



# A Critical Review of Sustainable Practices in Homestay Operations

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## Abstract

Homestay tourism is essentially an assortment of rural tourism that attempts to attract tourists to immaculate destinations to share the customs, cultural legacy of the local people. In fact, rural tourism is a multifaceted concept that may consist of resort-based holiday plans, adventure tourism, health tourism, and leisure tourism. The basic idea of homestay is to provide a home away from home to the tourists, to enjoy the pleasure of home and family while visiting various destinations. The homestay operators provide neat, relaxing rooms in a traditional atmosphere, with authentic food and pleasing hospitality which are the basic components of a homestay initiative. Home-Stay Tourism is attracting the interest of scholars and facilitators alike, despite the fact that it is still a relatively new idea. The term "homestay" may suggest welcoming tourists and travelers into one's home in the same way one would any other guest's, with little to no structural changes. However, as intermediaries play an increasingly important role in connecting tourists and hosts, many homeowners feel pressured to make extensive renovations to meet the standards set by these intermediaries, if only to ensure their own success in the industry. House owners sometimes find themselves obligated to compromise their own priorities, tastes, and comfort zones in order to fulfill the terms of contracts & agreements with these larger brands.

**Keywords:** Home-Stay, home-stay opportunities, Green hotel, sustainable tourism, sustainable practices

## Introduction

The number of educated, middle-class Indians who would want to go overseas for whatever reason, be it business, school, or pleasure, is already high and rising quickly. The devastating impact on their buying power, however, stands as the greatest obstacle to their realizing this ambition. Typically, the larger the hole cut into their pockets, a more developed the nation they dream of visiting is. In order to make sure their vacation is well-organized and safe, they often choose well-known tourist companies at set prices, even if they aren't always happy with the service or the price.

Had they been given more freedom to decide on their own when it came to where to stay, what to see, eat, and when they wanted to travel, with the certainty of readily available facilitators and reasonable costs for protection, they would have been happy. Regarding the facilitators, they might have been just as happy and enthusiastic to take part if they were given some freedom to decide who to invite, what to provide, when to invite (or not), how much to charge, etc., along with some guarantee that their lives and property would be safe from unapproved and unwanted visitors.

Although they may not always signify the same thing, the words Bed and Breakfast (B & B) as well as Paying Guest (PG) are increasingly used in favor of Home-Stays. Bed & breakfasts and vacation rental properties aren't always signs of a nice place to stay. Home-Stay tourism, on the other hand, is a type of tourism in which visitors stay with local families and spend time along with move around with them. This allows for social as well as cultural interaction, different from professionalism of a businessman, while visiting different tourist spots.

### **The concept of Home Stay**

The term "home stay" refers to a short-term arrangement in which a person pays to stay in the house of another person. However, individuals within the community also provide lodging and other services to these visitors. Thus, it is considered to be administered (managed) by the individual or community according to Home-Stay Regulation. Because of this, home-stays are more akin to the idea of VFR tourism (VFR stands for "Visit to Friends and Relatives") than B&Bs or PGs, however unlike VFRs, guests at home-stays are required to pay a fee to the host family.

Guests are also welcomed to stay in the family house or in neighboring separate apartments. Most homestays provide their visitors the same level of comfort as a good hotel, eliminating the uncomfortable relationship with strangers while yet guaranteeing a certain level of professionalism for the money they charge. As the old Indian saying goes, "Athithi Devo Bhava" (which translates to "The Guest is God"), India is a great place to perfect the Home-Stay arrangement. Most tourists who stay in hotels while in India never get to feel genuine Indian hospitality, which is a shame. The increasing number of the homestays in India has the potential to benefit both the local economy and the local population by providing travelers with a more affordable and comfortable way to stay while also attracting tourists. Thorough studies and subsequent contributions that benefit both home-stay hosts and visitors are required for this to be both doable and worthwhile.

### **Indian home-stay opportunities**

In recent years, there has been a noticeable uptick in the popularity of the intercultural gatherings. This, along with the fact that many traditional families have been transformed by children leaving the nest and numerous others attending college or studying abroad, has left numerous empty houses. As a result, many Indian homes are finding that hosting home stays is a great way to earn some extra money without having to invest much beyond cleaning supplies and a positive attitude. As long as the homestay is clean, inexpensive, and offers security and the

opportunity to experience local culture, budget travelers who travel often say that even a cranky host won't stop them.

