Rural Homestays Reviving Culture and Traditions: A Study Analysing Expectation and Satisfaction of Homestay's Guests

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Abstract---In contemporary world, travellers are more inclined towards seeking peace and tranquility from vacation destination rather than mere travel. Travelllers indulge in travel experience that enables them to connect with locals, gets genuine insight into their culture and traditional lifestyles. Rural homestays are one such means to cater the needs of such tourists in all-inclusive. The purpose of the study is to evaluate variation between the factors affecting satisfaction and expectation of the homestay's guests. The study is conducted in the Shimla district of Himachal Pradesh, India. The data is collected by close ended questionnaire method, in face-to-face interaction with 200 tourists staying in 20 rural homestays. The study is intended to evaluate various attributes of the rural homestay accommodation that leads to satisfaction/dissatisfaction among guests staying in the homestay and also to make homestay owners understand the needs and requirements of guests to improve upon the service provided. The study also analyses the relationship between guests' socio-economic profile and their satisfaction. The result of the research supports the suggestions for the homestay owners and public administrators that further boost the level of satisfaction of the guests and contributes in extensive rural as well as cultural tourism development.

Keywords---culture tourism, rural homestay, rural tourism, tourist's expectation, tourist's satisfaction.

Introduction

India is globally known for its innate tourism attractions and marvelous hospitality. In the year 2019, India attracts 17.91 million foreign tourists and 2321.98 million domestic tourists visits around the nation (Ministry of Tourism, 2020). The World Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index in the year 2019 ranked India 34th among 144 economies (World Economic Forum, 2019). India being rich in culture, tradition, heritage, diverse ecology and spectacular natural attractions cater to all brackets of tourists. Ministry of Tourism plays crucial role in formulating promising policies and strategies to foster growth of tourism industry in the country. Tourism and Hospitality industry plays pivotal role in growth impetus of nation by contributing in the economy through generating employment and acting as a source of foreign exchange earnings. Surge in the number of tourists result in increased competition between service providers to gain competitive edge. There is a vital need to understand tourist's behavior, their purchasing pattern and decision making. An amalgamation of natural tourist attractions and services & facilities provided to the tourists completes a holiday experience (Qiao et al., 2021; Jamaludin et al., 2012).

Tourists visiting a destination has prior expectations while experiencing the services and facilities, if the actual services experienced are in congruence with the prior expectations the tourists feel satisfied (Sulistyadi et al., 2019). While a feeling of dissatisfaction arises when actual experience doesn't meet the pre conceived expectation. Level of tourist's satisfaction is an indicator of quality of services and facilities provided to the them that leads to overall growth of tourism. Tourists pay close attention while deciding on an appropriate accommodation that compliments their needs and requirements. Nowadays modern tourists not only demand comfortable and budgeted stay instead they have quest to explore and gain knowledge about traditional living culture and related practices. Rural homestay accommodation best fit for such quests and authentic traditional experience. The year 2020 is marked as the year of 'tourism and rural development' by UNWTO, with an objective of focusing on rural communities' empowerment and development of rural sites through tourism. There is exponential growth in the number of tourists willing to experience alternate form of accommodation – homestay during their course of travel (Al-Laymoun et al., 2019; Sharma, 2020; Thapa & Malini, 2017). A rural homestay accommodation facilitates basic necessity of clean and hygienic bed-room along with home cooked meals and offer an experience of rustic lifestyle, custom and traditions. In tourism and hospitality industry, accommodation sector is keenly focusing in understanding and improving quality of service and perceived value of the service for guests (tourists) to achieve customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Thi et al., 2020; Sulistyadi et al., 2019).

Himachal Pradesh, India is popularly known as 'land of gods', famous for its pristine natural beauty, topographic-cultural diversity with varied climate change. Located in sub-Himalayan region, Himachal Pradesh attracts tourists all around the globe. In 2019, Himachal Pradesh experienced 16.83 million domestic tourists' inflow and hosted 383 thousand foreign tourists (IBEF, 2013). Shimla once summer capital in British Era is now a capital of the Himachal Pradesh with geographical area of 5131 sq km comprising rural land of 5075 km sq and rest

