



Dynamics of Homestay Enterprises in Uttarakhand: A Contextual Approach

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Abstract: Uttarakhand, often called "Devbhoomi" has significantly transformed its business landscape, particularly in the tourism and homestay sectors. Known for its stunning landscapes, pilgrimage sites, rich cultural heritage, and unique culinary traditions, the region has become a magnet for tourists. Homestays, also called "commercial home enterprises" or "farm stays," have emerged as a popular lodging option, reflecting the entrepreneurial spirit of the local community. These accommodations offer visitors an authentic experience intertwined with local culture. This study explores various sociocultural, economic, technological, and regulatory factors influencing the well-being and success of homestay businesses in Uttarakhand. In order to analyse the existing literature to identify key strategies and practices crucial for their growth, this study provides insights into fostering sustainable development, enhancing tourism, and promoting the positive impacts of homestay enterprises, ensuring long-term benefits for the region and its communities.

Keywords: Homestay • Contextual Dynamics • Socio-cultural Dynamics • Economic Dynamics • Technological Dynamics • Governmental Dynamics

Introduction

Uttarakhand was created as India's 27th state on November 9, 2000, hoping to welcome a new era of economic growth and progress. However, the geographical complexity of the region continues to impede growth, forcing locals to leave their peaceful ancestral homes in search of better opportunities and livelihoods. However, the business environment in "Devbhoomi" Uttarakhand has undergone a sea change, especially regarding tourism and homestays. Homestays have emerged as an entrepreneurial activity in the region by becoming the preferred accommodation option for tourists and highlighting the entrepreneurial spirit of the local community. Homestay, which is also called a "Commercial home enterprise" or even "farm stay" and "home-based enterprise" (Davis et al 2010; Jamal et al 2011; McIntosh et al 2011), expanding their appeal in the area as a result of rising tourism and visitor traffic. Hamzah (2007) states,

"Homestay is a form of holiday where the guest stays with the host's family and participates in the host's way of life." The concept of homestay resolve around the lodging facility where people pay and stay and feel the grand gesture of their host and experience their hospitality, and this experience allows them to connect with the place on a deeper level (Kc 2021; Jasrotia & Kour 2022). Homestays range from traditional-style village homes to eco-friendly cottages offering local flavours with unique hospitality. The world's largest, fastest-growing, smokeless sector is now tourism, with all the chances and promises it holds (Khanka 2010). Similarly, India is undergoing a notable upsurge in domestic and international tourism. As per a report issued by the Ministry of Tourism, a total of 6.19 million foreign tourists and 1731 million domestic tourists visited India in the year 2020. In Uttarakhand, the count of domestic tourists stood at an impressive figure of approximately



54.64 million, showcasing a remarkable growth post-2020. The report also highlights an increase in foreign tourists to around 64,429 (India Tourism Statistics 2022). As far as travel preferences are concerned, homestays are widely regarded as the preferred choice of tourists. An intimate atmosphere, attentive service, healthy home cooking, authentic local encounters, and cultural immersion continue to be essential for travellers choosing a homestay (Wang 2007; Gunasekaran & Anandkumar 2012). Supported by various government schemes and other initiatives such as Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali Paryatan Swarozgar Yojna and "Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grah Awas (Homestay) Yojana (DDUGAHS)," homestays encourage local entrepreneurship, thus aiding in the preservation of cultural heritage, the promotion of sustainable tourism practices, and the overall economic development of the region. The success of homestay businesses and entrepreneurs plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of

homestay entrepreneurship (Devadas & Jayasooriya 2021). However, the success of this business depends not only on individual effort but also on other factors, such as contextual factors, that play a catalyst to success. These contextual variables include a wide range of factors, such as socio-cultural norms, economics, technological, and regulatory frameworks, are part of these context variables. To understand the obstacles, these diverse variables need to be understood well.

Registered Homestays: A Growing Counts

In recent years, the total number of homestays in Uttarakhand has risen sharply, from 285 in 2017 to 1022 in 2019, spread across the thirteen districts. This positive increase in registrations shows that the homestay setup is on the right track. Further, homestay registrations increased from 4525 in 2022 to 5281 in 2023 in just five years (www.Uttarakhandtourism.gov.in).

