

Preference of Customers for Home Stays Over Hotels - With Special Reference to Coastal Areas of Maharashtra

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Abstract

This research is all about awareness of homestays and knowledge of homestays in coastal areas of Maharashtra among people. The allure of Maharashtra, India is irresistible to both domestic and international visitors. Domestic tourists are eager to visit the amazing destinations that their country has to offer, which are on par with the best in the world. The Indian custom of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' - Guest is God is well known. This was a background for the concept of homestays in India, which is an emerging trend in hospitality business in the country.

The research is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was gathered using a sample survey. The data was collected using the convenience sampling approach. The sample survey is a questionnaire-based survey.

Homestay housing is an excellent method to get a feel of a destination's true way of life. However, homestay operators must improve their sanitary standards and provide tourists with essential conveniences. They should also ensure that they have improved security measures in place, which will substantially improve the guests' comfort levels. It is also crucial to remember that they should work with locals to preserve the destination's natural and cultural attractiveness.

Keywords: Homestay, Hotels, Brands, Culture, Immersive, Experience, Local, Environment, Professional, Standards, Tourists, Guests, Community, Sustainable, Family, Hosts, Customs, Rituals, Nature, Comfort, Home, Food

INTRODUCTION

The term homestay is defined as "a period during which a visitor lives with a local family". The idea of the homestay program is to accommodate tourists with a local family, thus enabling the tourist to learn about the local lifestyle, culture, nature etc.

Homestays are all about sharing a house with different personalities and understanding their culture. Homestay hosts all have their own unique interests and hobbies and guests often find a host with similar interests which further complements the homestay experience.

Hosts can help their guests find their feet in a new place, whether it is help with local orientation or places to eat. It is also a convenient, value-for-money way to book accommodation when attending an event or conference.

Homestay programmes have been a successful tool to increase tourism visitation and broaden accommodation options in poorer rural communities. The offering of these homestays is clean traditional houses with basic amenities and unforgettable experience to the guest which they cannot get even in the most expensive of hotels and resorts in the world.

The tourists stay at hotels, guesthouses or dharmshalas, depending on needs and budget. However, there are tourists who wish to stay in a homely environment and not spend too much money on accommodation. Their service expectations are modest; they do not expect room- service or round the clock service. On the other hand, there are people who have surplus accommodation in their own premise, are interested in taking guests and earning additional income by providing part of the house and extending hospitality to the guests.

These are usually farmhouses, rural cottages, Havelis and bungalows where families stay and where they allocate rooms to guests for monetary consideration accompanied by fresh home cooked meals and local produce. The guests get to experience the local way of life, staying

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with the owners of the house. At times, there can be more than one family staying at that house, as homestays can have at least one room and maximum six rooms as per the ministry of Tourism.

As per the norms, homestay establishment must be registered under the tourism department's bed and breakfast scheme. The Government of India considers Homestay as a tool of community development. This paper discusses the potentiality of homestay programs in the country and proposes a model for Homestays programs.

The Homestay project in the coastal areas of Maharashtra attracts much attention of the Tourism stakeholders.

Today when some popular tourist spots are getting overcrowded, developing new places is the need of the hour.

Visitors to home stay tourism get the opportunity to spend time with a family while learning about their rituals, values, and culture, giving them a flavor of country life. Both the environment and culture are commoditized in homestay tourism, and commercial value is created by visitor demand. This provides a monetary compensation to the local indigenous people in exchange for environmental and cultural preservation.

The rapid growth of the tourism industry has also resulted in various negative impacts, such as environmental degradation, cultural commodification, and economic leakage. In response to these challenges, the concept of sustainable tourism has emerged to promote tourism that is environmentally friendly, socially responsible, and economically viable. The latest news about Spain where locals are putting board and signs of "Tourists go back" talks about over-crowding of popular destinations.

One of the key components of sustainable tourism is community-based tourism, which emphasizes the involvement of local communities in tourism activities and the promotion of their culture and traditions. This is very important. Homestays have emerged as an important component of community-based tourism, offering guests an opportunity to experience local culture and traditions while also generating income for local communities. This form of accommodation becoming increasingly popular,

is good news for home stays. This is particularly true among travelers who are seeking authentic cultural experiences and a deeper connection with the local community and Nature in general.

IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES

Homestays can benefit both tourists and local communities in various ways. For tourists, homestays offer a more authentic and immersive cultural experience than traditional forms of accommodation. Visitors can interact with local communities, learn about their way of life, and participate in local customs and traditions. Homestays also provide an opportunity for travelers to support local communities directly, as the income generated from homestays typically goes directly to local hosts.

