
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN HOMESTAY EXPERIENCE AND ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH (EWOM) INTENTION: EVIDENCE FROM INDIAN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Gaurav Joshi*, Deepti Pathak**

**Associate Professor, Lal Bahadur Shastri Institute of Management, New Delhi, India. Email: gauravjoshi12@gmail.com (Corresponding author)*

***Associate Professor, Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS), Bangalore, Karnataka, India.*

Abstract

Homestay constitutes a significant element of tourism, serving not just as accommodation but also as a travel attraction. The present study aims to examine the influence of tourists' experiences (cognitive, sensory, emotional, and behavioural) on their electronic word-of-mouth intentions about homestays in the Indian states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. The study employed quantitative research utilising a pretested questionnaire administered to 260 guests residing at various homestays in the Indian states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, employing a purposive sample strategy. Path analysis results confirmed the proposed associations. The findings demonstrate that tourists' experiences positively affect their happiness with the services offered by the homestay, subsequently resulting in favourable electronic word-of-mouth intents. The results offer guidance to homestay owners for enhancing their services to improve tourists' experiences and foster loyalty.

Keywords: *Homestay Experience, Satisfaction, Tourism, Electronic Word of Mouth eWOM, India*

Introduction

The tourism and hospitality industry are one of the major contributors in India towards the growth and development of Indian service sector (Kour & Jasrotia, 2022). With the increasing number of international as well as domestic tourists' arrival, an increased emphasis on the customer experience has been witnessed in the tourism sector as it relies heavily on customer satisfaction (Wang et al., 2009). Measuring customer experiences is very complex specially in service industry because of its intangible nature (Bravo et al., 2020), and as it is affected by variety of factors like customer's experience with the reservation process, service providers, local community interactions, local shopping and tour guides etc. (Molina-Azorin et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2009). With its experiential nature, homestay is emerging as a significant tool to cater to the needs of the travellers (Kulshrestha & Kulshrestha, 2019). Homestay is an established concept that is gaining popularity as an increasing number of tourists opt to reside with locals in their homes instead of in costly hotels (Gu & Wong, 2006; Ghimere, 2023; Shandilya & Srivastava, 2024a). A Homestay is a place which offers the distinction and cosiness of a hotel and combines it with the personal hospitality and homely environment (Agyeiwaah, 2013). It helps in understanding the culture, traditions, and daily routine and challenges of everyday life. Tourists are being treated as family guests and get the chance to mingle with the family as well as other local people. Many foreigners and domestic travellers prefer to stay in homestays to relax in the cosy environment, learn about local traditions, and also to enjoy authentic home cooked food (Kulshrestha & Kulshrestha, 2019). With lesser touch points and smaller footfalls as compared to big hotels, homestays have become more popular among tourists specially after COVID-19 (Ghimere, 2023). Customers are preferring less crowded places to fulfil the requirements of social distancing and satisfy their need of cleanliness and privacy. The homestay project provides clean, hospitable, and affordable accommodation and meals in rural regions abundant in natural surroundings, aiming to divert tourists from opulent and congested urban locales (Pasanchay & Schott, 2021).

Homestays close to nature with basic facilities like proper road connectivity and wi-fi have observed exponential growth in the last few years (Sharma & Chettri, 2023). The travellers of today want to experience things that are unique to a destination for which they want to engage more in authentic and meaningful local interactions (Hasan et al., 2016). Homestay not only create meaningful experience for the customers but also help in conserving local cultural heritage and source of income generation for local community people (Truong, Hall & Garry, 2014). Currently, most homestays in India are located in the extreme north or south, particularly in the

