

Policy To Practice: Assessing The Socio-Demographic Profile Of Homestay Operators And The Implementation Of The Himachal Pradesh Homestay Scheme 2025 In Shimla

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Abstract

This study presents an extensive assessment of the performance of homestays in Shimla District of Himachal Pradesh, particularly their performance dynamics and the socio-economic dimensions along with their relevance to the CBT (Community-Based Tourism) of Himachal Pradesh. The study adopts a quantitative approach in which the data collected from 160 homestay owners has been analyzed statistically. The results of the study highlight that the growth rate in the homestays is quite high; however, there are some socio-demographic differences, which include gender imbalance, as almost 83.1% of the respondents are males, and social inequity, as 91.3% belong to the socially dominant sections. Although most homestays are compliant with the standard administration and room parameters, the research highlights the existence of significant gaps in safety procedures fire safety in particular and environmental sustainability practices, such as rainwater harvesting and sustainable infrastructures. In addition, although entrepreneurial drive is one of the major factors encouraging homestay establishments, the research shows that about 76.9% of homestay owners view homestay as an additional source of income, with their economic success primarily dependent on the location rather than the socioeconomic characteristics of the owners. Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that future policy interventions should focus more on improving the quality of homestays rather than increasing their numbers through safety compliance, professionalization, and inclusion of underprivileged classes.

Keywords: *Homestay Tourism, Community-Based Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Operational Demography and Tourism Policy Compliance.*

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I. Introduction

Tourism, an elaborate global industry, plays a key role in economic development through job creation, foreign exchange earnings, and investments in infrastructure (Li et al., 2025; Uçar & Alsu, 2024). Given the broad impact of the industry in terms of services, education, and infrastructure, it is evident that this industry plays a vital role in developing economic systems and achieving diversification (Mir & Kulibi, 2023). The tourism industry makes a huge contribution to the Gross Domestic Product of India, and the future estimates indicates its significant role in supporting economic growth and employment in India (Ota et al., 2024). Tourism accommodation consists of different types of facilities including both hotels as well as different types of private facilities (Sánchez-Sánchez & Sánchez, 2025). These varied forms of accommodations highlight the global

trend of providing diversified accommodation facilities ranging from guest houses, resorts, backpacker accommodations, campsites, to serviced apartments. (Greenberg & Rogerson, 2019). In the larger picture of tourism, community-based tourism stands out as an important initiative towards sustainable development in regions with sensitivity towards ecology and rich cultural traditions (Kumar & Sharma, 2025). Community-based tourism is a model of sustainable tourism that involves a synergy between local communities and tourists. In this paradigm, local communities have agency to plan, develop, and manage tourism-related activities in order to foster economic prosperity, preservation of culture, and conservation of environment (Priatmoko et al., 2021). Community-based tourism differs from mass tourism, which marginalises local communities while externalizing economic benefits from these communities (Sapkota, 2024). Among the various models through which CBT is promoted, homestays represent the most intimate and culturally rooted community tourism accommodation. Homestay tourism is a particular form of tourist accommodation where tourists stay at home of local families in the destination area (Kafle, 2023). Such models are commonly described as a form of ecotourism management, which enables tourists to get directly involved in the native lifestyle, providing them an opportunity to experience their culture firsthand (Patwal et al., 2023). Such models help in creating sustainable tourism opportunities for the native communities by allowing tourists to have affordable accommodations and contributing significantly towards economic and socio-cultural sustainability (Lakhera et al., 2024). Homestay services have become a popular alternative mode of accommodation within the Indian hospitality industry, providing tourists with an authentic local experience other than the standard hotel accommodations (Krishnan et al., 2024). In this regard, the Ministry of Tourism plays a proactive role in encouraging such rural tourism programs by promoting homestays as a vital tool that helps to create employment opportunities and income generation in such communities, especially in the context of post-COVID-19 tourism development (Sharma et al., 2024). The concept of homestays in Himachal Pradesh can be viewed as a significant shift from the traditional modes of accommodation in the state's tourism industry (Khatkar, 2024). The program was initiated in 2008, and its primary objective is to disperse the tourist flow from crowded destinations such as Shimla, Manali, Dharamshala, and Dalhousie (Verma et al., 2023). In the sociodemographic aspect, one of the gender issues that arise in relation to the operation of homestays is the presence of gender inequality, where there might be a preponderance of females in some places who operate the homestay services, ensuring an equally hospitable environment for travelers (Bachok et al., 2019); on the other hand, there may be more men operating the services in others (Lakhera et al., 2024). There is also the age demographic aspect where researchers have noted that most of the homestay operators belong to adult age groups. Home stays can be differentiated on the basis of the ability of these home stays to provide visitors with genuine experiences of cultural immersion, allowing tourists to interact directly with the hosts and hence offering tourists a distinctive experience that goes beyond just accommodation (Dash, 2022; Hasbi&Badollahi, 2019). These distinct qualities may relate to the distinct physical characteristics associated with these home stays, such as distinctive bedrooms and beautiful settings, contributing immensely towards higher satisfaction levels among tourists (Sugiarto et al., 2024). In addition, the incorporation of local culture and local resources within the framework of home stay establishments not only leads to higher levels of guest satisfaction but also contributes towards the development of sustainable tourism activities, leading to increased productivity and employment opportunities within the local communities (Dar et al., 2024; Dash, 2022). The present study will analyze the current status of homestays with regard to Himachal Pradesh Homestay Policy 2025, alongside the socio-demographic profile of the homestay owners, to throw light on the socio-economic implications of homestays in Himachal Pradesh