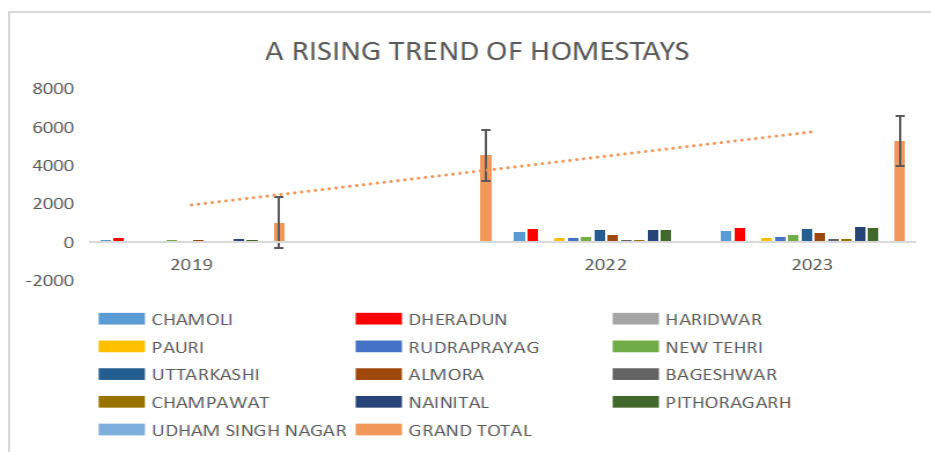


Fig 1. A rising trend of Homestays (Source: <https://uttarakhandtourism.gov.in>)

Methodology

This study aims to identify the multiple impacts of contextual factors on the well-being of homestay businesses in Uttarakhand. To attain the said purpose, an extensive analysis of previous literature, including socio-cultural, economic, technological, and regulatory dimensions, examines the complex interplay

shaping the success of homestay businesses and enhancing positive impacts within the region.

Observations

1. Dynamics of Contextual Forces Shaping Entrepreneurial Success



The business environment refers to the external factors that affect the operation and performance of businesses (Sharma 2018). The way entrepreneurship takes place is essential for success in the marketplace (Ratten & Leitão 2022), and external elements critical to an entrepreneur's success are contextual factors. Entrepreneurs recognize business opportunities to create and deliver value to stakeholders in future ventures (Ardichvili et al 2003). The environment in which a budding entrepreneur operates influences their ability to successfully recognize and exploit such opportunities (Cuervo 2005).

In Uttarakhand, several contextual factors that have an essential impact on success are closely related to the entrepreneurial environment of homestay businesses and can create opportunities or difficulties for operating and starting a business. Socio-cultural, economic, technological, and governmental factors are among the elements that influence the functioning of businesses (Shapiro & Sokol 1982; Licht & Siegel 2005; Thornton et al 2011; Craig & Campbell 2012; Akhter & Sumi 2014; Castaño et al 2015; Ahadi & Kasraie 2020; Yoosefi Lebni et al 2021; Sadiku 2022)

Socio-Cultural Dynamics : Personal qualities are essential, but social skills are crucial to business success (Baron & Markman 2000). As the entrepreneur's decision is based on contextual circumstances, sometimes, inner conscience is the motivation or external factor that leads an individual to make decisions. Socio-cultural entrepreneurship determinants include personal characteristics, social skills, motives for starting a business, and barriers to implementation. The things people do when they start and operate a business are closely related to their intentions and thinking about entrepreneurship. This connection illustrates the importance of socioeconomic elements in shaping entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviour in a community or culture (Ismail 2015). As motivation for starting a business often lies within the cultural fabric, the

motivation for individuals to start an entrepreneurial venture is shaped by cultural values, social expectations, and community dynamics (Shane et al 2003). The desire to maintain and support local heritage through the homestay business can be a decisive motivation factor within certain cultures or communities of Uttarakhand. However, these socio-cultural determinants are not solely facilitating factors; they also make it difficult to implement them. Entrepreneurs may find cultural norms and societal expectations challenging, particularly those introducing new ideas or innovative business models (Ratten, 2020). In a context where these social determinants influence not only the entrepreneurial mindset but also the strategies and approaches entrepreneurs adopt in particular contexts, it is essential to understand them. For entrepreneurial success in Uttarakhand homestay enterprises, it is necessary to include people's characteristics, cultural skills, motivation, and recognition of the obstacles set out by the socio-cultural context.

Local Community Engagement and Support: The involvement of the local community in the initial development process is key to creating successful tourism businesses (Chakraborty, 2019). Studies have demonstrated that cultural heritage preservation and promotion of Rural Development can provide substantial additional revenue to the locals through community-based tourism activities like homestays (Ibrahim & Razzaq 2010; Affizzah et al 2017). For the initial development process, perceptions and participation of the local communities are essential because they are key to tourism business success (Kukreti 2021). Furthermore, the involvement of villagers in the homestay programme has been shown to influence their attitudes and behavior related to the objectives of ecotourism and community-based tourism (CBT), leading to positive engagement in public partnerships and private tourism-related cultural programmes



(Bhalla et al 2016). However, the Homestays in Uttarakhand have been accepted as an appropriate alternative for promoting sustainable tourism, bringing economic benefits to rural areas, and supporting local art, architecture, traditions, and food habits (Chakraborty 2019).