regions of Delhi, Rajasthan, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand (Kulshrestha & Kulshrestha, 2019). Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, located in the Himalayas of India, are renowned tourist destinations owing to their stunning landscapes, diverse culture, and spiritual importance. Tourists pursuing nature-centric excursions are converging on these two states. Snow-covered peaks, tranquil lakes, lush valleys, and sacred pilgrimage sites attract visitors to these areas (Semwal & Singh, 2023). People convert their ancestral houses, farmhouses, old style houses (in hilly areas), bungalows, heritage homes etc. to homestays which makes the tourists stay experience more pleasant especially due to its location which is away from the hustle and bustle of busy and crowded towns and cities (Joshi & Bahuguna, 2023). Personalised interactions with the customers help homestay owners as well as employees to continuously improve their service operations thereby leading to higher customer satisfaction (Chen et al., 2010). The idea of homestay is not novel in India. Due to the increasing interest of domestic as well as foreign tourists in authentic local experience, there has been a surge in demand for homestays in India in the last few years (Sun & Ghiselli, 2010). Even being at its nascent stage, the kind of experience and cosy environment homestays provide is being considered as value-for-money by the customers. The direct association between customers' experience and their satisfaction with the services or service provider has been witnessed in various contexts as well as sectors (Bravo et al., 2019). Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), commonly known as online reviews, online suggestions, or online opinions, has gained significance with the advent of new technological instruments (Cantalops & Salvi, 2014). Litvin et al. (2008) characterise eWOM as "all informal communications aimed at consumers via Internet-based technology concerning the usage or attributes of specific goods and services, or their vendors." This encompasses communication between producers and customers, as well as interactions among consumers themselves. The tourism sector is significantly influenced by electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), with hotels being the most impacted within this business.

Online reviews not only guide travellers for finalising their accommodation decision but also help service providers with the information on the feelings, expectations, and requirements of the travellers (Park & Allen, 2013). Easy accessibility of online reviews makes them even more popular. Through online reviews, travellers collect information about the facilities, environment, experience of the past travellers and attributes of the accommodation and finally make their accommodation decision after making appropriate comparisons (Fileri & Mc Leay, 2014; Fan et al., 2023). Moreover, in a digital landscape where consumer feedback is increasingly

influential and esteemed, it is evident that accommodation providers, whether hotels or homestays, must deliver great experiences to consumers to ensure employee satisfaction (Schmitt, Brakus & Zarantonello, 2015).

This study aims to assess the correlation among dimensions of accommodation experience (cognitive, sensory, emotional, and behavioral), traveller satisfaction, and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). There is no dearth of research that explore the association between consumers' experiences and satisfaction with a brand, however, this study is one of its kind to measure the association between consumers' satisfaction and e-WOM intentions through satisfaction in homestay segment of tourism accommodation.

Literature Review

Experience

Tourism is associated with fun, relaxation, quality time with self, family and friends and experience is associated with the memories that travellers make. Customer experience comprises of a customer's emotional, mental, societal, and physical response to the product, place, and service (Paisri et al., 2022). In other words, customer's experience is a consequence of customer's interaction with the product & services of the organization. Consumer experience can also be defined as the consumers' mental and affective evaluation of the interactions during their purchase process (Klaus & Maklan, 2013). Customer's positive experience not only help the hotels in getting competitive edge over their counterparts but also in creating sustainable tourist destinations (Kar et al., 2021; Srivastava, 2024). Experience is an outcome of interaction between the situation and consumer's psychological state during that moment (Schmitt, 1999). It comes as a reaction to certain stimuli (Shen & Liu, 2015). In tourism experiences can occur at multiple stages like before or during online booking, during stay, post stay etc. (Srivastava & Shandilya, 2023).