55km sq is urban (Kinnaur, 1932). Located in the south western Himalayan ranges with subtropical highland climate. Shimla houses second highest number of registered homestays 433 units after highest in kullu (578) out of 2189 in the state. Himachal Pradesh' Department of Tourism and Civil Aviation has launched a scheme in 2008 under the name of 'Himachal Pradesh Home Stay Scheme, 2008', that majorly aims on providing an accommodation to tourists amidst rural areas of Himachal Pradesh with all basic facilities and a chance to experience traditional lifestyle of the region. An unique predominant architectural style of houses in the region is known as 'kath kuni', here 'kath' means wood and 'kuni' means stone, a house structure that is made of wood and stone (Dave et al., 2013). In modern era of glass, steel and reinforced concrete, materials used for building houses in Himachal Pradesh are still has major proportion of wood and stone along with other materials (Hui et al., 2007; del Bosque & San Martín, 2008).

Intricate wood carvings, motif designs, wooden pendants (jhallars) are integral part of Kath kuni (/part kath-kuni) houses not only adds to the aesthetic beauty, it also has religious and folk reference. The construction is done in such a way that it keep the interiors warm to withstand harsh cold weather, with customarily fire place in the middle of the living room. According to the Himachal Pradesh Homestay Scheme, criteria of being a registered homestay, the accommodation must be part/portion of the existing house structure of the host (owner of the house) and the host (/their family) must be residing in the premises all the time. The scheme intends to benefit both, the tourists(guests) as well as the host (service provider) by letting guests stay at the homes of host in return of monetary obligation, the guests experience local life, cuisine, custom and unexposed serenity of the habitat (Gnoth, 1997; Poria et al., 2006).

Significance of the study

Tourists staying in rural homestays of Shimla district of Himachal Pradesh are earmarked for the purpose of the current study, their expectation and satisfaction are evaluated to understand the buying pattern, behavioural pattern and to suggest improvements in the service provided. Through rural homestays, tourists earn an opportunity to live close to the nature and experience indigenous cultural lifestyle while enjoying the amenities of a conventional hotel accommodation. The outcome of the study can be further evaluated to understand the means or information that assist in forming expectations of the tourists towards homestays and also the motivating factors behind choosing a homestay accommodation. The research further aid homestay owners in formulation of marketing strategies in accordance with the expectations of the tourists to enhance competitiveness of rural homestays. Along with apprising society about the traditional and cultural rituals, cuisines, lifestyle, activities and practices (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008; Devesa et al., 2010).

Literature review

Homestay and rural tourism

Homestay accommodation refers to a lodging facility including full board that enable tourists to come across indigenous language, culture and social structure (Agyeiwaah et al., 2013). Successful implementation of the homestay not only benefit the host in terms of monetary gains, but also contributes towards community development in terms of socio-economic changes, gained social capital, improved quality of life etc (Ibrahim & Razzaq, 2010). Rural tourism is a form of tourism where the tourism takes place on the countryside Lane (1994), with all the activities taking place in the rural setup free from urban influence. Homestay accommodation is potential tool for promotion of rural tourism (Kulshreshtha & Kulshreshtha, 2019). Rural homestay accommodation acts as an income generating opportunity for the host community Wang (2007), that draws focus on service excellence leading to guests' satisfaction and loyalty Ismail et al. (2016), inturn increases the prospects of attracting potential guests. In a study conducted in Spain Peña et al. (2012), analysed specific characteristics of rural tourism that are valued and attract tourists,helps in developing destination design and the product (homestay) to cater the specific demands of tourists inclined towards 'rurality' as a distinct elelment for their vacation (Bernard, 1994).

Guests expectation and satisfaction

Guests' expectation, experience, satisfaction are multidimensional concepts though the measurable instrument and dimensions/constructs are diverse. SERVQUAL model was coined (Parasuraman et al., 1988). HOLSAT was first mentioned in research on Cuba hotel determining the parameters that has effect on holiday satisfaction, is an extension of SERVQUAL, specialized for tourism and hospitality sector (Tribe & Snaith, 1998). For a successful conduct of hotel/homestay business, customer satisfaction plays an important role, Nadiri & Hussain (2005), the concept of experience and expectation are extensively studied to measure guests' satisfaction (Spencer & Uys, 2015; Marković & Raspor Janković, 2013; Oh & Parks, 1996; Luo & Qu, 2016). In the study Hamzah (2007), perspective of young Japanese Tourists staying in homestay with the help of SERVQUAL technique that facilitates in identifying gaps between expectation and satisfaction level. Experiences of the guests were further evaluated in qualitative terms to understand the pleasant and unpleasant memories. A successful and sustainable homestay operation is determined by the extent to which the homestay operator follows the basic standards or requirements of the guests, such as, safety of the guests and belongings, authenticity in the food serving and lifestyle, activities in and around homestay. Resultantly, homestay guest's expectations and basic requirements acts as the standard guideline for operating the homestay business (Sharma , 2018; Wang, Hung, & Li, 2018).