Homestay opportunities provided by traditionally generous parents allowed those who welcomed young Indians while they were abroad to reciprocate the favor by inviting them to India. This practice became more common as more along with more young Indians left for better education and employment opportunities abroad. In addition, the demand for cultural exchange, which is best facilitated by the reciprocal offering of the home-stay opportunities, has grown substantially in recent years due to the growing purchasing power of global population, the expansion of global economy, and the increasing number of Indians jetting off to other countries for vacations and adventure travel

## **Benefits of Homestay in India**

"AthithiDevoBhava" has the literal translation of "the guest is God" in Indian philosophy. Indians go to extraordinary lengths to make their visitors feel welcome and appreciated when they visit their house. The hospitality of the Indian people is unparalleled. Most tourists who stay in hotels in India never receive a taste of genuine Indian hospitality, which is a shame. Fortunately, this is beginning to change as more and more people in India choose to stay at locals' houses. The family house or neighboring separate quarters are used to host guests. In comparison to modern hotels, the most homestays nowadays provide comparable comfort to their clients. If you're looking for an alternative to a hotel, a homestay may be the way to go. Homestays in India have several advantages, including:

- 1. Distinctive and Characterful Accommodations** -- Homestays are the best way to really immerse yourself in the vibrant culture and unique traditions of India. From antique havelis (mansions) to secluded rural cottages, the possibilities are almost unlimited when it comes to plantation bungalows.
- 2. Personalized Service** -- A homestay often has fewer rooms than a hotel. The host family and the family that lives there operate it. This ensures that each visitor will get plenty personalized attention. The amount of time you spend with your host family is completely up to you. They have people who only want to eat with them and others who will spend hours speaking. If you want to learn about Indian culture and lifestyle, living with an Indian family is the best option. It is very uncommon for hosts and guests to form strong bonds during a vacation and continue communicating even after the trip has ended.
- 3. Local Knowledge**-- Making plans is a snap because to the hosts' plethora of knowledge about the region. Gaining such intimate familiarity with the area will greatly enhance your enjoyment of your stay. Guests may get priceless information from hosts that aren't accessible in a guidebook, and many hosts are more than happy to tour visitors about their hometown.
- 4. Home Cooked Food**-- Indian cuisine prepared at home tastes quite different from that found in restaurants and hotels. Staying at a homestay gives you the opportunity to experience traditional, freshly prepared Indian cuisine. There's more variety and taste, and it's a lot lighter than restaurant cuisine. There are homestays that go so far as to invite visitors into their kitchen, where they may observe or even help prepare meals.

**5. Unique Activities--** When you book a homestay, the host family will tailor their hospitality to your specific interests. The hosts will frequently go out of their way to make sure you have an enjoyable stay by organizing any activities you may be interested in. These things to do might change according on where you are. There is a wide variety of alternatives, including excursions to villages, picnics, and temple tours; seeing a coffee farm in Coorg; witnessing a polo match in Rajasthan; and herding animals in rural northern India. It is common practice to invite guests to weddings and other events. Instead of only seeing the tourist attractions, guests of homestays in India really get to experience the local culture.

### **Sustainability Framework: The outlook of sustainable practices**

An all-encompassing instrument, the Sustainability Framework examines the environmental, socio-cultural, and economic aspects of the tourism. Sustainable practises, effects, and results may be more easily evaluated when applied to homestays within this framework. The research looks at how homestays may help local communities financially, how different types of housing can affect the environment, and how homestays can promote cultural understanding and history preservation.

#### **Environmental Sustainability**

For homestays in India to continue operating in the future, environmental protection must be a top priority. Evaluating and reducing the ecological footprint of the homestay operations is the focus of the research. There is an effort to encourage sustainable practises such as recycling more, using less energy, and relying on the renewable energy sources. Homestay operators may reduce their impact on the environment by adopting eco-friendly practices. Research has shown that homestays may play a big role in protecting India's natural environment by reducing their water use, implementing waste reduction measures, and using renewable energy sources.

#### **Socio-Cultural Sustainability**

It is well-known that homestays in India play a significant role in preserving cultural and social traditions. One way to empower local communities is to include them in the tourist sector and provide them opportunity to participate economically. Researchers have discovered that homestays greatly aid in the preservation of the cultural heritage by allowing hosts and visitors to share traditional knowledge, practices, and rituals. To ensure that cultural exchange happens with care and attention, it is critical to lessen the negative impact on indigenous practices and ways of life. Tourists may help preserve India's rich cultural heritage by taking part in the homestay experiences, which can also help them better understand and appreciate the country's many distinct cultures.