During their stay, tourists experience various aspects of the services like cleanliness of the room, ambience, behavior of staff members, privacy etc and these experiences stay with them for longer time (Kar et al., 2021). For the present study experiential four components sensory (sense), affective (feel), cognitive (think), behavioral (act) as identified by Schmitt (1999) have been considered to measure the overall tourist's experience of staying in homestays. The consumer sense experience is associated with the sensory dimensions of the products and services (sound, touch, sight, taste, smell) which provide pleasure and acts as value-add for the customers generating higher customer

satisfaction (Shen & Liu, 2015). The Feel experience refers to the emotions and feelings generated by the schemes and offers (Richins, 1997). The Think experience is linked to the problem-solving experiences appealing to the intellect which aids in engaging customers with the product, brand, and service (Schmitt, 2011). The Act experiences represent the changes in behavior and lifestyle because of interaction with the product and brand. When tourists choose an accommodation for their stay, they actually buy experiences, and their experiences depends a lot on the service quality provided during their stay (Gronroos, 2001). As per various studies in past there is a strong positive association between consumer's experience and emotions which ultimately leads to overall satisfaction (Kim & Chen, 2019; Ridhwan & Hargreaves, 2021; Kar et al., 2021). Therefore, it can be said that the service experience produces cognitive and affective response in the customer, and positive experiences lead to increased satisfaction with the services provided (Kim & Chen, 2019).

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is defined as the consumer's attitude towards the product, brand, or the organization (Anderson, Fornell & Lehmann, 1994) and it also depends on the expectations set by the customer with respect to the product and services (Ryu et al., 2012). It can also be defined as the customer's attitude towards the services received. If the services provided by the hotel meets the expectations of the tourists' it adds value to them leading to positive tourist experience which may further lead to increased tourist satisfaction (Bravo et al., 2019). Tourists' satisfaction can also be defined as the degree to which they believe that the experience is generating positive feeling (Burns & Neisner, 2006). If the service fails to meet the prior expectations of the user it generates dissatisfaction (Oliver, 1993). In tourism and hospitality sector the tourists' satisfaction plays a significant role in business success as it not only influence the re-visit decisions but it also motivates the tourists to share positive information about the services and experiences on various social media platforms and recommend the destination and accommodation to other travellers (Sotiriadis & Van Zyl, 2013; DeLone & McLean, 2003) found a positive correlation between user satisfaction and their repurchase decisions. It also influences user's intentions to share their experiences with others. Jeong and Jang (2011) indicate that user satisfaction leads to behavioral intentions of eWOM. The previous literature suggested that the positive customer experience creates a significant influence on their behavior intentions if they feel satisfied with the product or services they consumed (Cantalops & Salvi, 2014; Casalo et al., 2008; Huete-Alcocer, 2017).

e-WOM

Word of mouth is one among the traditional methods of transferring the information from one source to another sources. All information exchange that takes place between the consumers with respect to the products, services or organizations via internet which is independent of any commercial influence is termed as e-WOM (Kankhuni & Ngwira, 2021; Alcocer, 2017). The increased use of online communication has attracted the attention of both academicians and businesses in e-WOM. In this digital era, almost all kind of information related to different products and services is readily accessible on the internet and when it comes to tourism and hospitality sector, customers bank heavily on the information provided on the e-WOM for making their purchase choices. In the earlier research work it has been found that around 45% of the customers make use of e-WOM through different social media platforms (Bravo et al., 2021). Many travellers today are becoming bloggers and love to share their opinions and review of the products or services they consume on the online platforms (Instagram, Facebook etc), websites, blogs to influence and help others in making their decisions (Tan & Lee, 2018). Tourists not only rate the services provided by the hotel/ homestay but also share their experiences during their stay and provide reference to the future travellers (Confente, 2015). TripAdvisor, VirtualTourist, MakeMyTrip, Expedia are few of the most used professional platforms providing information pertaining to the tourism (Garcia-Pablos et al., 2016). With increased use of ICT (Information & Communication Technology) the reliance of consumers has shifted from family and friends to eWOM (online comments) by other travellers to obtain information about the hotels (Bravo et al., 2021; Nieto et al., 2014). Few consumers share their experiences over internet (active consumers) and others use that information for making buying decisions (passive consumers) and as eWOM is considered to be free of commercial influence it is viewed as a widely trusted source (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). Thus, it can be said that positive tourism experience and tourist's satisfaction has a significant role in generating eWOM.