For local communities, homestays can provide an important source of income, particularly in areas where tourism is the main economic activity. Homestays can also contribute to the preservation of local culture and traditions, as hosts often share their knowledge and skills with guests. Moreover, homestays can promote social and economic development by creating employment opportunities, fostering entrepreneurship, and encouraging investment in local infrastructure. It also helps to bring marginalized communities in the mainstream.

Despite the potential benefits of homestays, there are also challenges that must be addressed to ensure their success. These challenges include regulatory issues, marketing, capacity building, and quality control. Regulatory issues involve the need for clear guidelines and standards for homestay operations, as well as adequate legal protection for hosts and guests. It must be an organized sector. Marketing is also a challenge, as homestays often lack the visibility and marketing support of larger hotels and resorts that are brands. Capacity building is necessary to ensure that hosts have the necessary know-how, the skills, and resources to provide high-quality services to guests. Finally, quality control is essential to ensure homestays meet the expectations of guests and provide a positive experience.

This research project aims to explore the potential, challenges, and opportunities for homestays as a sustainable tourism product, with a focus on Maharashtra. The project includes a comprehensive review of the

existing literature on homestays, highlighting the benefits, challenges, and best practices associated with this form of accommodation. The project will then present the results of a survey of homestay operators and guests in Maharashtra, providing insights into the current state of homestay tourism in the state.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand awareness level regarding Homestay in coastal areas of Maharashtra.
- To analyse the primary reasons for staying in Homestays.
- To understand the benefits perceived by the guests.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- In their research on the impact of homestays on the local economy, Naik and Sridharan (2019) found that homestays can create employment opportunities for locals and contribute to the development of the tourism industry in Kokan.
- In their research on the challenges faced by homestay operators in Kokan, Jadhav and Gaikwad (2020) identified issues related to marketing, access to finance, and infrastructure development as key areas that need to be addressed to support the growth of the homestay sector.
- In their research on the role of homestays in promoting rural tourism in Kokan, Chavan and Shinde (2019) found that homestays can help to promote the unique cultural heritage of the region and provide an alternative to traditional hotel accommodation.
- A study by Rane and Bhagwat (2020) explored the factors influencing tourists' decision to choose homestays over other forms of accommodation in Kokan, including cost, location, and the availability of local experiences and activities.
- In their research on the contribution of homestays to community development in Kokan, Patil and Patil (2019) found that homestays can help to preserve local traditions and customs, while also providing economic benefits to local communities.
- In their research on the potential for homestays to promote sustainable tourism in Kokan, Joshi and Chavan (2020) emphasized the importance of community involvement, responsible tourism practices, and a focus on local culture and traditions to ensure the long-term sustainability of the homestay sector.
- Subramanya, H. K., & Vaidya, S. S. (2018). Homestay tourism in Karnataka, India: A study of tourists' perceptions. *Journal of Tourism & Hospitality Management*, 6(2), 19-26. This article investigates tourists' perceptions of homestay tourism in Karnataka, India, including factors related to accommodation, food, hospitality, and destination image.
- Rai, K. N., & Dashora, K. (2019). Homestays in Rajasthan: An exploration of tourists' perceptions, *Journal of Tourism & Hospitality Management*, 7(1), 1-9. This article explores tourists' perceptions of homestays in Rajasthan, India, including factors related to accommodation, food, hospitality, and cultural experience.
- Karthikeyan, S., & Durgadevi, S. (2019). Homestays in Tamil Nadu, India: A study of tourists' satisfaction. *Journal of Tourism & Hospitality Management*, 7(2), 10-19. This article examines tourists' satisfaction with homestays in Tamil Nadu, India, including factors related to hospitality, accommodation, food, and overall experience.
- Karthikeyan, S., & Parthiban, A. (2019). Homestays as a community-based tourism option in Tamil Nadu, India. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Management*, 7(1), 27-36. This article explores homestays as a community-based tourism option in Tamil Nadu, India, including their potential to promote local economic development and cultural exchange.
- Senthilkumar, V. S., & Jayanthi, P. (2019). Homestays as a sustainable tourism accommodation option in South India. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Management*, 7(1), 1-10. This article argues that homestays offer a sustainable tourism accommodation option in South India, with benefits for both tourists and local communities.
- Maldonado-Guzman, G., & Smith, W. W. (2019). Assessing the impact of homestays on

rural communities in India. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 16(2), 131-146. This article assesses the impact of homestays on rural communities in India, including their potential to promote local economic development and cultural exchange.