Theoretical framework

Rural Homestays are accommodations situated in the country-side with good accessibility and basic good conditioned room – ensuite facility and host/ host

family is physically residing in the premises (Dept of Tourism & Civil Aviation Himachal Pradesh, 2008). Guests' expectation is elucidated as their preconceived image that they 'think' or 'feel' (Font, 1997). Expectations has been explained as notion that a specific action will lead to specific outcome (Edwards et al., 2009). Various research Spencer & Uys (2015); Marković & Raspor Janković (2013); Wu & Ko (2013); Nadiri & Hussain (2005), states that customer satisfaction is determined by comparing guest's expectations and experiences of the services received. Guest's predictive expectations can be understood by predetermined service standards. This imply that guests compare services before experiencing the actual service and post receiving (Santa-Cruz & López-Guzmán, 2017; Boniface, 1998).

The objective of the study

- To evaluate the attributes of the rural homestay influencing expectation and satisfaction of homestay guests.
- To assess the factors that lead to satisfaction of the guests staying in rural homestay accommodation.
- To examine the effects of guests' socio-economic profile on the level of satisfaction of the homestay guests.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework is constructed from the literature collected and reviewed. It is reviewed that the expectation disconfirmation theory aka expectation theory is coined by Richard L. Oliver in the year 1977-80, is widely accepted and most promising theory for evaluation of customer satisfaction. The expectation disconfirmation Oliver (1980), states that the consumers buying good/services have a pre-determined standard of performance which are compared to the actual performance to measure the satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Therefore, the level of expectation is the standard against which the goods/services are judged. Positive disconfirmation occurs when actual performance exceeds the expected performance resulting into delighted customer. While on the other hand, if the performance is lower than expectation then negative disconfirmation occurs leading to dissatisfied customer.
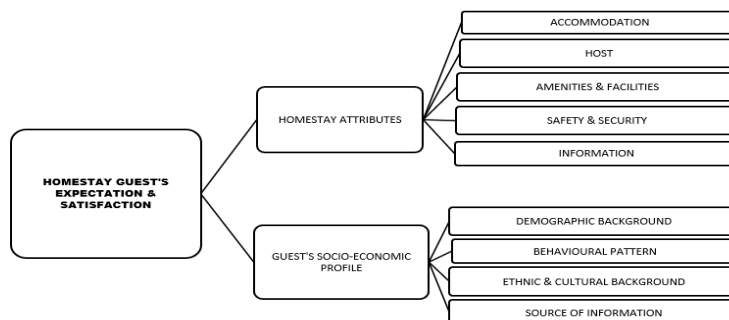

Figure 1. measure of expectation and satisfaction level of guests staying in homestay accommodation

The researcher is of the view that the expectation disconfirmation theory aptly fit into the proposed model of understanding the level of expectation and satisfaction of guests staying in homestay accommodation. The model also illustrates comprehensive attributes of rural homestay that are the basis of evaluating expectation and satisfaction of guests staying in homestay accommodation. Homestay attributes are divided into subsections as Accommodation, Host, Amenities & facilities, Safety and security, Information, with more elaborated constructs in each category. For the purpose of analysing and comparing the factors influencing expectation and satisfaction are kept same and are measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Further, evaluation of relationship between guests' socio-economic profile and guests' satisfaction is done to understand the effect of guests' socio- economic profile on overall satisfaction of guests staying in homestays. Guests profile is divided into categories such as demographic background, behavioural pattern, ethnic & cultural background and source of information (Fedorchenko et al., 2021; Nur et al., 2021).