Conceptual Framework

The study aims at measuring association between customer experience, satisfaction and eWOM intentions with respect to the homestays in India. The customer experience of homestays was observed using experiential framework proposed by Schmitt (1999) which includes four experiential components: Sense, Feel, Think and Act.

Good customer service not only helps in developing competitive advantage, but also influence tourist's satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Kim & Chen, 2019; Ridhwan & Hargreaves, 2021). Various factors like accessibility of the destination, safety, service quality, hospitality, cleanliness impacts all four experiential components of tourist's overall experience and inspire tourists to revisit the destination and also inspire others for the same by writing positive eWOM recommendations (Nessel et al., 2021; Kar et al., 2021). Higher satisfaction level of tourists makes them to create positive eWOM on different social media platforms (Kar, Kumar & Illavarasan, 2021). Therefore, we propose that:

H1: The sense experience has a significant positive association with the tourists' satisfaction.

H2: The feel experience has a significant positive association with the tourists' satisfaction.

H3: The think experience has a significant positive association with the tourists' satisfaction.

H4: The act experience has a significant positive association with the tourists' satisfaction.

H5: The tourists' satisfaction has a significant positive association with the tourists' eWOM intentions.

Sampling and Population

The study explores the association between customer experience, satisfaction and eWOM intentions for homestays experience in India. The study implemented quantitative research with the help of pretested questionnaire to 290 visitors who stayed at different homestays in Uttarakhand and Himanchal Pradesh states of India using purposive sampling method (Schutt & Chambliss, 2011). The data for primary research collected during the period August-December 2022.

The questionnaire comprises multiple questions related to seven distinct constructs required for hypothesis testing. The sensory experience dimensions—sense, feel, think, and act—are measured using scales developed by Schmitt (1999) and Yuan and Wu (2008). To assess customer satisfaction in rural homestays, Hsieh et al. (2012) created a scale that focuses on factors

influencing guests' overall satisfaction with their homestay experiences, which has been utilized in this study. For measuring electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), the scales developed by Cheung & Thadani (2012) and Litvin et al. (2008) have been adapted for the homestay context. The administered questionnaire has been evaluated for consistency and reliability of responses. A total of 260 questionnaires were deemed valid, reflecting a valid response rate of 89.5 percent, and were utilised for subsequent research.

Data Analysis Technique

Exploratory factor analysis method has been utilized for analysing the valid responses collected via questionnaire. The discriminant validity and reliability of the various items in the research instrument has been checked. All items have been checked for normality then used on model for further analysis. The values of skewness found to be in range of -1.57 to -.31 and kurtosis range is in between -.74 to 3.02 which provide confirmation that the primary data were properly distributed and can be used for structural model analysis. (Curran et al. 1996). The PLS-SEM model has been employed for conducting path analysis for the purpose of hypothesis testing. The PLS-SEM method generally deliver the similar outcome for larger and small sample size (Hair Jr et al., 2016). For estimation of measurement model bootstrapping procedure (n = 5000 resamples) has been employed. Fornell and Larcker and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio methods has been employed for checking the discriminant validity of the scale.

Table 1: Reliability and Validity of Constructs for Model Building

Items		Standard Loadings
SE	Sense Experience (SE)	
SE1	The natural surroundings are beautiful.	0.868
SE2	The local meals provided are delicious and very tasty.	0.883
SE3	The ecology and ambience of the surroundings are beautiful.	0.806
SE4	The surroundings air is so fresh and natural.	0.690
FE	Feel Experience (FE)	
FE1	The facilities(like bedroom, bathroom, and lighting) are very cozy.	0.946
FE2	The services provided is cordial and personable.	0.872
FE3	I like the simple and pure lodging experience.	0.663
FE4	I enjoy the carefree lifestyle when lodging.	0.890

