Karnataka, the houseboats of Kashmir, the temples of the South, the churches of Goa; to name a few. The sheer variety of choice that a traveller in this country has is stupendous. International visitors find this allure of India irresistible. Domestic travellers too are eager to experience these magnificent destinations that their country has to offer, that rival the best in the world. The Indian tradition of ‘Atithi Devo Bhava’ means that the guest is God. They are accorded the highest place of honour in the house. This was a background for the concept of Homestays in India which is now an emerging trend in the hospitality business in the country. Homestays can be explained as a form of tourism where travellers get to stay as guests in a private home for a fee. They have their own room with facilities like attached bathrooms and home-cooked fresh meals, and experience the real essence of the destination and its unique culture, which the traveller might inadvertently miss out on while staying in conventional accommodation like hotels.
1. INTRODUCTION

India today has become a much sought after destination for tourists from other countries. The Incredible India campaign of the Government of India has created a ‘Brand India’ so to say, portraying the country as an exotic getaway, while showcasing its magnificent attractions. Indians too, with increasing income levels, double income families and wanting to experience something new have started travelling more often. These travellers face a number of choices about where to go, once that is finalized, then how to travel and, equally important, where to stay. The hospitality industry in India offers accommodation ranging from humble tourist hostels and local hotels, to luxurious rooms in star category hotels, which are at par with the best in the world. Amongst all these offerings to the discerning guest stands out the concept of Homestays.

1.1. Concept Of Homestays

Homestays mean places of accommodation located in places of tourist interest, which may be on beaches, hills, near lakes, or houses in the middle of coffee/tea plantations, usually places of scenic beauty. These are usually farmhouses, rural cottages, havelis and bungalows where families stay, and where they allocate rooms to guests for monetary consideration, accompanied by fresh home-cooked meals and local produce. The guests get to experience the local way of life, staying with the owners of the house. At times there can be more than one family staying at that particular house, as Homestays are permitted to have a minimum of one room and maximum six rooms as per the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India norms (Guidelines of Approval and Registration of Incredible India Bed and Breakfast/Homestay Establishments).

As per these norms, Homestay establishments have to be registered under the Bed & Breakfast Scheme of the Tourism Department, and the owners have to reside there and make arrangements for provision of clean and comfortable accommodation and breakfast to the guests who book their rooms. The Researchers have had an opportunity to stay at the following Homestay establishments – Ocean-O-Pearl at Ganeshgule-Ratnagiri, Bhadsawale Farms at Neral, Maharashtra, The Dalethorpe Homestay at Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu, Berry Lane Homestay at Amathi, Coorg, Karnataka and Green Spaces at Munnar, Kerala and experience the traditional hospitality that they have become well-known for amongst tourists.

1.2. Features Of Homestays

i.) Homestays are owned and managed by the host family, who extend their hospitality to the tourists. The facilities offered to the guests differ from those in a hotel in that they are more personal, as there are only a few guests staying there at one time, in comparison to a hotel. This ensures that the homestay owners have more scope to cater to the individual’s requirements.

ii.) Moreover, the guests are able to stay in a homely environment, and can enjoy the luxury of having the entire space to move about. Also, if there are any infants or young children with them, it is a comfortable stay for them as well, since there is less fear of them disturbing the other guests during their play. Children are more comfortable in this environment, where there is less chance of the staff requesting their parents to keep them quiet.
iii.) Usually, people who stay in hotels across India have to choose their meals from amongst the ubiquitous Punjabi, Udupi or Indian-Chinese fare on offer, with the odd Continental item as a change. The kind of authentic food served to guests in Homestays cannot be found in hotels, which rarely offer the original local food. Very often travellers who visit far off destinations and stay in the hotels there end up ordering the familiar items offered on the menu and leave the destination without knowing what the local cuisine tastes like. It is in Homestays that guests can really experience the true flavors of the destination. At times, the host family may even permit the guest to enter the kitchen and pick up the nuances of the local cooking.

iv.) Since the tourists are staying with a local family they are able to, with their advice, visit local places of interest that are not as well-known as the commercially popular ones and yet have something unique to offer. Thus in addition to the must-see places on planned itineraries; they can also experience ones that are off the beaten track.

v.) The guests at a Homestay are welcome to participate in the local activities which include harvesting fruit in the orchards, working in the plantations, accompanying a fishing boat as it goes into the sea to haul its daily catch home or even feeding and grooming the animals on the estate or plantation. This gives them a chance to glimpse the routine life there.