#### **Economic Sustainability**

One of the most important things that homestay programs in India can do for the long run is to become financially stable. The goal is to minimize losses in the tourist value chain and ensure that all parties involved get an equal share of the economic advantages. It is critical that local populations have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from tourism-related endeavors,

including homestays. More money stays in hosts' pockets when direct booking methods are made easier to use. Supporting homestays that use locally produced goods and services helps the local economy and reduces dependency on outside vendors.

## Research Objectives

1. To study the effectiveness of current sustainable practices implemented in homestay operations across diverse regions.
2. To study the impact of sustainable practices on the economic viability and community engagement of homestays.
3. To study the integration of environmentally friendly initiatives in homestay operations, assessing their contributions to conservation and reduced ecological footprint.
4. To study the socio-cultural aspects of sustainable homestay practices, considering local community involvement, cultural preservation, and social responsibility.
5. To study the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of sustainable practices in homestay operations and propose recommendations for improvement.

## Research Questions

1. How effective are current sustainable practices implemented in homestay operations, and what variations exist in their success across diverse geographical regions?
2. What is the impact of sustainable practices on the economic viability of homestays, and how do these practices contribute to community engagement in different settings?
3. How are environmentally friendly initiatives integrated into homestay operations, and what measurable contributions do they make to conservation efforts and the reduction of ecological footprints?
4. What are the socio-cultural dimensions of sustainable homestay practices, and how do factors such as local community involvement, cultural preservation, and social responsibility influence these practices?
5. What challenges and opportunities are associated with the implementation of sustainable practices in homestay operations, and based on these findings, what recommendations can be proposed for enhancing sustainability in the homestay sector?

## Literature Review

(Semwal and Singh, 2023)The profitability of homestays in Uttarakhand is examined in this research. Adventurers and nature lovers go there for the stunning landscapes, fascinating traditions, and spiritual significance. The impact of homestays on both tourists and residents in Uttarakhand is examined in this research. As tourism continues to flourish, it is crucial to ensure the long-term preservation of our environment, culture, and communities. Sustainable housing options like homestays are becoming more popular because they allow visitors to immerse themselves in local culture, participate in community activities, and form meaningful connections with residents. This research assesses the unique qualities and long-term viability of homestays in Uttarakhand as a tourism destination. Additionally, the article discusses the community's cultural, social, economic, and environmental impacts of homestays. This research looks at the

potential of Uttarakhand homestays to promote ecotourism. It lays forth potential avenues for profit for everyone involved. Research on sustainable tourism, cultural interaction, and homestays is evaluated. The principles of sustainability, community-based tourism, the social exchange theory, & cultural theory provide light on the ins and outs of homestays. Benefits of homestays in Uttarakhand are the subject of this research. Local experiences and cultural exchanges are made distinct by diverse terrain and cultures. Tourists may immerse themselves in local culture by staying with families. Learning about one other's cultures helps preserve a place's history. Economic potential of host communities and profitability of homestay operations are highlighted in the report. Local economies, host families' incomes, and entrepreneurial ability may all benefit from welcoming guests into their homes. Tourism in Uttarakhand & its impact on the environment and local culture are the subjects of this research. Reduce the environmental effect of homestays via better trash management, energy efficiency, and the use of renewable energy sources. Economic independence for families and indigenous tourism both contribute to long-term social and cultural viability. This research delves into the socio-cultural impacts of homestays in Uttarakhand as a kind of sustainable tourism. Stakeholders should promote homestays as a means of fostering cultural understanding, economic independence, and ecological preservation. By weighing the pros and cons of homestays, lawmakers may encourage ecotourism that respects local traditions and preserves natural and cultural landmarks.

(Joshi and Bahuguna, 2023) Homestays are common in many nations that rely on tourism, such as the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia. Even in India, it's gaining traction. Himachal, Assam, and Uttarakhand are among of the Indian states that promote it in the hopes of attracting more tourists and creating more jobs. Being a relatively new phenomena in Uttarakhand, it is important to understand what drives guesthouse operators and what obstacles they face as they embark on their economic path. As a result, the literature review is divided into two parts. Part one examines research that concentrate on the reasons people establish homestays, while part two examines studies that focus on the difficulties that homestay owners face. It categorized the factors that drive homestay entrepreneurs into two groups: pull and push. Pull factors include, according to them, a desire to earn more money, a strong passion for the homestay industry, a desire to prove oneself, a desire to find personal fulfillment, an interest in entrepreneurship, the desire to own a business, autonomy, time management, and taking advantage of opportunities presented by available homes.