Items		Standard Loadings
FE5	The surrounding environment is something I appreciate	-0.013
TH	Think Experience (TE)	
TE1	I concur with the action taken to protect the environment.	0.951
TE2	I enjoy sampling of local products.	0.953
TE3	I have deeper feeling about environment protection when lodging.	0.939
AE	Act Experience (AE)	
AE1	The activities are enjoyable.	0.934
AE2	The homestay experience has increased my preference to purchase local made products.	0.907
AE3	I wish to experience rural/home stay in future as well.	0.922
SAT	Satisfaction (SAT)	
SAT1	I liked the customer support during my homestay.	0.839
SAT2	I like the information support provided during my homestay.	0.860
SAT3	I like the transparency provided by homestay owner/ company.	0.732
SAT4	I like the services provided during homestay.	0.854
SAT5	I like the overall experience in homestay.	0.845
EWOM	E-Word of Mouth Intention (EWOM)	
EWOM1	I prefer to share my homestay experience with others .	0.828
EWOM2	I prefer to share positives reviews about homestay experience.	0.909
EWOM3	I prefer to recommend friends and relatives for homestay experience.	0.899
EWOM4	I prefer to encourage others for homestay experience.	0.876
EWOM5	I prefer to recommend homestay experience if someone ask for information.	0.884

The Table 1 depict the standard loading of various scale items which has been used for calculating the reliability of the scale. As per the standard loadings in Table 1, only two items from feel experience construct and one item from sense experience namely, FE3, FE5 and SE4 respectively found to be less than threshold value of 0.70 (Laroche et al., 2001). So, these three items have been removed for further analysis. The standard loadings for all other construct items are found to be greater than that of 0.7 which implies suitability for further analysis.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Statistics for Different Constructs

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Sense Experience	0.942	0.821	0.947	0.783
Feel Experience	0.927	0.930	0.945	0.774
Think Experience	0.808	0.820	0.842	0.578
Act Experience	0.890	0.917	0.915	0.684
Satisfaction	0.836	0.894	0.887	0.665
e-Word of Mouth Intention	0.944	0.996	0.963	0.898

Table 2 shows the reliability statistics for different constructs. The values of Composite Reliability, Cronbach's Alpha, and rho_A has been used for measuring internal consistency of constructs and all values found to be above 0.7 which fulfil the condition of internal consistency of different constructs used in primary study (Wong, 2013; Hair et al., 2016). The calculated values of Average Variance Extracted for all constructs is above 0.5 which fulfil the conditions of convergent validity for the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981, Hair et al., 2016).

Table 3: Discriminant Validity of the Scale

	Sense Experience	Feel Experience	Think Experience	Act Experience	Satisfaction	e-Word of Mouth Intention
Sense Experience	0.884					
Feel Experience	0.768	0.879				
Think Experience	0.667	0.612	0.760			
Act Experience	0.531	0.657	0.576	0.827		
Satisfaction	0.652	0.611	0.688	0.655	0.875	
e-Word of Mouth Intention	0.547	0.767	0.675	0.745	0.787	0.947

Table 3 shows the discriminant validity of the constructs used in collection of primary data. Discriminant validity is evaluated using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which states that the average variance extracted (AVE) of a latent construct should be greater than the highest squared correlation between that construct and any other latent construct in the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As per Table 3 it can be observed that, the value of the elements in the diagonal position which represents the square root of AVE is greater than the values of non-diagonal elements, which indicate the correlation between the constructs. Therefore, it is evident that discriminant validity has been achieved.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity of the Scale

	Sense Experience	Feel Experience	Think Experience	Act Experience	Satisfaction	e-Word of Mouth Intention
Sense Experience						
Feel Experience	0.433					
Think Experience	0.569	0.777				
Act Experience	0.678	0.729	0.675			
Satisfaction	0.778	0.810	0.711	0.534		
e-Word of Mouth Intention	0.699	0.767	0.621	0.623	0.654	

The HTMT criterion has been also employed for measuring the discriminant validity of the Scale. As per Table 4 all the values of HTMT ratios found to be below 0.9 which implies that no multicollinearity found in between different latent constructs (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015). The results also suggested that that each construct in the model is unique by establishing discriminant validity for the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Wong, 2013; Hair et al., 2016).