II. Literature Review

Conceptual Foundation of Community-Based Tourism

Community-Based Tourism can be viewed as an alternative paradigm in the overall domain of tourism. This paradigm is distinguished by its focus on the need for community involvement, the fair sharing of economic benefits among the hosts, and the necessity to preserve indigenous culture and the natural environment (Walsh & Zin, 2019). In contrast, traditional mass tourism practices often ignore local people and deprive them of financial benefits (Pramono& Juliana, 2025). Thus, it is critical to involve the local community in tourism processes, as well as to develop sustainable tourism projects that correspond to local values and needs (Arafat et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2025). The importance of community participation in tourism activities has been well understood and acknowledged by professionals worldwide. Hence, CBT can be considered a beneficial form of tourism that helps implement poverty alleviation and sustainable tourism development strategies in deprived regions (Gutierrez, 2023). The conception of CBT took root in Thailand in the 1990s, where tourism services were structured and run by local people to generate direct socio-economic gains for them (Sapkota, 2024). The concept further gained momentum in the 1970s in reaction to the perceived drawbacks of large-scale tourism, which facilitated community empowerment through skills acquisition and the application of local resources (Lina, 2023). Furthermore, CBT is an eco-friendly framework that aims to

maximize socio-economic gains while minimizing adverse environmental effects, especially in developing countries that rely on natural resources. (Lo & Janta, 2021).

RQ 1: Why is there a need for research on Community-Based Tourism in Himachal Pradesh?

Homestay Tourism

Homestay tourism can be described as an accommodation form that involves paying guests residing within local families for a certain amount of time. In such a way, this type of tourism differs from the standard forms of accommodation because of offering a unique opportunity to get acquainted with the cultural heritage, traditions, and way of life of the hosts (Dash, 2022). Such a concept provides visitors with a possibility to become familiar with various products available locally, touristic attractions, as well as the fauna and flora of the area (Patwal et al., 2023). At present, such a kind of tourism has acquired popularity in the country due to the need to develop rural tourism in the region and to provide local inhabitants with additional sources of income and employment opportunities (Sharma et al., 2024). Apart from the abovementioned aspects, this kind of tourism is important for cultural and natural resources preservation as well as sustainable development of the hospitality industry as such and attraction of private sector representatives to engaging in culturally sensitive tourism advertising (Dar et al., 2024).

RQ 2: Why is there a need for research on Homestay Tourism in Himachal Pradesh?