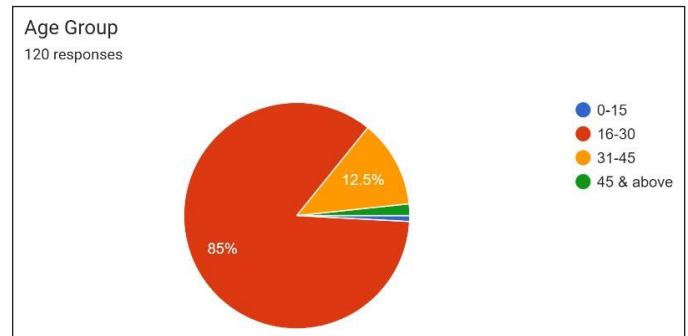
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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

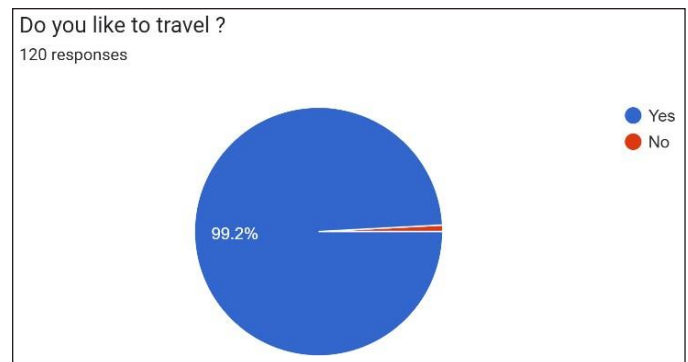
The research is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was gathered using a sample survey. The data was collected using the convenience sampling approach. The sample survey is a questionnaire-based survey, with the questionnaire created using Google Forms. There are three sections to the questionnaire form. The first section contains fundamental Homestay information. The second component includes study-based questions, such as visitor interest, likes, and problems in the study area. The final segment discusses the advantages of homestays in Maharashtra's coastal areas.

Respondents were asked about reasons of staying in homestays, also whether they are aware about the concept of homestays and their accommodation experience at Homestays.

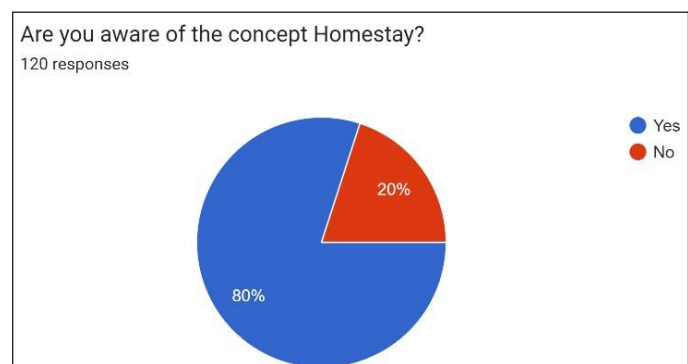
DATA ANALYSIS



Observation: According to the survey, most of the respondents 85% are from age group 16-30. 12.5% respondents are between the age group of 31-45. From the overall 120 respondents.

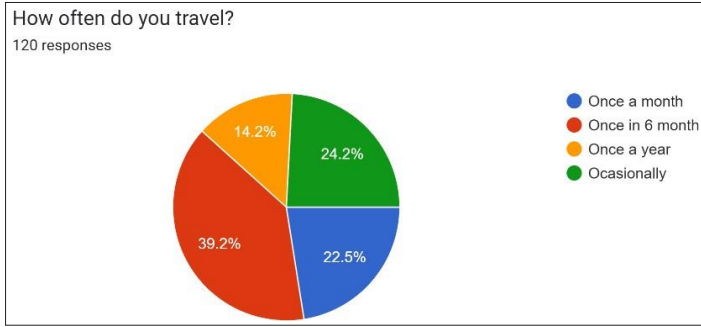


Observation: According to the survey, 99% respondents say they like to travel.



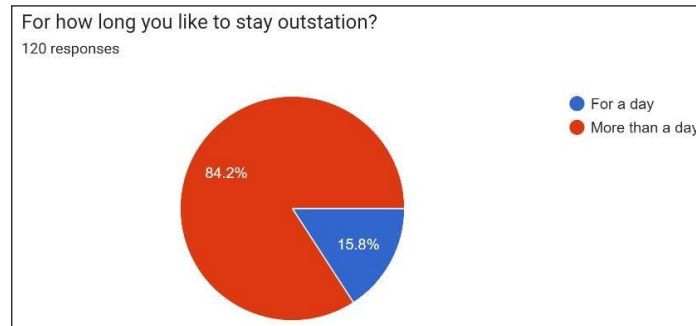
Observation: 80% respondents are aware of the concept of homestay, 20% are unaware about it, according to the survey.

