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Research Paper / Article / Review

Unveiling the Potential of Homestays in Uttarakhand: Exploring Sustainable Tourism and Socio-Cultural Impacts

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Abstract: This study investigates Uttarakhand's homestay profitability. Beautiful scenery, unique customs, and religious importance draw outdoor enthusiasts and adventure seekers. This study analyses how Uttarakhand homestays promote sustainable tourism and affect locals. Sustainable environmental, cultural, and community protections are needed as tourism grows. Homestays, a sustainable housing option that offers cultural immersion, community engagement, and meaningful relationships with locals, have gained popularity. This study evaluates Uttarakhand homestays' distinctive traits and sustainable tourist potential. Homestays' social, cultural, economic, and environmental effects on the community are also addressed. The study analyses how Uttarakhand homestays might encourage sustainable tourism. It outlines ways stakeholders might capitalise. Homestays, cultural exchange, and sustainable tourism research are reviewed. Social exchange theory, cultural theory, community-based tourism, and sustainability explain homestay dynamics and effects. This study explores Uttarakhand homestay benefits. Diverse geography and culture create unique local experiences and cultural exchange. Travellers can stay with local families and discover their customs. Cultural understanding can maintain a region's legacy. The research underlines host communities' economic prospects and homestay ventures' profitability. Hosting visitors in homes can promote local economic growth, host family income, and entrepreneurial abilities. This study explores environmental and socio-cultural sustainability in Uttarakhand tourism. Trash management, energy savings, and renewable energy can lessen homestays' environmental impact. Indigenous tourism and household financial empowerment foster socio-cultural sustainability. This study examines Uttarakhand homestays as sustainable tourism and their socio-cultural effects. Stakeholders must encourage cultural interchange, economic empowerment, and environmental protection through homestays. Homestay benefits and drawbacks can help policymakers promote sustainable tourism while maintaining the area's environmental and cultural heritage.

Key Words: Homestay, Community Based Tourism, Sustainable Tourism Framework, Cultural Heritage, Host-Guest Interaction.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Uttarakhand, in the Himalayas of India, is a popular tourist destination due to its beautiful landscapes, diversified culture, and spiritual significance. Tourists seeking nature-based adventures are flocking to Uttarakhand. Snow-capped summits, calm lakes, verdant valleys, and pilgrimage sites draw people to the region. This study examines Uttarakhand's tourism potential and sustainability. The report emphasises homestays' role in Uttarakhand's sustainable tourism. As the tourism industry grows, so does the importance of sustainable tourism practises that protect the environment, preserve culture, and help indigenous peoples. Homestays have become a popular sustainable tourism alternative to traditional housing. Homestays allow guests to stay with locals for immersive experiences, cultural interaction, and community engagement.

This study defines and analyses homestays in Uttarakhand. It examines their ability to promote sustainable tourism and their impact on local populations. The study's goals are two. This study examines Uttarakhand's diverse geographical and cultural landscape and homestays' unique qualities and potential. This study's second goal is to analyse

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homestays' social, cultural, economic, and environmental impacts on local populations. This study also examines how homestays promote sustainable tourism. This study is structured to achieve the following goals:

The next part reviews homestays and sustainable tourism literature, including theoretical models, past research, and best practises. Next, homestays in Uttarakhand are analysed, taking into account its diverse geography and rich cultural heritage. Sustainable tourism and Uttarakhand's tourism development are examined in this study. The study examines how homestays may help sustain regional tourism. This study examines how homestays affect Uttarakhand's local populations' social, cultural, economic, and environmental elements. This study illuminated the potential of homestays for sustainable tourism in Uttarakhand. Our findings suggest that tourism stakeholders use this opportunity to promote sustainable tourism. We recommend homestay growth and sustainable tourist initiatives. By doing so, Uttarakhand can promote sustainable tourism growth and improve visitor experiences. This study analyses the importance of homestays in Uttarakhand and their potential to promote sustainable tourism, contributing to the current dialogue on responsible and community-oriented tourism. By understanding homestays' pros and cons, tourist industry decision-makers and local people can encourage sustainable tourism growth in Uttarakhand while protecting its natural and cultural heritage.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The objective of this literature review is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of prior research and theoretical constructs pertaining to homestays and their influence on cultural exchange and sustainable tourism. Through a thorough examination of existing literature in this particular field, our objective is to acquire a comprehensive comprehension of the theoretical foundations and practical consequences of homestays within the framework of cultural exchange and sustainable tourism.