Policy Framework and Himachal Pradesh Homestay Scheme

The Himachal Pradesh Homestay Scheme introduced in 2008 is a policy intervention intended to decongest the popular tourist destinations and reduce environmental pressure by decentralising tourist inflows of key destinations such as Shimla and Manali (Thakur et al., 2023). Not only does the policy aim to spread tourists to various destinations but intends to ensure sustainable development and enhance the socio-economic status of people in the area by engaging them in tourism activities (Thakur et al., 2023). As mentioned, community-based tourism will help improve the financial and economic wellbeing of the community members. In relation to the sustainable development goals, the policy addresses the eighth goal concerning good job creation and economic growth and the 12th goal that promotes responsible consumption (Verma et al., 2023). At present the homestay sector is governed by the Himachal Pradesh Homestay Policy 2025

RQ 3: How effectively are the Himachal Pradesh homestay policy guidelines 2025 implemented in District Shimla?

Socio-Demographic Profile of Homestay Operators

Homestay research is consistent in its emphasis on sustainability within the tourism industry. Researchers have focused on the promotion of culture and economic benefits to the locality (Khatkar, 2024). Socioeconomic gains for the local community include income creation, economic diversification, and skills enhancement among homestay owners (Lakhera et al., 2024). Homestay research has considered the motives for participating in the business, including financial gain and cultural conservation, and the hurdles faced by the proprietors in managing their ventures (Pandey, 2024). A considerable number of homestay owners are female entrepreneurs who have evolved from being homemakers to becoming leaders and the main breadwinners in their households, thus acquiring more respect and status in society (Acharya & Halpenny, 2017; Woli, 2022). The demographic data on the profile of homestay operators point towards self-employed women aged between 50 and 59 years, implying a seasoned workforce that operates in this industry (Bachok et al., 2018). On the other hand, other demographic studies reveal the dominance of male homestay owners in some areas particularly where government guidelines influence the rural tourism development (Lakhera et al., 2024). These differences in terms of gender distribution among operators in the homestay market can be attributed to socio-cultural norms within the region concerned, along with regulations pertaining to tourism ventures (Dar et al., 2024). Additionally, an examination of the economic benefits derived from the homestay business reveals that it results in better living standards for operators and their families and allows for greater investment in areas such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure (Khatkar, 2024). A number of studies have highlighted the positive relationship between higher educational qualifications among operators and homestay success; however, there is limited research on the educational profile of operators in the homestay industry (Dar et al., 2024). It is interesting to note that operators in the Nainital district are educated up to various degrees, including primary school to postgraduate, reflecting their ability to manage the tourism business (Pandey, 2024).

RQ 4: What is the Socio-Demographic Profile of Homestay Operators in District Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

III. Methods And Measurements

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the present status of homestays and the socio-economic profile of homestay operators of the district Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

Objectives of the study

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the operational status of homestays and the socio-demographic profile of homestay operators in District Shimla

- To study the socio-demographic profile of homestay operators in District Shimla, Himachal Pradesh.
- To examine how effectively the Himachal Pradesh Homestay Policy 2025 is implemented in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh.

Hypothesis of the Study

- The socio-demographic profile of homestay operators in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, exhibits a uniform distribution across the study area.
- Homestay operators in Shimla demonstrate an equal rate of adherence to both the mandatory and desirable requirements stipulated in the 2025 Homestay Policy.

Sampling Design

The population for this study is defined by the total number of registered homestays within Shimla, a popular tourist town located in Himachal Pradesh, which amounts to 959 units based on data provided by the Department of Tourism of Himachal Pradesh. Registered homestays within all the tehsils of Shimla district were considered the universe from which the sample was taken. A criterion sampling technique, which falls under the category of purposive sampling methods, was adopted to choose tehsils. The criterion used was whether the tehsil had more than 50 registered homestay units. Using this criterion, four tehsils, namely Shimla, Theog, Kumarsain, and Rampur, were selected, having a total of 809 homestay units, which constitute about 84.36 per cent of all registered homestay units in Shimla district. The sample size of 160 homestay units constitutes 20 per cent of the 809 homestay units.