Hypothesis of the study

- H1 There is a significant difference of mean of the expectation level and satisfaction level of homestay guests.
- H2 There is a significant relationship between the factors of the homestay accommodation and tourist's satisfaction level.
- H3 There is a significant relationship between guests' profile and level of satisfaction of homestay guests
  - H3 (a) There is significant relationship between demographic background of the homestay guests and their level of satisfaction
  - H3 (b) There is significant relationship between travel behaviour pattern of the homestay guests and their level of satisfaction
  - H3 (c) There is significant relationship between ethnic and cultural background of the homestay guests and their level of satisfaction
  - H3 (d) There is significant relationship between source of information of the homestay guests and their level of satisfaction

Research Methodology

Primary data were collected by means of close-ended questionnaires from 200 respondents (tourists) staying in 20 homestays located in Shimla district of Himachal Pradesh. The data was collected through random sampling technique. Each questionnaire is filled with face-to-face interaction to understand the respondent's views better. The represented data is primarily collected for Doctoral Research and part of the data is analysed for the current study. An open interview method was also used to understand the prospects of homestay owners towards tourists and homestay operations, represented in the form of qualitative data in the study. Quantitative data is analysed with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) V.20 software. Hypothesis testing is done by various tools, such as paired T test, F- test, Correlation, MANOVA were used (Alsharif, 2020; Wendri et al., 2019).

Result and Discussion

The study shows that majority of the respondents of the research study were male (55%) as against females (45%). For the purpose of research, only guests between the age group of 18 years above were included. Majority of the guests staying in homestay accommodation were of Indian origin (80%) and rest were of foreign nationality. The dominant educational background of respondents (60%) were of graduate level, approximately 10% were postgraduate. 55% of respondents were single, and reported monthly income of responders (57%) is in the groups 30,000-60,0000 per month. Majority of the guests staying in homestay were experiencing the homestay accommodation and services for the first time (69%) with an average length stay of 2 to 3 days, having approximate budget of the stay as Rs 1000- Rs 2500 per room per night. Highly preferred purpose of choosing homestay as stay is experiencing rural lifestyle and touring/sightseeing (Pratiwi et al., 2019; Suwija et al., 2019).

Statistical test, Cronbach's alpha is used to test the reliability of five major attributes of rural homestay that are influencing expectation and satisfaction of the guests. The attributes are reliable as per the statistical test as the range of alpha coefficient is between 0.509 to 0.892 for all the attributes. As the values of all the attributes is higher than 0.50, therefore, the results are reliable for further testing. Most significant constructs from each of the attributes: Accommodation, Host, Amenities & Services, Safety & Security, and Information, is analyzed by varimax rotated factor matrix. Result of factor loading enables to drop 7 least significant constructs our of 30 constructs, therefore 25 constructs were found to be analytically significant (factor loading ≥ 0.6).

Figure 2 shows the mean difference between the level of expectation and satisfaction of the guests staying in homestay. The analysis is measure through paired t test analysis that reveals that there is significant difference between the level of expectation of the guests and level of satisfaction of the guest. Therefore, we accept the H1. Result shows factor 1 i.e Accommodation has three attributes that satisfies the tourists (ease of access, cleanliness and hygiene, in house maintenance) while the attribute contributing to dissatisfaction is value for money; and attributes environment of the homestay and 24 hours reception scores indifferent. Factor 2 i.e Host has three satisfactory attributes i.e. Hospitality, Culture exchange with host, Proactiveness towards any problem solving and Ease of Communication scores dissatisfaction. In the factor 3 Amenities and Services, five attributes score satisfactory from the guests staying in the homestay- Attached Toilet / 24 X 7 water supply, Condition of Bed & Mattress, Local food/ Authentic cuisine, Experience of local lifestyle and Activities near homestay. Guests were dissatisfied with Wi-Fi facility/TV and indifferent with two attributes Room lighting/ room heater/power backup and Participation in daily household activities of Homestay (cooking, gardening, farming etc). In the 4th factor Safety and security, guests were satisfied with two attributes locking provision for room & cupboard locks, Secured location of Homestay while indifferent with First Aid/ Emergency/primary healthcare. Lastly the 5th factor Information, guests scored the attribute Tourist spot & sightseeing guidance from homestay operator as satisfactory, dissatisfactory to Ease of access to information about homestays and indifferent towards advertisements of homestay.