1.3. Selecting Homestays

Guests can choose to book their accommodation at Homestays through web portals which have listings of such facilities. They often decide on a particular place on the basis of reviews from past guests over internet travel portals. Some of these Homestays have their own websites with information and photographs of facilities. Guests can also book their stay there through travel agencies that these Homestays have a tie-up with.

2. OBJECTIVES

This Research Paper has the following objectives-

I. To assess the popularity of Homestay concept amongst travellers in India.
II. To find out the expectation of guests who prefer this type of accommodation.

3. HYPOTHESES

H1: There is a significant acceptance by guests for Homestays.
H2: Homestays help in better understanding with respect to local cuisine, lifestyle & culture.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

- McGehee & Kim (2004) spoke about farmstay accommodation that is a vital part of agri tourism in which the guests get to experience farm life.
- Wang (2007) stated that homestays appeal to travellers searching for novelty, personalized service and genuine social interaction with the hosts.
• Dolezal (2011) analyzed that rural Homestays permit guests to catch a glimpse of the daily lives of village residents and therefore serve as a means of experiencing a local community in ways that differ from conventional tourism interactions and settings.
• Kumar, Gill & Kunasekaran (2012) opined that homestays are places where the tourists stay with the host’s family and experience their way of life in a direct and indirect manner.
• H. Ramakrishna (2012) analyzed that the prime object of Homestays is to increase the accommodation capacity for the tourist in heritage places.
• The review of literature suggests that the trend of travellers choosing Homestays as accommodation in tourist destinations is gaining popularity around the world as well as in India.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The methodology used for this research paper included using a Questionnaire and Sampling technique to find out views of the Respondents-
A survey of 60 travellers was conducted. This was through travel agents in Pune and Mumbai who make travel and accommodation arrangements for inbound international visitors and also sell domestic package tours and personalized tours to local travellers. The survey was done using a questionnaire to find out whether travellers are aware of the Homestay concept, and if they prefer it, then their requirements or expectations.

6. DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS
Following were the results of the survey, represented in a graphical format.

6.1 -Awareness about Homestays

Interpretation- Out of the sample size of 60 travellers, a majority i.e. 76.66% was aware of the Homestay concept, 15% were not aware and 8.33% respondents were not sure.
6.2 Preferred type of Accommodation

![Chart 2: Preferred type of Accommodation](image)

Interpretation- Out of the 60 travellers surveyed, 38.33% respondents preferred to stay in Hotels/Lodges, none preferred Yatri Niwas, 1.66% preferred to stay in Dormitories, while 60% stated their preference for Homestays. Thus a definite majority stated their preferences for Homestays.

6.3 Rating of experiences at Homestays with regard to the facilities offered/available.

![Chart 3: Rating of experiences](image)
Interpretation: The 46 Respondents who were aware of Homestays rated their experience as follows-

i.) Location- 65.21% - Excellent, 13.04% - Very Good, 10.86% - Good and 10.86% - Fair.

ii.) Hygiene- 32.6% - Excellent, 17.39% - Very Good, 39.13% - Good, 8.69% - Fair and 4.34% - Poor.

iii.) Basic Amenities- 32.6% - Excellent, 32.6% - Very Good, 19.56% - Good and 15.21% - Fair.

iv.) Variety of Food- 43.47% - Excellent, 43.47% - Very Good, 13.04% - Good.

v.) Taste- 50% - Excellent, 43.47% - Very Good, 6.52% - Good.

vi.) Personal requests- 62.21% - Excellent, 21.73% - Very Good, 6.52% - Good, 2.17% - Fair and 4.34% - Poor.

vii.) Safety- 21.73% - Excellent, 26.08% - Very Good, 30.43% - Good, 4.34% - Fair and 17.39% - Poor.

viii.) Emergency Services- 10.86% - Excellent, 15.21% - Very Good, 41.30% - Good, 21.73% - Fair and 10.86% - Poor.

6.4 Formal Training required for stakeholders

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<th>Respondents</th>
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<tr>
<td>Formal training required</td>
<td>56.52</td>
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<td>Not Required</td>
<td>43.47</td>
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<td>Not Sure</td>
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Interpretation: Out of the 46 respondents who were aware of Homestays, 56.52% stated that the owners /stake-holders needed to have some kind of a formal training, while 43.47% said it was not necessary.

6.5 Source of information about Homestays

Chart 5: Source of information about Homestays
Interpretation- Out of the 46 respondents who were aware of Homestays, 15.21% said that they got to know of them through Friends & Relatives, 6.52% through Information at destination, 17.39% through Newspaper articles, 28.26% through Travel Agents and 32.60% through Internet web-sites. So, a large proportion of travellers and guests were attracted by internet marketing.