Cultural Preservations and Authenticity:

Cultural authenticity is essential to attract tourists, support economic and social justice, and enhance the region's sustainability (Kutty, 2008; Ibrahim & Razzaq, 2010). Heritage conservation and tourism are often seen as opposing practices, such as patronizing attitudes, stereotyping, and illegal discrimination cause the problem; the discrimination experienced by ethnic group members from the host societal group can affect their motivation to maintain their heritage culture (Pocock 2020; Mekonnen et al 2022). The findings of the study by Ruggiero et al (1996) showed that respondents with a more intimate experience of discrimination are less interested in preserving their heritage culture. Consequently, there is a likelihood that discriminatory practices could be detrimental to efforts to protect cultural heritage in homestays because they may make it harder for people to value and preserve their cultural traditions (Sciurba 2017). Cultural preservation and authenticity could be achieved when the role of the tourism sector in preserving and restoring cultural landscapes is focused, which can be achieved by developing a strategy to deal with the conservation problems; secondly, the cultural components of tourism development, such as pilgrimages, fairs, festivals, customs, rituals, traditional foods, beverages, arts, and crafts, can assist in tourism development and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage (Mehta et al 2012).

Social Dynamics and Collaborative Networks:

Cooperative networks and the dynamics of society highly influence the homestay business in Uttarakhand. It has been concluded that this network analysis is

essential for achieving sustainable development, women's empowerment, the preservation of international guests, and environmental protection (Lynch 2000; Miraz et al 2015; Sharma 2022). Intercultural communication among homestay operators and guests is critical in enhancing the quality of services (Suharsono 2020). Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, have become powerful tools for promoting sustainable tourism in this region (Chakraborty 2019). This rise of network marketing models and the use of collaborative filtering algorithms have improved the online marketing mode of homestays, making it richer and faster and enabling personalised suggestions to customers based on their preferences and behavior (Ramli et al 2019; Yu 2022).

2. Economic Dynamics

The potential for generating income and employment and increasing rural livelihood has been included in the homestay business of Uttarakhand Himalaya (Sati 2020). Economic factors are primarily dependent on homestay businesses' success and sustainability. In the hill districts of Uttarakhand, local households' financial health is affected by cash management, savings habits, and economic attitudes (Purohit et al 2022). Other essential factors are the availability of local income, a reasonable cost for tourism and homestays, and their contribution to rural economies. It is considered that local people benefit from homestays as a way to generate direct tourism revenue and thus improve their social and economic well-being (Ruth et al 2018). Therefore, residents' primary motivation to participate in homestays is their income (Basak et al 2021).

Financial Accessibility And Funding Opportunities:

The importance of financial accessibility and funding opportunities in homestay businesses are significant factors that should be considered in the accommodation concept in India since it is a welcoming and pleasant environment for



travellers (Singh & Schmidgall 2000; Kumar et al 2023). Financial Inclusion is key to ensuring that individuals and businesses have access to finance services (Subbarao 2009). In light of financial feasibility and multiplier effect analysis, positive results have been achieved for the economic potential of communal homestays (Takaendengan et al 2022). It signals that there are opportunities to finance and support homestay businesses. However, specific laws and regulations must be established to guarantee the quality and safety of homestay accommodation (Yaja et al 2023). By addressing these financial accessibility challenges and providing funding opportunities, the homestay business can thrive and contribute to the economic development of local communities.

Resources Allocation and Management

Practices : Effective planning, marketing, research activities, and adequate allocation of resources are essential to increase and develop the homestay accommodation sector (Yaja et al 2023). This would allow for a financial investment plan based on information regarding financing activities, e.g., assets or liabilities and adequate cash reserves (Maritan & Lee 2017). The importance of allocating resources to homestays is further underlined by the economic viability and evidence of positive profitability indicators such as return on sales, profit margins, or capital gains (Ranasinghe 2015). Enabling them to identify regional competition positions and allocate capacity accordingly can be accomplished through different approaches such as TODIM (Total Order Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solutions)(Joshi & Dhaigude 2021). Moreover, a homestay management system based on the Internet of Things may be used to unify operations due to the significant role played by the Internet of Things in improving the guest experience by providing customers with tailored services (Sharma & Gupta 2021).