Interpretation: Most of the respondents are aware of homestays.



Observation: 39.2% respondents say they travel once in 6 months, 24.2% says they travel occasionally, 22.5% says they travel once a month & 14.2% respondents travel once a year.

Interpretation: Most of the respondents i.e., 39.2% & 24.2% says they travel once in 6 month and occasionally. There are also 22.5% respondents who say they travel once a month & 14.2% respondents travel once a year.



Observation: 84.2% respondents voted to stay for more than a day & 15.8% respondents say they like to stay for a day.

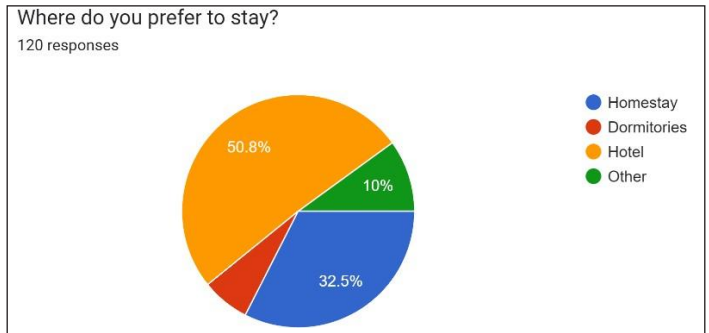
Interpretation: Most of the respondents 84.2% respondents stays for more than a day and only 15.8% like to stay for a day from the overall respondents.



Observation: According to the survey, 35.8% respondents have experienced beach side homestays, 24.2%

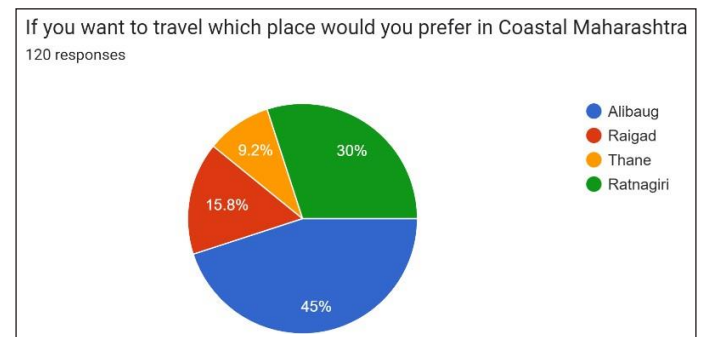
respondents have experienced homestays near hill station. 5% respondents have experienced homestays near snow regions & 35% respondents have experienced all of the homestays in various regions.

Interpretation: Most of the respondents 35.8% & 35% says that they have experienced homestay near beach side areas and all of the various regions.



Observation: 50.8% respondents prefer to stay at hotel, 32.5% respondents say to stay homestay and 10% respondents prefer to stay at other places.

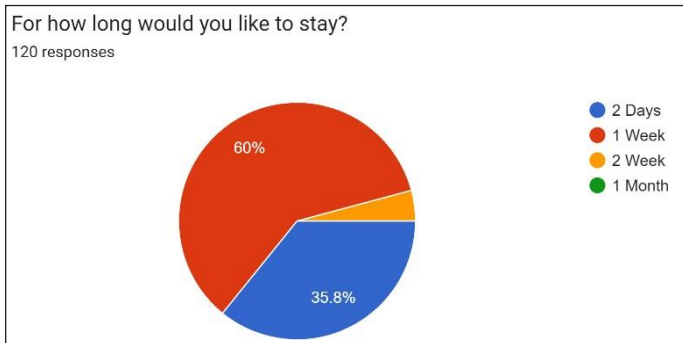
Interpretation: Most of the respondents like to stay at hotels, but there is also huge acceptance of respondents to stay at homestay. Very few respondents like to stay at dormitory and other places. However most of the respondents who opted for hotel, didn't completely understand or experience the relatively newer concept of homestays.



Observation: 45% respondents prefer traveling to alibaug, 15.8% respondents prefer traveling to raigad, 9.2% respondents prefer to traveling to thane, and 30% prefer to traveling to Ratnagiri.