(Mukhopadhyay and Babu, 2022) Improved access to remote areas, a growing middle class with more discretionary means, and widespread use of the internet and social media all contributed to a brighter future for India's tourist industry. Access to the online travel agencies (OTAs) has increased economic opportunities and worldwide reach for homestays, which have already become an essential component of India's tourist industry. This article uses primary survey data from six states in India to examine how homestay operators' use of digital platforms has affected their business operations. Additionally, it looked at the current regulatory holes that may be filled to encourage homestay industry from a policy standpoint. Based on the results, we can say that promoting homestays is a great way to help local communities out financially, meet the aims of the sustainable tourism, and boost the industry as a whole in India.

(Yang, 2021) This report provided a concise overview of homestay marketing strategies used in Beijing's outskirts. Online travel companies, portals, blogs, social media, search engines, and government promotion platforms are the mainstays of this marketing strategy. In addition, the paper claims that the success of homestay marketing on the internet was due to feature orientation. Also included were instructions for working with the feature orientation. In conclusion, homestay marketing that focuses on features should avoid commercial erosion, capitalize on the geographical advantages, pay attention to the connotation creation, emphasize cultural taste, differentiate market demand, and pay attention to the cultural taste. Plus, hosts of homestays need to be creative and adept at new ideas. Homestays in the Beijing Suburb have seen a significant uptick in their brand value, new business standards have been promoted, and the system for leisure agriculture & rural tourism has been much improved thanks to innovation.

(Janjua, Krishnapillai and Rahman, 2021) In order to assess where our understanding of the rural homestays and tourism is at the moment, we have conducted this comprehensive literature study. We combed through 94 papers published in the chosen journals between 2010 and 2020 using the PRISMA flowchart as a guide. In this review, we look at the literature on the sustainable rural homestays and how it varies by setting, subject, sample, methodology, region, and theoretical framework. In addition to summing up the authors' important points and proposing avenues for further study, this review sheds light on the topic of the sustainability in the rural homestay tourism via the lens of co-occurrence. In the context of the sustainable rural tourism, homestay was only explored by 51% of the research that were assessed. As this study points out, there is a growing body of research focusing on rural homestays in communities, particularly in the Asia-Pacific area, from developing nations. Homestay branding, homestays & business, homestays and ICT proficiency, and sustainability training and development for homestay operators are unfortunately under-discussed in the current literature.

(Chetiya and Gogoi, 2021) Home-Stay Tourism is attracting the interest of scholars and facilitators alike, despite the fact that it is still a relatively new idea. The term "homestay" may suggest welcoming tourists and travelers into one's home in the same way one would any other guest's, with little to no structural changes. However, as intermediaries play an increasingly important role in connecting tourists and hosts, many homeowners feel pressured to make extensive renovations to meet the standards set by these intermediaries, if only to ensure their own success in the industry. The so-called "amateur" locals are already under a lot of financial strain from increased startup & maintenance expenses, and now they have to split their profits with the larger players in the hotel industry. When homeowners sign contracts and agreements with these major players, it often forces them to do what the company says, regardless of whether it means sacrificing their own values, tastes, or comfort zones. However, the thought of a massive dent in their bank accounts due to such international travel often dampens the enthusiasm of the average or middle class Indian tourist for trotting across the world.

(Chandra and Verma, 2018) The current study contributes to the sustainability component by looking at the hotel management's plans to be green. A convenience sample of 285 hotel managers had their data obtained using a standardized questionnaire. The statistical analysis tools SPSS V.20 and AMOS V.21 were used for the development and analysis of model, which included measurements and the structural model. According to the findings, hotel management's

plans to adopt eco-friendly policies are strongly impacted by guests' favorable attitudes and concerns about the environment. This research provided further evidence that behavioral elements, like the attitude of consumers and the environmental concern of staff, are just as important as economic ones when it comes to greening a company's operations. Green hotel practices are still in their infancy in India, but this research offers some helpful management insights into how they compare to wealthy countries.