FACTORS	Homestay Attributes	expectation	satisfaction	MD	Significance	Result
Factor 1	Accommodation					
1	Ease of access	3.29	3.75	0.46	.000	S
2	Cleanliness/ Hygiene	3.27	3.41	0.14	.011	S
3	Value for money	3.53	3.34	-0.19	.000	D
4	Environment of the homestay	3.47	3.49	0.02	.777	I
5	In house maintenance	3.26	3.6	0.34	.000	S
6	24 hours reception	3.47	3.36	-0.11	.076	I
Factor 2	Host					
1	Hospitality	3.73	3.99	0.26	.000	S
2	Culture exchange with host	3.56	3.92	0.40	.000	S
3	Proactiveness towards any problem solving	3.47	3.71	0.24	.001	S
4	Ease of Communication	3.53	3.42	-0.12	.412	D
Factor 3	Amenities and Services					
1	Attached Toilet / 24 X 7 water supply	3.87	4.2	0.23	.001	S
2	Condition of Bed & Mattress	3.7	3.82	0.24	.000	S
3	Room lighting/ room heater/power backup	3.61	3.53	-0.11	.077	I
4	Wi-fi facility and TV	3.12	2.94	-0.18	.004	D
5	Local food/ Authentic cuisine	3.86	4.04	0.18	.032	S
6	Experience of local lifestyle	3.56	3.96	.40	.000	S
7	Participation in daily household activities of Homestay (cooking, gardening, farming etc)	3.64	3.77	0.10	.100	I
8	Activities near homestay (trekking, fishing, rafting etc)	3.56	3.81	0.24	.004	S
Factor 4	Safety and Security					
1	Locking provision for room & cupboard locks	4.02	4.15	0.13	.24	S
2	Secured location of Homestay	3.68	3.82	0.14	.028	S
3	First Aid/ Emergency/primary healthcare	3.62	3.66	0.06	.445	I
Factor 5	Information					
1	Ease of access to information about homestays (booking, contact details, location)	3.55	3.41	-0.12	.046	D
2	Assistance from locals	3.38	3.			
3	Tourist spot & sightseeing guidance from homestay operator	3.77	3.97	0.26	.000	S
4	Advertisement of homestay	3.84	3.89	0.05	.515	I

S= Satisfactory
D= Dissatisfaction
I= indifferent

Figure 2. Mean difference between the expectation and satisfaction of homestay guests

The analysis in figure 3 shows correlation between all the attributes of the homestay accommodation and the overall satisfaction of the tourists associated with these attributes. The result shows that there is significant relationship and the variables are moderately correlated. Furthermore, five major factors of the homestay accommodation taken as independent variable and satisfaction of homestay guest's as dependent variable, multivariate regression analysis is conducted to understand the importance of these the five factors contributing towards the variance in the homestay guests' level of satisfaction.

Factors	Pearson correlation	Significance (2 tailed)	N
Factor 1	0.403	0.000	200
Factor 2	0.345	0.000	200
Factor 3	0.253	0.000	200
Factor 4	0.132	0.044	200
Factor 5	0.017	0.011	200

Figure 3. Correlation analysis

Figure 4, depicts regression analysis that analyses the satisfaction level of guests staying in homestay accommodation for the factor 'accommodation' is highest(B1=0.413, Sig=0.000), followed by 'host' (B2=0.354, Sig=0.000) then 'amenities and services'(B3=0.207, Sig=0.000) and lowest for 'safety and secuirty' (B4=0.132, Sig=0.012) and 'information'(B5=0.108, Sig=0.036). The result shows significant relationship between five factors of the homestay accomodation and satisfaction of the guests staying in homestay, therefore H2 is accepted.

coefficients	B	beta	T	Sig.
Accommodation	0.413	0.4002	7.8903	0.000
Host	0.354	0.3445	6.7809	0.000
Amenities and Services	0.207	0.2624	5.2139	0.000
Safety and security	0.132	0.1269	2.5209	0.012
Information	0.108	0.1063	2.1089	0.036
Satisfaction of guests (constant)	3.657		72.089	.000

Figure 4. Multivariate regression analysis

Hypothesis 3, there is significant relationship between guests's profile and satisfaction level of guests is tested in four sub hypothesis. Figure 5, shows MANOVA stating the effects of demopgaphic profile of guests staying in homestay on the level of satisfaction of touirsts staying in homestay accomodation. The results shows that there is significant difference in the satisfaction level and age of the respondents (F=15.891,Sig=0.000), education (F=3.160, Sig=0.014) and monthly income of the respondents (F=7.002,Sig=0.000). while there is no significant difference in the satisafction level of guests and gender, marital status, monthly income and occupation of the respondents. and Therefore, we accept H3 (a).