Comprehending theoretical frameworks is essential in examining and deciphering the intricate dynamics inherent in homestay encounters. The frameworks utilised in this study offer a theoretical perspective for analysing the various dimensions of homestays, such as their function in enabling cross-cultural interaction, cultivating intercultural awareness, and advancing sustainable tourism initiatives. Through an examination of these frameworks, a deeper understanding can be gained regarding the fundamental mechanisms and variables that impact the efficacy and results of homestay programmes.

The present literature review endeavours to underscore the importance of homestays for cultural exchange and sustainable tourism. The exchange of cultures is a crucial factor in advancing intercultural comprehension, dismantling preconceived notions, and cultivating a sense of mutual respect and admiration among individuals of varying cultural origins. Sustainable tourism practises are deemed crucial in mitigating adverse environmental, socio-cultural, and economic effects while simultaneously optimising the favourable contributions of tourism to the local populace.

The present study aims to outline the objectives of the literature review.

- The aim of this study is to investigate the theoretical frameworks that form the basis for analysing homestays with regard to cultural exchange and sustainable tourism.
- The aim of this research is to analyse the current literature on homestays, with a particular emphasis on their advantages, difficulties, and optimal methods for fostering cultural exchange and sustainable tourism.
- The objective of this study is to examine the impact of host-guest interactions on promoting cultural exchange and cross-cultural learning in the context of homestays.
- The objective is to amalgamate the outcomes obtained from the review of existing literature and pinpoint any deficiencies or domains that require additional investigation.

Theoretical Framework

The comprehension of homestay dynamics and their effects on cultural exchange and sustainable tourism frequently necessitates the use of theoretical frameworks (1). The frameworks under consideration offer a set of conceptual instruments to scrutinise and construe the diverse facets of homestays, which include cultural, social, economic, and environmental dimensions. This section will provide an overview of various theoretical frameworks that are frequently employed in the study of homestays and their respective contributions to the comprehension of this phenomenon.

Social Exchange Theory

The application of social exchange theory is a prevalent approach in the analysis and comprehension of the interactions that occur between hosts and guests in homestay settings. As per the theoretical framework, individuals partake in social interactions by conducting a cost-benefit analysis. This conceptual framework elucidates the underlying factors and interplay of host-guest interactions in the context of homestay arrangements (2). The phenomenon under

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examination emphasises the presence of reciprocal actions, trust, and mutual advantages that transpire between individuals who occupy the roles of hosts and guests. The Social Exchange Theory investigates the variables that impact the quality of interactions between hosts and guests (3):(4). These variables include the establishment of trust, the sharing of experiences, and the exchange of resources.

Example Robina-Ramírez et al. (2020) used Social Exchange Theory to study the social and economic wellbeing of host-guest interactions (5). The study found that hosts have been motivated by social exchange to promote social values, emotions, attitudes, and social reciprocity to entertain visitors as a supplementary source of income to improve their quality of life. Visitors help impoverished hosts. Tourist-generated seasonal and precarious jobs harm the local community.

Cultural Theory

The field of cultural theory provides valuable perspectives on the influence of cultural elements on the formation of homestay experiences (6);(7). The framework acknowledges the multifaceted nature of cultural values, norms, and practises that impact the intercultural interactions taking place in homestay settings. The significance of cultural authenticity, intercultural communication, and the safeguarding of cultural heritage is underscored (8);(9). The field of cultural theory emphasises the importance of fostering cultural sensitivity and comprehension among hosts and guests in order to facilitate meaningful cultural exchange experiences.