Primary data was gathered by administering a structured survey questionnaire which aimed to collect data about the current status of homestays based on the state tourism policy guidelines, as well as data about the demographics of the homestay owners. The secondary data used in this study was sourced from the Department of Tourism, Himachal Pradesh, particularly the database of registered homestays and the list of requirements (both mandatory and desirable) as detailed in the Himachal Pradesh Homestay Policy 2025. This list can be verified at <https://himachaltourism.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Draft-HP-Home-Stay-Rules-2025.pdf> . Pilot survey was carried out from 1st November 2025 to 30th November 2025 in three selected regions Ghanahatti, Baldeyan, and Bharari through a lottery technique. Responses were gathered from 40 homestays, out of which 33 were taken into account, while 30 responses were finally taken, excluding any kind of invalid or biased responses. Based on the pilot survey, the questionnaire was modified keeping in mind all the necessities and desirable criteria that have been mentioned by the state. The improvements made were in regards to adding more categories in the category of infrastructure as ‘Traditional OR Modern RCC OR Mixed,’ changing the closed question about ‘Experience in operating homestay’ to an open one, and finally adding extra responses under ‘Motivation for setting up homestay,’ such as awareness about tourism and investment of money.

Table 1: Population of the Study

Sr. No.	Tehsil	Number of Homestay Units	Sr. No.	Tehsil	Number of Homestay Units	Sr. No.	Tehsil	Number of Homestay Units
1	Shimla	529	7	Kotkhai	19	13	Nankhari	4
2	Theog	136	8	Jubbal	19	14	Nerwa	1
3	Kumarsain	91	9	Rohru	14	15	Kupvi	1
4	Rampur	53	10	Chirgaon	12	16	Tikkar	1
5	Junga	40	11	Dodrakwar	10		Total	959
6	Sunni	23	12	Chopal	6			

Source: Himachal Pradesh Tourism Department, <https://himachaltourism.gov.in/> (upto, 2024)

Table 2: Determination of sample Size

Sr. No.	Tehsil	Number of Homestay Units	Sample Size Proportion (20 per cent of each tehsil)
1.	Shimla (Urban & Rural)	529	105
2.	Theog	136	27
3.	Kumarsain	91	18
4.	Rampur	53	10
	Total	809	160

Table 3: Pilot Testing and Purification of the Questionnaire

S.No.	Items in Pilot Study	Items taken in pilot study	Items Dropped	Items Added	Items refined	Items Finalised
1	Mandatory Requirements	10	Nil	8	Nil	18
2	Desirable Requirements	10	Nil	8	Nil	18
3	Socio-Economic Profile	18	Nil	nil	3	18

Tools & Techniques

This study uses statistical tools and methodologies to get the intended results. Before being used, these tools were thoroughly examined. The software used for data analysis is SPSS (version 25) and MS Excel (version 21). Data is arranged, presented, and analysed using descriptive statistics, such as percentages.

IV. Results And Discussions**Socio-Demographic profile of the Homestay operators in District Shimla, Himachal Pradesh****Table 4: Socio-Demographic Profile of Homestay Operators**

Sr. No.	Demographic Profile	Classification	Frequency	Per centage	Cumulative Percentage
1	Gender	Male	133	83.1	83.1
		Female	27	16.9	100.0
2	Social Category	General	146	91.3	91.3
		OBC	3	1.9	93.1
		SC	9	5.6	98.8
		ST	2	1.3	100.0
3	Education	Up to Matriculation	19	11.9	11.9
		Plus Two (+2)	59	36.9	48.8
		Graduation	54	33.8	82.5
		P.G. & Above	28	17.5	100.0
4	Motivation for starting homestay	To own a Business	67	41.9	41.9
		Knowledge of tourism	14	8.8	50.6
		Investment of savings	4	2.5	53.1
		Benefit of Locational advantage	25	15.6	68.8
		All of the Above	50	31.3	100.0
5	Primary Source of Income	Yes	37	23.1	23.1
		No	123	76.9	100.0
6	Age Categories	0-35 years	50	31.3	31.3
		36-50 years	67	41.9	73.1
		51 year & above	43	26.9	100.0
7	Annual Income	0-100000	41	25.6	25.6
		100001-500000	86	53.8	79.4
		500001-1000000	33	20.6	100.0
8	Homestay Running Experience	0-5 years	115	71.9	71.9
		6-10 years	34	21.3	93.1
		11 & above	11	6.9	100.0