Economic Impacts on Homestay Sustainability: The lack of sustainability at the core of any strategy is irresponsible and

damaging to businesses, shareholders, and the environment (Castaño et al 2015). Economic performance is vital, as it increases people's optimism towards the future and makes them feel more confident in their chance to establish a business (Werbach 2011). The economy of Uttarakhand has been in poor shape, and the primary sources of income and employment are agriculture and tourism (Mishra & Mishra 2021). For tourism businesses to succeed, local communities must participate in the initial development process (Chakraborty 2019). Sati (2020) stated that homestay schemes should be economically viable if the community can cope with an influx of visitors and provide the necessary services and facilities. In this respect, homestay's economic sustainability will be positively affected if funding and infrastructure resources improve (Sharma 2016; Ahmad Puad & Keng 2018).

3. Technological Dynamics

A significant factor that impacts the technical determinants in this sector is a multidisciplinary environment, with a powerful influence on operational efficiency, guest experience, and the market position of homestays. Online booking, payment notes, and information on rates to improve occupancy rates are the technical contextual factors for homestay tourism in Uttarakhand (Sati 2020).

Integration of Technology In Homestay

Operations: To promote and trade, home business enterprises need to use technology (Tiwari et al 2022). Studies have demonstrated that technology can significantly improve the layout and management of homestays and provide an overall tourism experience(Afifah et al 2022). The use of digital tools facilitates a seamless booking process, providing potential guests with a user-friendly platform for booking stays, exploring facilities, and interacting with personalised services (Khasawneh et al 2023; Vegas Macias et al 2023; Yakymenko-Tereshchenko et al 2023). Technology integration may improve the visitor experience, increase efficiency, and



assist homestay businesses in becoming more sustainable (Singh 2019; Zou & Yoon 2021; Ercan İştin & Karakaş 2022).

Impact of Technological Advancements on Guest Experience: Technological advances have a significant impact on the guest experience in homestays. Homestay facilities are designed and managed to increase guest satisfaction and their perception of home life using big data analysis and Internet of Things technologies (Na 2019). These technological developments will reduce operational costs, improve the quality of service, and increase resource efficiency by enhancing the capacity to provide tourism and hospitality services (Arifin 2022). Additionally, adopting digital marketing strategies can improve the visibility and reach of homestays, attracting more guests and increasing their overall experience (Verma et al 2021). Furthermore, the value creation and positive impact on guest experiences can be helped by a service automation approach to hotels, particularly homestays (Anuj et al 2023). Overall, by improving the design, marketing, and service delivery aspects of homestays in Uttarakhand, technological progress plays a crucial role in ensuring better guest experiences.

Tech Infrastructure and Accessibility in Rural Settings: The rural communities of Uttarakhand have considerable difficulties with technological infrastructure and accessibility. There are differences between urban and rural communities regarding access and connectivity (Velaga et al 2012). This imbalance between urban and rural areas is exacerbated by the lack of transport infrastructure in rural areas and poor technical infrastructure (Lu et al 2022). In addition, accessibility is hampered by the limited number of airports and railways (Priyanka & Preeti 2022). However, the development of homestay facilities is restricted; they have great potential in terms of technological infrastructure (Sati 2020). These challenges must be addressed to enhance the area's growth and sustainability of homestays.

4. Governmental Dynamics

One of the relevant factors influencing government policies on homestays in Uttarakhand is that appropriate policy frameworks are needed to manage natural resources better and develop train entrepreneurs within the community-based ecotourism sector (Kukreti 2021). The need to sustainably grow tourism and the compatibility of tourism practices with the region's fragile ecology is a critical government factor in the homestay business in Uttarakhand (Bhalla et al 2016).

Analysis of Government Policies and Initiatives : Assessing government policies and efforts to promote homestay tourism in Uttarakhand highlighted the importance of ecotourism and sustainable development (Kukreti 2021). In the year 2018, the tourism sector in Uttarakhand was officially recognized as an industry by the government, thereby enabling the provision of incentives and subsidies to promote its growth (Chakraborty 2019; Kukreti 2021; Kapil & Varghese 2023). There is potential to generate income, jobs, and improved rural livelihoods through homestay tourism in Uttarakhand. Veer Chandra Singh's Garhwali Paryatan Swarozgar Yojna, which was the first self-employment scheme to be introduced by the Government of Uttarakhand to make tourism a key source of employment and income as well as the development of transport infrastructure within the state, began on 1 June 2002. This is a credit-cum-subsidy scheme with a maximum loan of INR. 10 lakhs and a subsidy of up to Rs. 2 lakhs, or 20% of the project cost. After a long delay, the government revealed its homestay tourism policy in 2015, "Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grah Awas (Homestay) Yojana (DDUGAHS)," which primarily focused on the expansion of homestay tourism and homestay businesses. The DDUGAHS programme is subsidy-based, with the highest basic subsidy for plain districts being Rs 7.50 lakh and the highest interest subsidy benefit being Rs 1 lakh per year for five years. Hilly