Guest profile	Factor	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Gender						
	Male	.640	4	.160	.634	.632
	Female					
Age		63.492	4	16.132	15.891	.000
	Below 25 years					
	26-35 years					
	36-45 years					
	46-55 years					
	56-65 years					
	66 years and above					
Education		7.143	4	1.781	3.160	.014
	Matriculation					
	Intermediate					
	Bachelor's Degree					
	Masters' Degree					
Marital status		.498	4	.122	.468	.756
	Single					
	Married					
	Widow					
	Divorced					
Monthly Income		40.123	4	10.032	7.002	.000
	Upto 15,000					
	15,000-30,000					
	30,000-45,000					
	45,000-60,000					
	60,000-75,000					
	Above 75,000					
Occupation		9.213	4	2.324	1.219	.305
	Salaried					
	Retired					
	Self employed					
	Student					
	Homemaker					
	others					

Figure 5. MANOVA demographic profile of homestay guests

Figure 6 shows MANOVA for travel behavioural pattern of the respondents and satisfaction level of the homestya guests. The result reveals that there is significant difference in the overall level of satisfaction and no. of visits ((F=1.888,Sig=0.168), average length of stay (F=6.569, Sig=0.000) and likely budget for homestay accommodation ((F=4.905,Sig=0.001). furthermore there is no significant difference in level of satisafction and purpose of visit, travel companion, number of members in group. Therefore, we accept H3(b), that there is significant relationship between travel behaviour pattern of the homestay guests and their level of satisfaction.

Behavioural pattern	Factor	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
No. of visits (To Destination)		1.420	2	.716	1.888	.168
	1st time					
	2-5 times					
	More than 5 times					
Purpose of visit		1.421	4	.356	.504	.743
	Touring and sightseeing					
	Hiking and trekking					
	Visiting friends / relative					
	Business/corporate tour					
	Adventure Sports					
	Religious tour					
	Experience local lifestyle					
	Leisure tour					
Average length of your stay		28.760	4	7.431	6.569	.000
	1-2 days					
	3-4 days					
	5-6 days					
	1 week-1 month					
	More than 1 month					
Travel Companion Status		7.654	4	1.986	1.044	.347
	Alone					
	Family					
	Family with young children					
	Friends					
	Worker/ Business partner					
	Tour group					
Number of persons in a group travelling together		1.409	2	.714	1.877	.165
	From 2 to 10 and above					
Likely budget for homestay accommodation per day per room		2.45	4	.592	4.905	.001
	Upto Rs. 500					
	Rs.500 – Rs.1000					
	Rs.1000- Rs.1500					
	Rs.1500 – Rs.2000					
	Rs.2000 – Rs.2500					
	Rs.2500 – Rs.3000					
	Rs.3000- Rs.3500					

Figure 6. MANOVA Travel behaviour of homestay guests

Figure 7, exhibit Multivariate Analysis of varience of cultural background of the respondenst and level of satisfaction. The result shows that there is significant variance in 'origin of the guests staying in homestay'(F=25.05, Sig=0.000) and satisfaction of guests staying in homestay. Therefore, we accept H3 (c) that There is significant relationship between ethnic and cultural background of the homestay guests and their level of satisfaction.

Ethnic & Cultural background	Factor	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Origin		102.634	4	27.314	15.05	.000
	Indian					
	Non-Indian					
Religion		1.719	4	.407	.314	.867
	Hindu					
	Muslim					
	Sikh					
	Christian					
Family Size		1.378	4	.335	.623	.687
	Nuclear					
	Joint					
	Extended Joint					

Figure 7. MANOVA Ethnic & Cultural background of Homestay Guests

In figure 8, the results presents analysis of multivariate variance that examines the variance in the sources of information about homestay accomodation and satisfaction level of guests staying in homestay accommodation. There is significant variance in source of information about the homestay($F=2.345$, Sig=0.038) and means of booking homestay ($F=2.902$, Sig= 0.209). Therefore we accept H3 (d) that there is significant relationship between source of information of the homestay guests and their level of satisfaction.