Source: Compiled by author

The demographic characteristics of homestay entrepreneurs depicted in Table 4 offer a detailed picture of socio-demographic attributes of the respondents (N = 160). Frequency and percentages show significant trends about gender distribution, social classification, education level, motivations, income dependency, age group, and experience in the homestay sector. Gender distribution clearly exhibits that the homestay sector is predominantly dominated by males (83.1%) with a very few females (16.9%). Such a trend suggests that the homestay sector in the current geographical region is male-oriented with comparatively fewer women entrepreneurs, indicating gender disparities in terms of entrepreneurship or property ownership. Concerning social classification, a very high number of respondents fall under the General classification category (91.3%). On the other hand, the presence of Other Backward Classes (1.9%), Scheduled Castes (5.6%), and Scheduled Tribes (1.3%) is quite limited. This skewed distribution indicates that homestay ownership and operation are concentrated among socially advantaged groups, possibly reflecting disparities in access to resources, capital, and tourism opportunities. Based on the analysis of the educational profile, one can state that homestay owners are highly educated people. Indeed, more than half of the total number of participants are graduates (33.8%) and higher secondary school leavers (36.9%). Moreover, the percentage of individuals who have obtained postgraduate qualifications is 17.5%, and 11.9% have reached matriculation education. This information means that homestay operators belong to the category of moderately and highly educated people who may use their knowledge in the process of management and service delivery. Turning to the motives behind homestay

ownership, one should note that 41.9% of respondents wanted to own a business. Locational advantage motivated 15.6%, knowledge about tourism motivated 8.8%, saving investment motivated 2.5%, while 31.3% respondents were motivated by multiple reasons. This information demonstrates that entrepreneurial ambitions play a pivotal role when it comes to choosing homestay ownership as a business model; however, there are certain situational and knowledge-related factors that may affect entrepreneurs' decision-making. In turn, an analysis of the primary source of income shows that only 23.1% of respondents receive their earnings from homestay activities, whereas the remaining 76.9% earn money elsewhere. This suggests that, for most operators, homestays serve as a supplementary or secondary source of income rather than a primary livelihood. In terms of age distribution, it can be observed that most of the operators belong to the age group of 36 to 50 years (41.9%) and are followed by operators who are less than 35 years old (31.3%) and then those who are 51 years old or above (26.9%). Therefore, from the age distribution, it can be seen that the main drivers of the homestay industry are middle-aged people with some contributions made by the young generation, which shows some generational changes in the industry. In terms of the annual income, most of the operators come under the moderate income bracket (₹100001 – ₹500000), which constitutes 53.8% of the sample size, whereas 25.6% earn below ₹100000 and 20.6% earn between ₹500001 – ₹1000000. In relation to experience in the homestay industry, it can be seen that there are a large number of operators (71.9%) with less than five years of experience in the industry, which signifies that this industry has been growing recently.

From the analysis, it can be seen that the homestay industry consists mainly of male individuals, who have a good education level but who operate within socially cohesive networks. Homestay operators are mainly middle-aged individuals with average earnings and engage in the business as a secondary source of income. From the analysis of operator experience levels, it can be seen that the industry is growing.

Present Status of Homestays in District Shimla, Himachal Pradesh (As per enumerator's observations)

Table 5: Mandatory Requirements under Himachal Pradesh Homestay Policy, 2025

Sr. No.	Mandatory Requirements	Response on the basis of the enumerator observation	Frequency	Per centage	Cumulative Percent
1	Application Form as per ANNEXURE I.	Yes	157	98.1	98.1
		No	3	1.9	100.0
2	List of documents as per ANNEXURE II.	Yes	157	98.1	98.1
		No	3	1.9	100.0
3	Online Payment Facilities	Yes	143	89.4	89.4
		No	17	10.6	100.0
4	House & Guest Room Condition Well maintained or not	Yes	156	97.5	97.5
		No	4	2.5	100.0
5	Room Cleanliness and Ventilation	Yes	157	98.1	98.1
		No	3	1.9	100.0
6	Bedding Quality	Comfortable	150	93.8	93.8
		Not Comfortable	10	6.3	100.0
7	Adherence to minimum size of each Room & Bathroom in Square feet.	Yes	157	98.1	98.1
		No	3	1.9	100.0
8	Is Kitchen Hygiene	Yes	136	85.0	85.0
		No	24	15.0	100.0
9	Good quality Cutlery and Crockery	Yes	139	86.9	86.9
		No	21	13.1	100.0
10	Availability of RO/ aqua guard Water facility	Yes	119	74.4	74.4
		No	41	25.6	100.0
11	Garbage Disposal facilities as per Municipal/applicable Laws	Yes	119	74.4	74.4
		No	41	25.6	100.0
12	Energy-Saving Lighting (CFL/LED) in guest Rooms	Yes	157	98.1	98.1
		No	3	1.9	100.0
13	Visitor Book and Feedback Facilities	Yes	59	36.9	36.9
		No	101	63.1	100.0
14	Emergency Contact of Doctors, Police & Fire	Yes	44	27.5	27.5
		No	116	72.5	100.0
15	Facilities for assisting tourists with forgotten or left back luggage.	Yes	82	51.3	51.3
		No	78	48.8	100.0
16	Fire Extinguisher	Installed	58	36.3	36.3
		Not Installed	102	63.8	100.0
17	Guest Register (Check In – Check out Information)	Maintained	152	95.0	95.0
		Not Maintained	8	5.0	100.0
18	CCTV Installation	Installed	114	71.3	71.3
		Not Installed	46	28.8	100.0