districts receive interest subsidies of up to Rs. 1.50 lakh per year for five years, or 33% of the cost, or a maximum of Rs. 10.00 lakh. Efforts to develop an eco-friendly tourism policy for Uttarakhand to provide a unique and memorable experience are being made by the government, which is focused on sustainable and community-based tourism.

Regulatory Framework and Compliance

Challenges : By generating income and employment and improving rural livelihood, homestay tourism can contribute to developing regional economies and protecting the environment (Imran & Nguyen 2018; Jasrotia & Kour 2022). As part of its Homestay Policy, the Uttarakhand Government has established rules for regulating homestay activities. This Framework covers aspects like registration procedures, security standards, and guidelines for the interaction of hosts with guests. However, compliance is problematic without an overall legal framework for homestay tourism (Thakur et al 2023). According to Chandra and Kumar (2021), the region's fragile ecology and sustainability of a tourism business are incompatible with prevailing inconsistent practices and irregular developments in the Uttarakhand tourism industry. To address these challenges and ensure the sustainability of tourism, he also recommended strengthening the legal framework. Furthermore, there is a need for community participation advocacy, improved government synchronization, local education and training, and the development of strategies customized to the emerging destination context (Kala & Bagri 2018).

Influences of Policies on Homestay Entrepreneurial Success: The Uttarakhand homestay policy facilitates registration and establishes safety standards and guidelines, fostering a sense of credibility and trust among tourists (Bisht 2016). To develop sustainable tourism in the region, this policy addresses incongruous practices and planned development activities within the tourism industry (Bhalla et al 2016). Financial

incentives and subsidies offered by the Uttarakhand government encourage locals to venture into homestay entrepreneurship (Kukreti, 2021). By focusing on skills development, such as service and communication, through training programmes, which contribute to a pleasing guest experience, the quality of the service is enhanced (Mehta 1996; Chakraborty 2019). However, there is still a need to ensure uniform compliance on different terrains and address infrastructure constraints.

Discussion

Homestays have been part of Uttarakhand's tourism sector long before the state's formation in 2000. However, with tourism being recognized as an industry in 2018, the sector has experienced remarkable economic growth. To foster sustainable development, government initiatives now emphasize establishing homestay clusters by promoting community participation. Despite these efforts, the well-being of homestay businesses remains inadequately supported, as their success depends heavily on contextual factors, including socio-cultural norms, economic conditions, technological advancements, and legal frameworks.

Socio-cultural factors like personal traits, social skills, and entrepreneurial motivations significantly influence the success of homestay operators. Similarly, economic factors such as financial access, funding opportunities, and the contributions of homestays to rural economies are critical for their sustainability. Technological developments, including online booking and payment systems, enhance operational efficiency and improve guest experiences. However, regulatory frameworks, government policies, and compliance challenges continue to pose significant barriers to the growth of homestay businesses.

Despite their high potential to generate income and employment and improve rural livelihoods, the development of homestays is constrained by inadequate policy frameworks



and insufficient training for stakeholders (Kumar 2017; Kukreti 2021). Practical, social, cultural, and institutional obstacles hinder community participation in tourism (Sati 2020). Furthermore, poor coordination between government agencies and local training needs prevents effective decision-making and stakeholder involvement in tourism development (Kala & Bagri, 2018). Addressing these challenges is essential to unlocking the full potential of homestay businesses in Uttarakhand.

Conclusion

Since 2015, the homestay business environment in Uttarakhand has evolved significantly. Recognized as part of the tourism industry in 2018, homestays have enhanced human capital, curbed migration impacts, and supported sustainable development and regional growth. However, socio-cultural, economic, technological, and regulatory aspects must be carefully addressed to ensure their continued success.

Key measures include developing a comprehensive policy framework that ensures safety, affordable financing options for owners, and integrating advanced technologies like the Internet of Things to streamline operations. Active community participation is essential for preserving local culture and ecology while fostering homestay growth. These initiatives can create a thriving business environment, promoting sustainable benefits and economic progress in Uttarakhand.

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