(Amandeep, 2017) Hitler was absolutely correct, and his words ring true in the modern hotel business. Tourists from all over the world are increasingly avoiding noisy, polluted urban hotels in favor of more rustic, environmentally friendly options that put them in touch with nature. In view of the above, it is imperative that the hospitality industry revise its current approaches to environmental sustainability. A new idea called Eco Hotels or Green hotels has arisen as people become more conscious of the need to maintain ecological balance. A green hotel is one that has taken significant steps to enhance its environmental footprint in order to reduce its negative effects on environment. The purpose of this article is to examine eco-friendly hotel trends & best practices in an effort to get a better understanding of this topic. Also included will be some simple tactics that hotels may use for environmentally conscious operations, as well as a general outline of the laws and policies that pertain to hotels in India.

(Mbasera *et al.*, 2016) Finding out what eco-friendly methods hotels in South Africa and Zimbabwe have in place and how they're helping to lessen environmental impacts is the goal of this study. Earth is now experiencing a number of environmental crises, such as rising temperatures, pollution, ozone depletion, resource depletion, and solid waste accumulation. The environmental effect of hotels is substantial since they are a component of the tourist sector. The question that comes up is whether hotel owners understand the importance of eco-friendly practices in their businesses, even though there is an immediate need to fix this issue due to the breadth and depth of the hotels' environmental impacts. The qualitative study was conducted in eight hotels in the specified nations that use the case study technique. Though some hotels do their part to help the environment, there aren't any green management principles in place just yet. When it comes to the environmental issues caused by their hotel operations, some managers choose not to use green management strategies.

(Venkatesh and Mukesh, 2015) One of the newest trends in the hospitality and tourist sector, home-stays are quickly becoming the preferred method of lodging for many. Unlike hotels, home stays allow you to experience the land, culture, people, and food of a location in all its natural glory. Houses of all shapes and sizes are transformed into charming home-stays, offering visitors a chance to relax in a setting that is both close to and far from the hustle and bustle of city life. Local cultural and ecological history may be preserved via home-stays, which also provide a steady income for the local inhabitants. Experiencing living in a rural setting is the main emphasis of rural tourism. Ecotourism in its many forms is possible. There are plenty of welcoming locals in every town that may turn it into a tourism hotspot. The need for human labor is decreasing as a result of the increasing mechanization of agriculture. Because of this, the economy of certain towns is suffering, and young people are fleeing to cities in search of better opportunities. People living in rural areas may diversify their revenue streams away from agriculture via rural tourism. Rural tourism may help bring back long-lost forms of folk art and



craft by bringing in additional revenue. This form of economic interchange between rural and urban areas is wonderful and completely natural.

## Discussion

While some homestays prioritize eco-friendly practices and community engagement, challenges such as resource consumption and management persist. Striking a balance between providing authentic local experiences and minimizing the ecological footprint is crucial. According to Chetiya and Gogoi, locals are already under a lot of financial strain from increased startup & maintenance expenses, and now they have to split their profits with the larger players in the hotel industry. When homeowners sign contracts and agreements with these major players, it often forces them to do what the company says, regardless of whether it means sacrificing their own values, tastes, or comfort zones. Drawing on the case study by Semwal and Singh along with Joshi and Bahuguna on the homestays of Uttarakhand which also shed lights on the challenges and benefits that owner faces and how they operate homestays keeping the context of sustainability in mind. Although it's been noticed that homestay industry needs a lot of furnishing but Rural tourism may help bring back long-lost forms of folk art and craft by bringing in additional revenue. This form of economic interchange between rural and urban areas is wonderful and completely natural.

## Conclusion

There is a lot of areas for improvement and further expansion in the homestay industry, even if there has been considerable progress in its development and operations both domestically and internationally. The rise of homestays has opened up a lot of doors for residents in rural areas, creating jobs and generating revenue. Similar efforts are also likely to proliferate in metropolitan tourist spots. The latter is reasonable given that visitors' wallets tend to get a bigger hit while visiting metropolitan areas as opposed to more rural ones. This aspect makes exploring metropolitan areas on a budget extremely tough. Conversely, in order for the property owners, especially inexperienced rural people, to profit more from homestays, systems should be put in place that bring together facilitators and potential guests, providing a level of protection for both sides. With these two factors in mind, homestays are often seen as the future of the tourist industry.

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