Source: Compiled by author

Table 5 shows a practical evaluation of 160 homestays in line with the legal requirements. A critical frequency percentage analysis shows a contrasting picture, with high levels of compliance in operational issues coupled with low levels in the aspect of safety, documentation, and facilities for service support. To begin with, there is near total compliance when it comes to documentation. This is clear from the high levels of documentation in application forms (98.1%), and document compliance (98.1%). Furthermore, in regard to structure and physical features, all the homestays have achieved very high standards, including house/guest room maintenance (97.5%), cleanliness and ventilation (98.1%), and minimum room size standards compliance (98.1%). When it comes to guests' comforts, 93.8% of the homestays provide comfortable bedding while 89.4% have online payments facilities. This clearly shows that homestay operations have been modernized and clients are made comfortable. In addition, 98.1% of the homestays have energy-saving lights, this indicates that operators are aware of sustainable practices. Nevertheless, a few other service qualities indicators receive an average score. The hygienic state of the kitchen facilities is adequate in 85% of homestays. The quality of crockery and cutlery offered is fairly high too; however, only 86.9% of them offer this kind of equipment. Safe drinking water is found in 74.4% of homestays, which also means that there is room for improvements in terms of health management. In addition, only 74.4% of establishments have garbage bins and appropriate garbage disposal facilities. This again signals poor health management. Another alarming aspect is related to the lack of interaction with customers as well as insufficiently developed procedures for providing services. Indeed, only 36.9% of homestays maintain a visitor book or some feedback mechanisms. Moreover, only 51.3% of them provide some help for those guests who might forget their luggage. However, the biggest problems are connected with safety precautions. Indeed, emergency phone numbers are available only in 27.5% of facilities, whereas fire extinguishers can be found in only 36.3% of cases.

In summary, the study suggests that although there exist many homestays in Shimla which adhere to the important infrastructural and administrative requirements, there is still a lot to be desired in terms of the safety and environmental aspects as well as services offered to tourists.

Table 6: Desirable Requirements under Himachal Pradesh Homestay Policy, 2025

Sr. No.	Desirable Requirements	Response on the basis of Enumerator observation	Frequency	Per centage	Cumulative Percent
1	Parking Facilities	Yes	133	83.1	83.1
		No	27	16.9	100.0
2	Attached Private Bathrooms with every room	Yes	160	100.0	100.0
		No	0	0.0	100.0
3	Toilet Facilities	Yes	160	100.0	100.0
		No	0	0.0	100.0
4	Availability of running hot & cold water with proper sewerage connection	Yes	156	97.5	97.5
		No	4	2.5	100.0
5	Water-Saving taps/shower	Yes	99	61.9	61.9
		No	61	38.1	100.0
6	Dining Area	Yes	146	91.3	91.3
		No	14	8.8	100.0
7	Wardrobe Facilities with at least 4 clothes hangers in the guest room	Yes	141	88.1	88.1
		No	19	11.9	100.0
8	Shelves or drawer Space in the guest rooms	Yes	141	88.1	88.1
		No	19	11.9	100.0
9	Good quality chairs, working table and other necessary furniture	Yes	156	97.5	97.5
		No	4	2.5	100.0
10	Arrangements for Laundry Services	Yes	104	65.0	65.0
		No	56	35.0	100.0
11	Refrigerator in the Homestay	Yes	86	53.8	53.8
		No	74	46.3	100.0
12	Lounge Area	Yes	97	60.6	60.6
		No	63	39.4	100.0
13	Heating and Cooling facility in homestay	Yes	103	64.4	64.4
		No	57	35.6	100.0
14	Luggage Assistance on request	Yes	145	90.6	90.6
		No	15	9.4	100.0
15	Safekeeping Facilities in the room	Yes	74	46.3	46.3
		No	86	53.7	100.0
16	Security Guard facilities	Yes	5	3.1	3.1
		No	155	96.9	100.0
17	Promotion of Himachali Local culture in the Homestay	Yes	141	88.1	88.1
		No	19	11.9	100.0
18	Rainwater Harvesting in the Homestay	Installed	62	38.8	38.8
		Not Installed	98	61.2	100.0