Example: Chitrakar (2021) conducted a study that employed cultural theory to examine the impact of community-based tourism on the dynamics of local food culture (10). The findings indicate that Community Homestay Tourism has had a positive impact on the local cuisine, resulting in a more diverse and dynamic food culture. This has been achieved through the incorporation of new culinary influences from both regional and international cuisines, as well as through the experimentation and creolization of traditional dishes. Additionally, there has been a revival of traditional feast patterns and festive dishes, further contributing to the vibrancy of the local food culture.

Community Based Tourism

The Community-Based Tourism (CBT) framework prioritises the involvement of the community, their empowerment, and local ownership in the development of tourism (11);(12);(13). In the scope of homestays, this framework conceptualises them as a type of community-based tourism that facilitates the active participation and advantageous outcomes of local communities in tourism-related endeavours. The implementation of homestay initiatives is underpinned by the principles of capacity building, equitable distribution of benefits, and sustainable resource management, as emphasised by CBT.

Example: Anand et al. (2012) utilised the case of Korzok homestays, which were established by the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-India) in the vicinity of the Ramsar wetland Tsomoriri, to demonstrate the integration of community development requirements with conservation objectives (14). The present study provides an in-depth analysis of the evolution of the initiative, including its early impacts and potential future developments.

Sustainability Framework

The Sustainability Framework is a comprehensive tool that analyses the various dimensions of tourism, including economic, environmental, and socio-cultural aspects (15);(16). The application of this framework in the context of homestays facilitates the evaluation of sustainable practises, impacts, and outcomes. The study examines the economic advantages that hosts can gain from homestays, the potential environmental impacts of lodging options, and the role that homestays can play in fostering socio-cultural exchanges and preserving local heritage.

Example: Pasanchay and Schott (2021) employed the Sustainable Livelihood Framework to conduct a thorough analysis of the advantages and drawbacks associated with running a homestay (17). Utilising a case-study methodology, a combination of semi-structured interviews, observation notes, and secondary sources were employed to investigate homestay operators in a community-based tourism (CBT) destination located in Laos. The research findings indicate that the operation of homestays presents a substantial opportunity to promote the achievement of SDG 1 (no poverty) and SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities).

The use of theoretical frameworks is crucial in the analysis of homestays and in comprehending their role in promoting cultural exchange and sustainable tourism. Homestays provide valuable insights into the motivations, interactions, impacts, and best practises associated with this type of accommodation. Through the application of these frameworks, researchers are able to acquire a more profound comprehension of the intricacies and fluctuations inherent in homestay encounters. This allows them to pinpoint fundamental concepts and principles that influence cultural interchange and sustainable tourism.

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The significance of reciprocity and trust in host-guest relationships within homestays is emphasised by social exchange theory. The field of cultural theory places great importance on the role of cultural authenticity and intercultural communication in facilitating significant cultural exchange. The framework of community-based tourism highlights the significance of community involvement and the fair distribution of advantages in homestay initiatives. The evaluation of homestays using the Sustainability Framework involves an analysis of their economic, environmental, and sociocultural dimensions. The primary objective of this assessment is to encourage sustainable practises and generate positive

Several investigations have utilised these theoretical structures to scrutinise and assess homestays in various settings. Robina-Ramírez et al. (2020) used Social Exchange Theory to examine host and guest social and economic well-being (5). According to studies, hosts promoted social ideals, emotions, attitudes, and reciprocity to improve tourists' quality of life. Visitors may help struggling hosts. Tourism affects communities. The impact of communitybased tourism on local food culture was analysed by Chitrakar (2021) using cultural theory (10). The study revealed that the effects were positive, leading to the diversification and revival of traditional cuisine. Anand et al. (2012) examined WWF-India's Korzok homestays near Tsomoriri wetland (14). Homestays demonstrated community development and conservation goals. The study examines the initiative's development, initial effects, and projected future outcomes. The Sustainable Livelihood Framework was used by Pasanchay and Schott (2021) to investigate homestay operations in a community-based tourism destination in Laos (17). The paper emphasises the impact on Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 11.