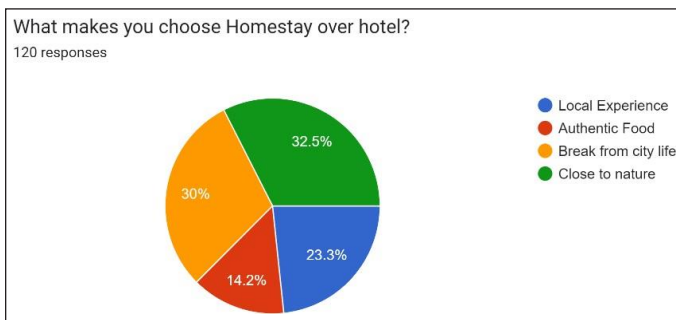
Interpretation: Most of respondents i.e., 45% prefer to travel to alibaug as it nearest to Pune. 30% respondents prefer to travel to Ratnagiri which is the second most

favorite coastal region of Maharashtra & very few respondents prefer to travel near Thane and Raigad.



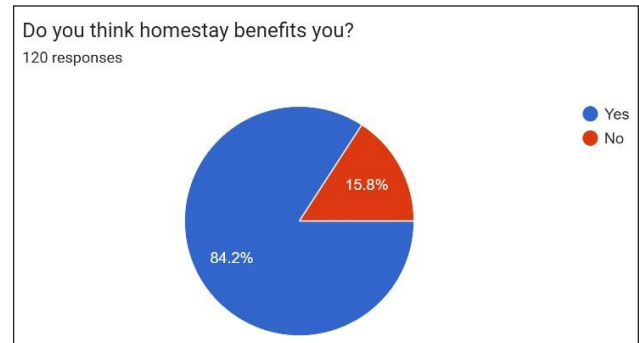
Observation: According to the survey, 60% respondents like to stay for around a week & 35.8% like to stay for 2 days at a particular area.

Interpretation: The timespan of the stay is important to know. Majority of tourists/travelers like to stay for a week i.e., 60% and 35.8% like to stay for maximum 2 days. And only 4% respondents like to stay for 2 week that is because they prefer to stay at relative’s place or some other.



Observation: According to survey, 32.5% respondents voted for close to nature, 30% respondents voted for break from city life, 23.3% respondents voted for local experience, and % respondents voted for authentic food.

Interpretation: The question had an implication that if they would choose a homestay, what would be their primary reasons for the same. Most of the respondents said if they chose homestay, it would be because of proximity to nature & to avail a break from city life. Some respondents chose homestay to get local experience of the area or region and others chose homestay to enjoy the authentic food of that region.



Observation: Most of the respondents i.e., 84.2% says homestays benefits them and 15.8% says homestays does not benefit them.

Interpretation: Most of respondents says homestays benefits them in comparison of price over hotels. Homestays benefits them by providing local experience, authentic foodfest.

FINDINGS

- Surveys have found that Homestays is familiar and comfortable mode of stay for most people as many of them are comfortable staying with different families and experiencing their style of living.
- According to survey many of them like to travel and they feel homestay benefits them in every way. As homestay provides good food, gives different facilities, garden area, clean rooms and most importantly explains others about their culture and living style.
- According to survey tourists choose homestays over hotels because of immersive cultural experience and authentic food.
- Also the duration of stay was one week stay as expressed by most of the respondents.
- Homestay benefits guests in terms of safety, timely provision of food, local cultural exposure, transportation facilities at times, Accessibility to nearby places and Wi-Fi.

SUGGESTIONS

- Emergency services, such as a doctor on call, should be available, as should transportation for sick guests to the nearest hospital.

- This type of lodging can sometimes be found far from a well-populated location, such as in the heart of a coffee plantation or in a rural coastal area. While such destinations have a charm of their own, Safety and Security are key issues.
- Guests may be worried about their safety from both humans and animals. Enhancing visitor safety and security measures such as a well-fenced perimeter, visitor support services, travel information. This will go a long way toward reassuring tourists. This is what allows companies to thrive and survive.
- It is suggested that Homestay businesses invest in professional training for their personnel so that they are better ready to deal with guests in a professional manner. Guests do not want to compromise on this vital component at any moment, so the operator should ensure that stringent sanitary standards are observed in their resort.
- Developing standard processes and systems will ensure a consistent experience for guests. There should be Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for all important processes.

CONCLUSION

Homestay housing is excellent method to get a feel for a destination's true way of life. However, homestay operators must improve their sanitary standards and provide tourists with essential conveniences. They should also ensure that they have improved security measures in place, which will substantially improve the guests' comfort levels. It is also crucial to remember that they should work with locals to preserve the destination's natural and cultural attractiveness. Community is the key word in developing homestay as an interesting option for tourists who are always seeking something new.

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