Source: Compiled by author

From the table above which gives insight into the desirable requirements of homestay, it is clear that they offer value addition, sustainable features, and tourist satisfaction. From the analysis, it is evident that there is a presence of solid foundational facilities coupled with deficiencies in advanced facilities and community-based practices. Initially, basic accommodation facilities are very well provided. All homestays (100%) have attached private bathrooms and toilet facilities, while 97.5% provide hot and cold water along with adequate sewerage. This is a sign of success as homestays have managed to develop themselves into standard hospitality services comparable to conventional hotels. Regarding convenience, most homestays are adequately furnished. Facilities like dining (91.3%), wardrobe facilities (88.1%), shelves/drawers (88.1%), and furniture (97.5%) are common in homestays. 83.1% of homestays offer parking facilities, making it easier for tourists. Furthermore, 90.6% of homestays provide luggage assistance, highlighting their customer-oriented attitude. One strength lies in the promotion of local culture, as evidenced by the fact that 88.1% of homestays include Himachali culture. This is one of the fundamental tenets of community-based tourism. But there are medium-level amenities that are moderately adopted. Laundry facilities (65%), heating and cooling systems (64.4%), lounges (60.6%), and water-efficient taps (61.9%) are only found in about two-thirds of the homestays. In addition, only 53.8% have refrigerators. This shows that there are some amenities lacking that modern travelers expect to be present. There are some significant shortcomings in terms of security and sustainability. Safekeeping services are found in only 46.3% of the homestays, meaning that there are some issues related to the security of guests staying in homestays. Furthermore, there are no security guards in almost all homestays, showing that there are no security personnel for guests. It can be argued that although there are some security problems in the area, such as robberies and kidnappings, there are minimal security concerns due to the relative safety of the area. From the environmental point of view, there are only 38.8% of homestays that have rainwater harvesting services, it suggests that eco-friendly practices are not yet fully integrated.

From the results obtained, it can be seen that although homestays generally achieve the standards in terms of basic services and comfort, the security and sustainability levels are considerably low. It is therefore important to address these challenges by undertaking sensitization, motivation, and supportive policy measures.

V. Conclusion

The study shows that the industry of homestays has evolved to become an important element in the state's approach to community-based tourism, which strives for decentralizing tourist flow and creating sustainable rural development. The research found that the sector under consideration is currently experiencing an active stage of development, with a large number of new entrepreneurs, who comprise more than 70% of all the owners and have been in the business for not more than five years. Although all the necessary administrative and organizational prerequisites for the business are met by almost all the respondents, some critical gaps remain with regard to the implementation of security measures and eco-friendly practices. Namely, the low level of using both fire-safety facilities and water conservation techniques shows that at the moment, the growth of the industry exceeds its ecological integration. The socio-demographic findings also defy a few conventional global narratives by showing a clear bias towards male domination in terms of operation, as well as ownership by socially privileged individuals within the local homestay sector. Additionally, the study shows that the level of age and educational attainment has little effect on the size of the business but greatly influences the entry into the market and dependence on the venture as a means of generating income. Most importantly, performance in financial terms in such establishments depends largely on geographical advantage and the physical capacity of the business. To realize the goals of the Himachal Pradesh Homestay Policy by 2025, it will be necessary to focus more on quality than on the number of establishments. This includes enhancing the safety standards, encouraging environmentally friendly construction, and being socially inclusive.