6.6 Respondents rating of Homestays on various parameters.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Restrictions/free access to all areas</td>
<td>64.13%</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
<td>16.94%</td>
<td>1.28%</td>
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<td>Friendly atmosphere and personal attention</td>
<td>51.32%</td>
<td>34.21%</td>
<td>13.96%</td>
<td>0.51%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restricted number of guests</td>
<td>51.36%</td>
<td>42.65%</td>
<td>5.99%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling of relaxation</td>
<td>54.84%</td>
<td>32.51%</td>
<td>12.65%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6.7 Homestays fit into the budget and avoid extra taxes being paid.

Chart 6: Respondents rating of Homestays on various parameters

Interpretation: Out of 46 respondents who were aware of Homestays, their experience rated as follows-

i.) No Restrictions/free access to all areas- 64.13 % - Excellent, 17.65% - Very Good, 16.94 % - Good and 1.28% - Fair.

ii.) Friendly atmosphere and personal attention - 51.32% - Excellent, 34.21% - Very Good, 13.96% - Good and 0.51% - Fair.

iii.) Restricted number of guests 51.36% - Excellent, 42.65% - Very Good and 5.99% - Good.

iv.) Feeling of relaxation- 54.84% - Excellent, 32.51% - Very Good, 12.65% - Good.

Chart 7: Respondents rating of Homestays fit into the budget and avoid extra taxes being paid
Interpretation: Out of 46 respondents who were aware of Homestays, 56.52% agreed with the idea that Homestays fit into your budget & avoid extra taxes being paid to hotels, 30.43% disagreed, while 13.04% were not sure. So, a majority of the consumers feel that they save money in Homestays.

6.8 Homestays help understand & gain knowledge about destination & its culture

Chart 9: Homestays help understand & gain knowledge about destination & its culture
Out of the 46 respondents aware of Homestays, 76.08% said that residing at Homestays helps to understand and gain knowledge about the destination and its culture, 10.86% disagreed while 13.04% were not sure. So, for most guests, the Homestay experience enhanced their knowledge about the destination & its culture.

6.9 Authentic experience of local life as compared to a hotel

Chart 9: Authentic experience of local life as compared to a hotel
Interpretation: Out of the 46 travellers aware of this concept, an overwhelming majority of 89.13% said that this form of accommodation at the destination promotes an authentic experience of local life as compared to a hotel stay. 6.52% respondents disagreed, while 4.34% were not sure.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

i.) At times, this type of accommodation may be located at a distance from well-populated places, for example in the middle of a coffee plantation or a remote coastal area. Guests might feel concerned about their safety from humans as well as animals. Enhancement of safety and security measures for visitors such as a well-fenced perimeter, support services for visitors, offering travel advice and aiming for visitor satisfaction will go a long way in reassuring visitors. This is what will help the organizations to sustain and flourish.

ii.) Emergency services such as doctor on call should be provided for, as well as arrangement for transporting ill guests to the nearest hospital.

iii.) It is recommended that the Homestay operators invest in some kind of professional training for their employees so that they are better equipped to handle guest requests and requirements i.e creating a unique experience for the guests with a professional touch.

iv.) The operators should ensure that strict standards of hygiene are followed in their property, as guests do not want to compromise on this important aspect at any given point of time.

8. CONCLUSION

Homestay accommodation is an excellent way of experiencing the authentic style of living of a destination. Guests staying here can truly get to live the life as the locals do, in a way that they would not be able to in a hotel. They get to know about the culture and history of the destination. Homestay operators however need to work on the hygiene levels as well as provision of basic amenities to the travellers. They should also take care to have enhanced security measures that will greatly enhance the comfort levels of their guests. It is also important to keep in mind that they should co-ordinate with locals to maintain the natural and cultural beauty of the destination.

9. REFERENCES


WEB-SITES


BIOGRAPHY

Ms Prachi Navare is working as an Assistant Professor in Hotel Operations at the Maharashtra State Institute of Hotel Management & Catering Technology, Pune. With a teaching experience of over 13 years at the under-graduate and post-graduate level, she is currently teaching various subjects like Accommodations Management, Tourism, Human Resource Management, French language, Quality Management to name a few. She is a recognized P.G Teacher under the Savitribai Phule Pune University. She holds Master’s degrees in Personnel Management and Hotel & Tourism Management. She also has an advanced Diploma in French language and literature from the Alliance Francaise de Paris. Currently she is pursuing PhD in Management from Tilak Maharashtra University, Pune.

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