Through the application of various theoretical frameworks and the examination of their implementation in prior research, scholars are able to acquire a deeper understanding of the intricate nature of homestays. The identification of key factors that influence cultural exchange, sustainable tourism practises, and the overall outcomes of homestay experiences is possible. The aforementioned frameworks serve as sturdy groundwork for future investigations and the establishment of optimal procedures in the strategizing, execution, and supervision of homestay endeavours.

Social Exchange Theory, Cultural Theory, Community-Based Tourism, and the Sustainability Framework help us understand homestays as cultural exchange and sustainable tourism. This study presents frameworks to define homestay concepts and principles and guide the analysis and assessment of this phenomenon. Scholars might provide valuable insight into future research and homestay programmes by analysing their use in previous studies.

3. CHARACTERSTICS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF HOMESTAY IN UTTARAKHAND: Geographical and Cultural Diversity of Uttarakhand as a Backdrop for Homestay Experiences

The state of Uttarakhand offers a stunning natural environment, varied ecological systems, and a culturally significant heritage that serve as an exceptional setting for homestay opportunities (18). The region under consideration exhibits a diverse array of topographical characteristics, including the grandiose Himalayan range, unspoiled waterways, verdant basins, and compact woodlands. The diverse natural surroundings of the region present distinct opportunities for tourists to engage in an immersive experience of the area's scenic and serene qualities. Furthermore, Uttarakhand boasts a diverse array of cultures, languages, and traditions, rendering it a prime location for cultural immersion and discovery via homestay experiences.

Role of Homestays in Providing Authentic Local Experiences and Fostering Cultural Exchange

The homestay accommodations available in Uttarakhand are considered an essential component in facilitating genuine cultural immersion for visitors. In contrast to traditional lodging options, homestays afford tourists the chance to reside with indigenous households and participate in their customary routines (19). The immersive experience provided to tourists enables them to gain first-hand knowledge about the local customs, traditions, and rituals, thereby promoting cultural exchange and understanding. By engaging in host-guest interactions, individuals have the opportunity to acquire knowledge about Uttarakhand's local cuisine, arts and crafts, music, and traditional practises. This can lead to a more profound understanding and safeguarding of the region's cultural heritage.

Economic Opportunities and Income Generation for Host Communities through Homestay Initiatives

The emergence of homestay initiatives in Uttarakhand has been observed as a potential avenue for promoting economic empowerment among local communities. The act of hosting tourists in their homes has the potential to generate supplementary income for host families, thereby enhancing their overall livelihoods (14). The direct benefits of homestays to host communities include revenue generation, which can contribute to local economic development and poverty reduction. Additionally, homestay programmes serve as a means to foster entrepreneurship and skill acquisition within the host communities. This is achieved through their involvement in various tourism-related activities, such as

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hospitality and culinary arts. The economic opportunities in question have the dual effect of improving the financial status of the host families and promoting the socio-economic development of the region as a whole.

4. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES AND HOMESTAY IN UTTARAKHAND: Environmental Sustainability

The preservation of the environment is a crucial factor in the sustainability of homestays in Uttarakhand. The study entails evaluating and mitigating the ecological impact of homestay operations. Sustainable practises, including waste management, energy conservation, and the utilisation of renewable energy sources, are being actively promoted. It is recommended that homestay operators implement environmentally conscious practises in order to mitigate their ecological footprint. The implementation of waste reduction measures, water conservation, and the utilisation of renewable energy sources by homestays have been found to contribute significantly to the preservation of Uttarakhand's pristine ecosystems.