VI. Implications Of The Research

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the dynamic landscape of community-based tourism in Himachal Pradesh, offering a base for both theoretical advancement and practical policy refinement.

Academic and theoretical implications

This paper makes an original contribution to existing academic discourse on multiple interconnected areas in tourism studies. To begin with, CBT research has gained additional empirical grounding from the regional case study of Shimla as a proof for theorizing homestays as a culturally situated model conducive to true empowerment of community members. With regard to entrepreneurship theories of tourism, the discovery of the specific "growth stage" that emerged as the result of entry into the market by entrepreneurs driven by the desire for ownership instead of being constrained by geographical location challenges researchers to re-examine motivational schemes. In addition, this paper contributes to discussions regarding gender roles in tourism entrepreneurship, since the observation of male dominance (83.1%) defies the global trend and raises issues of regional socio-cultural context for gender relations in the field. Lastly, its use of the State Tourism Guidelines 2025 as a criteria for assessing policy compliance provides an original methodology for future research.

Policy and Practical Implications

These insights have practical value in terms of providing a scientific basis for effective tourism governance in key areas. For instance, the existence of non-compliance cases makes it imperative for policymakers to have an evidence base to move towards mandatory auditing and provision of equipment through subsidies. In the same breath, there is sufficient evidence to encourage the adoption of incentive-based tools, such as green certification or taxation structures, which will encourage the operators to adopt sustainable operations. With regard to guest feedback systems, there is enough evidence for tourism administrators to invest in the development of digital infrastructure to make operators more accountable. With respect to ownership of tourism enterprises, it gives policymakers a solid ground on which to design interventions to provide financial and skills support to people belonging to OBC, SC, and ST categories. Finally, the presence of unexperienced operators justifies the implementation of a professional training program for hospitality services within the region.

VII. Limitations Of The Study

Although the study has contributed greatly to knowledge about the Homestay Industry in Shimla, certain shortcomings cannot go unnoticed. Geographically, since this study focuses only on District Shimla, it does not allow the results of this study to be generalized to other districts in Himachal Pradesh or even to other parts of the Himalayas with different socio-cultural dynamics. From the methodological perspective, the limitation lies in the selection process used for conducting the research using purposive/criterion sampling, which considered only those tehsils where the number of registered units exceeded 50. The main constraint of the study, however, was in focusing solely on the perspectives of one stakeholder group – operators' experiences were explored while tourists' satisfaction from their stay at these homestays was left out of consideration despite being important for assessing community tourism projects' efficiency. A very minor case of non-response bias can be identified, as some of the participants refused to take part in the research due to the absence of the owner or personal reasons. At last, the cross-sectional design of the research restricts its ability to account for the impact of seasonality on the flow of tourists, which affects the performance of the homestays.

VIII. Future Scope Of The Study

The results of this research point to a number of promising directions for further academic exploration. In comparative terms, a regional analysis involving key tourism destinations like Manali, Dharamshala, and Dalhousie might shed light on whether the trends discovered, especially the strong gender bias towards men, apply throughout the state or only within individual districts. As far as the demand side is concerned, a customer-oriented approach that investigates tourist satisfaction and expectations in relation to experiencing genuine Himachali culture would be an excellent addition to the supply side orientation of the current research. In terms of longitudinal analysis, monitoring the dynamics of the present group of new entries over time may provide interesting findings in relation to the development of managerial practices, compliance, and sustainability among others based on the acquired experience. Another important area for future research concerns the socio-cultural and economic impediments to the under-representation of women and marginalized social groups as owners of homestays, which can guide future interventions in addressing their inclusion problems. As for the insignificant impact of market distance on the income of the respondents, studies on how online booking portals can help increase the visibility and profits of remotely located homestays appear promising too. In addition to this, environmental sustainability audits, which measure the real impact of homestays as compared to traditional hotels, can further substantiate the call for mandatory "Green Certifications." Lastly, an implementation study on the Himachal Pradesh Homestay Policy 2025 can generate important information on the success of regulatory change in achieving qualitative growth in the sector.

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