Path Model for Hypothesis Testing

The Structural model for the study has been depicted in Fig. 1. The model shows that sense, feel, think and act experience explained 44.7 percent of the variance in satisfaction, while satisfaction explains around 34.8 percent of variance in eWOM intention.

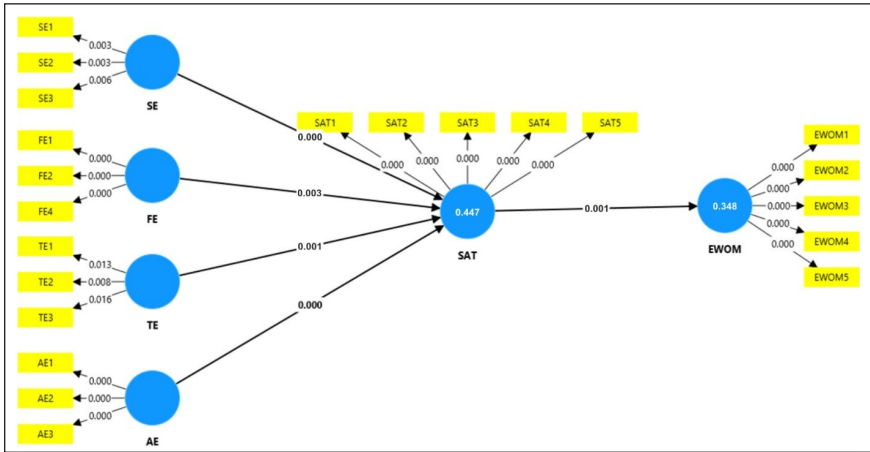


Fig. 1: PLS Path Model

Table 5: Model Fit Summary

Fit Summary		
	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.056	0.057
d_ULS	8.718	8.964
d_G	12.470	12.660
Chi-Square	5294.271	5356.426
NFI	0.933	0.928

Table 5 shows model fit summary. As per table the value of Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) found to be 0.056 which is below the threshold limit of 0.080 which shows goodness of fit measure for the model (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Henseler et al., 2013). Also, the value of Normed Fit Index (NFI) found to be 0.923 which is close to 1 and shows the model is well fitted (Lohmöller, 1989).

Table 6: Results of Hypothesis Testing

	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	t-Statistics	p-Values	Results
Sense Experience -> Satisfaction	.653	.647	0.049	13.294	.000	H1 Accepted
Feel Experience -> Satisfaction	.410	.402	0.134	2.995	.003	H2 Accepted
Think Experience -> Satisfaction	.601	.600	0.107	5.556	.001	H3 Accepted
Act Experience -> Satisfaction	.812	.815	0.030	26.847	.000	H4 Accepted
Satisfaction -> E-WOM Intention	.590	.592	0.053	11.162	.001	H5 Accepted

Table 6 reveals that the p-values for the different hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 found to be 0.000, 0.003, 0.001, 0.000, and 0.001 which is below the threshold limit of 0.05, implies that these hypotheses are supported. The results indicate that think, sense, feel, and act experience is having positive impact on satisfaction level of respondents. Also, satisfaction is having positive impact on e-WOM intention with respect to homestay experience.

Discussion and Implications

The fundamental value of tourism resides in the vacation experience, which fosters the production of indelible memories for visitors. This study’s findings indicate a strong association between experience and electronic word-of-mouth intents. The outcomes of this study underscore the significance of delivering warm and polite service to the travellers. The natural landscape and lifestyle offered by homestays nested in Himalayas significantly contributed towards the depth of tourists’ experiences.