Source of Information	Factor	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Source of information about the homestay		17.020	4	4.578	2.345	.038
	TV/Magazine/Newspaper					
	Friend/Relative					
	Self-explored on arrival					
	Travel agent					
	Advertisement on internet					
	Homestay's Website					
	Travel sites on internet					
	Himachal Tourism Website					
	Social networking sites					
Means of booking Homestay		5.717	4	1.803	2.902	.209
	Government website					
	Directly on arrival					
	Through travel agent					
	Online Travel Aggregators					

Figure 8. MANOVA source of information

Conclusion

In service sector like tourism and hospitality industry, prioritizing guests' satisfaction is vital for sustainable growth of the destination and tourism products (homestay). The study evaluates level of satisfaction of tourists staying in homestay accommodation enables the homestay owners to better understand the dynamic needs and demands of the guests and address any service gaps as an when required. Rural homestay accommodation facilitate the guests in providing basic accommodation and services attached, along with a glimpse of cultural and traditional practices, activities and lifestyle of Himachal folks. In

addition, the homestays are excellent opportunity for homestay owners to gain monetary benefits that help in personal upliftment as well as augment tourism in destination that in turn leads to overall benefit for the community. The result of the research supports the belief that most satisfactory attribute for a rural homestay is the accommodation itself, the host that is serving the guests and amenities and services associated with the homestay accommodation. A tourist looking forward to stay in rural homestay would have a different mindset from that of the tourists staying in conventional hotel accommodation. On that account the guests primary focus would be to enjoy the 'rurality' of homestay and the native inhabitants. Guests are thoughtfully interested in cultural exchange, indulge in the flavors of the Himalayas in many forms- food, drinks, cuisines, habits, lifestyle and various other activities. Homestay accommodation also acts as a reliable and integrated promotional tool to augment cultural as well as rural tourism.

The results of this study reinforce the knowledge that the level of satisfaction is heterogenous in nature and depends on the demographics of the guests i.e. age, gender, marital status, occupation, educational background etc. travel behaviour of guests also effect satisfaction level, i.e., number of past visits, purpose of visit, length of stay, budget allocated for accommodation, travel companion and number of family members/group members. The overall level of satisfaction is also affected by the ethnicity and cultural background of the guests, i.e., origin, religion and family size. The source of information about the homestay and booking information also effect the level of satisfaction of the guests. Furthermore, the study takes into account the inclusive attributes of rural homestay to evaluate the level of expectation and satisfaction of the guests staying in rural homestay, that covers all the dimensions of the homestay accommodation i.e., Accommodation, Host, Amenities & Services, Safety & Security, and Information. Thus, author is of the view that prime innovation of this research study is that there are limited studies in tourism research literature that empirically tested the expectation and satisfaction of the guests staying in rural homestay by evaluating homestay's attributes as a basis for comparison and to boost cultural tourism.

Recommendations

Few recommendations could be made, based on the personal interaction with the homestay owners and guests staying in the homestay, and on the basis of the results of the study. The homestay owners must work upon improving the internet connectivity for their guests and also make the information regarding the homestay location, proximity to well-known places, services & amenities and activities available, a portal for booking and a online payment gateway, most importantly details of the contact person for any queries or solutions. Guests' satisfaction is not only created from the actual services experienced during the stay and also from the implied services offered before experiencing actual product/ service. To enhance competitiveness and gain profit it is suggested to deeply understand the requirements of the tourists, as small gestures and affairs leads to a fulfilling and satisfied stay for the guests. A unique selling proposition of rural homestay is inclusion of guests in special religious and cultural rituals/activities that helps in reviving the culture, restoring the tradition,

passing it on to future generations. In addition to this, positive word of mouth spread by satisfied guests act as absolutely no cost promotion tool that would attract more tourists. Services and amenities provided by the homestay owners that are at par with the cost charged enhances the likelihood of a guest turning loyal and more chances of re-visiting the homestay.

Furthermore, the findings of the research draw attention of the civic authorities and the public administrators to focus on providing the basic infrastructure in the rural region of Shimla. They shall also operate in line with the village representatives working at grass root level to better understand the needs and requirements of local community. Promotion and marketing of local traditional fairs, festivals, exhibitions or even local shops near the homestay accommodation adds value to the experience of the guests. Therefore, comprehensive development of rural areas is crucial for promotion and development of rural homestay and sustainable growth of cultural tourism in the destination.

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