As tourists across the world looking for unique travel experiences where they can explore hidden treasures combining nature's beauty with cultural heritage, remote locations are becoming most sought-after destinations (Luekveerawattana, 2024). Information and communication technology has unveiled a plethora of previously uncharted sites for vacationers. Tourism has grown exponentially in India in the last two decades (Kulshrestha & Kulshrestha, 2019). In response to evolving tourist preferences and the extensive information disseminated online regarding destinations and lodgings, homestays are emerging as the superior alternative to hotels. Experience is defined as “an event that engages oneself in a personal way” (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 12). In the realm of tourism, a tourist's experience at their chosen place is paramount. Homestay meets the expectations of travellers by providing tranquil accommodations that immerse them in local culture, community, and cuisine (Shandilya & Srivastava, 2024b; Shen & Liu, 2015). When tourists experience a warm reception from their hosts and cultivate emotional connections and empathy, they are more inclined to demonstrate loyalty to the destination's homestay sector (Zhang et al., 2021; Bi et al., 2024). Visitors are more inclined to have a positive experience and advocate for a destination when they feel secure and well-supported. If tourists believe that the advantages of their visit surpass the expenses associated with activities like visiting, observing, learning, and enjoying, they are more inclined to have a favourable experience (Kim & Thapa, 2018; Seow et al., 2024). Homestay tourists who experience enhanced service from their hosts and cultivate a stronger emotional connection with them are more likely to return to the homestay and promote it to others (Luekveerawattana, 2024). The aforementioned good effects can lead to heightened tourism traffic and favourable electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) promotion, hence enhancing the local economy and the long-term viability of the tourism sector (Van Heel et al., 2024; Rattanaburi, 2023).

Establishing high-quality homestays and assisting consumers in creating distinctive and memorable experiences can provide a firm with a sustainable competitive edge in the marketplace (Shen & Liu, 2015). Leisure tourism in India can be advanced and marketed by establishing a robust network of homestays in the future. Numerous uncharted leisure areas in India, such as hill stations, heritage sites, and beaches, remain underdeveloped mostly due to inadequate road access and insufficient lodging, yet has the potential to be turned into appealing tourist attractions. In such locations, establishing homestays is more practical and economical than constructing major hotels. The accessibility of comprehensive information regarding accommodation and booking improves tourist contentment and elevates their propensity to generate favourable electronic word-of-mouth (Kar et al., 2021).

The study framework is advantageous for homestay owners to acquire a thorough comprehension of hotel guests' experiential feedback and their electronic word-of-mouth responses (eWOM). Homestay owners must actively strive to enhance service quality and engage guests in local cultural practices. A homestay program can provide economic, social, and cultural benefits to local communities. To maintain demand for homestays and deliver an authentic experience to travellers, it is essential to promote collaboration among homestay proprietors, governmental entities, and tourism enterprises. Consequently, the study's findings indicate that homestay owners should endeavour to engage tourists' senses and emotions through seamless booking processes, prompt service, a welcoming atmosphere, local cultural insights, and the creation of exceptional experiences that align with customer expectations and preferences.

Limitations

This study included two major drawbacks. The data were limited to two mountainous states, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, in India, resulting in sample homogeneity. This may limit the applicability of the findings to homestays in different regions. Secondly, the data were obtained from Indian tourists. A comparative analysis may be conducted by gathering reviews from international travellers. Future studies may be undertaken to mitigate these limitations and augment knowledge in this domain.

Conclusion

The concept of homestays offers guests a unique and immersive experience while also providing hosts with supplementary income and employment alternatives. Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, renowned for their enchanting natural beauty, are favoured destinations for homestay vacations in India. This study seeks to evaluate the relationship between dimensions of accommodation experience (cognitive, sensory, emotional, and behavioural), traveller satisfaction, and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). This study's findings indicate a correlation among homestay experience, destination satisfaction, and behavioural intention. This study concludes that enhanced tourist pleasure from authentic experiences is attributable to destination locales. Tourists can gain insights into the local culture of the destination through homestays. Homestays serve as both accommodation options and tourist attractions that significantly impact travel motivation as a pull element. Comprehending the homestay experience offers guidance for the travel sector in formulating marketing strategies for tourism.

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