Socio-Cultural Sustainability

The homestays located in Uttarakhand are known to have a noteworthy impact on the maintenance of sociocultural sustainability. The involvement of local communities in the tourism industry and the provision of opportunities for economic participation are means of empowering them. Homestays have been found to play a significant role in the conservation of cultural heritage through the facilitation of the exchange of traditional knowledge, customs, and practises between hosts and guests. It is imperative to mitigate adverse effects on indigenous customs and ways of life by guaranteeing that cultural interchange occurs in a considerate and conscientious fashion. The participation of tourists in homestay experiences can facilitate a more profound comprehension and admiration of the diverse cultures present in Uttarakhand while simultaneously contributing to their conservation.

Economic Sustainability

The attainment of economic sustainability is a critical factor in ensuring the enduring viability of homestay programmes in Uttarakhand. The objective is to achieve equitable distribution of economic benefits among all stakeholders and reduce leakages in the tourism value chain. It is imperative that local communities are afforded the chance to engage in and reap the rewards of tourism-related undertakings, such as homestays. The facilitation of direct booking channels can result in increased revenue retention for hosts. Furthermore, the advocacy of utilising locally sourced products and services within homestay operations serves to bolster the regional economy and mitigate reliance on external providers.

5. CASE STUDIES WITH EXAMPLE:

Showcase of Successful Homestay Initiatives in Different Regions of Uttarakhand

Homestay programmes in Uttarakhand need economic sustainability to succeed. This study seeks to distribute the financial benefits of the tourist industry fairly and prevent revenue loss across the tourism value chain. Tourism programmes like homestays must include local communities. Direct booking channels let hosts retain more money. Promoting the use of regionally procured supplies and facilities in homestay operations may benefit the indigenous economy and reduce dependence on overseas vendors.

Uttarakhand's excellent homestay programmes demonstrate strong community and cultural links. In Khirsu village of Pauri district, the Live Basa homestay blends local architecture with modern comforts. Traditional and modern features combine to create a genuine and pleasant living area. Kanatal's Pahadi House is peaceful and non-touristy. Abhay Sharma's homestay scheme restores abandoned village homes. His programme protects the rugged region. Dalar's Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary guesthouse is another example. Ganesh Dutt's tranquil homestay overlooks the Dalar Ranges. Homestay programmes provide authentic experiences while preserving local cultures. Through indigenous community engagement and cultural heritage display, homestays encourage sustainable tourism. Successful homestay models in Uttarakhand indicate positive social, cultural, and economic consequences. These homestays also provide an unforgettable immersion experience.

Community-Led Homestay Projects and Their Impact on Local Developments and Empowerment

The emergence of community-led homestay projects in Uttarakhand has been observed as a potent means for facilitating local development and empowerment. A noteworthy illustration is the homestay initiative in Munsiyari, wherein the indigenous populace has spearheaded the provision of homestay opportunities to visiting tourists. The initiative has facilitated economic opportunities for the villagers and empowered them to engage in decision-making processes while preserving their cultural heritage. In Almora district, Sewa Atithi, a women-run community homestay

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initiative, resulted in significant improvements to the livelihoods of local inhabitants. Another initiative is Rose (Rural Opportunity for Social Elevation) in Kanda Village of Bageshwar district, run by Jeevan Verma. His responsible rural tourism model benefits locals and visitors through real and respectful cultural exchanges. Multiple generations of Verma's have lived in Kanda. Social, cultural, and environmental challenges are understood by the person. Three key elements of a sustainable lifestyle are highlighted in the article. This holistic approach directs all activities. R.O.S.E. has developed earthquake-resistant homes, communal sanitation, twin-tank latrines, and rural employment education projects. Examples include a communal store, a religious building, ecological advancement, natural farming, small-scale dairy production, bird husbandry, and others. These projects have facilitated the generation of income, the enhancement of infrastructure, and the promotion of sustainable practises. The aforementioned instances serve as evidence of the capacity of community-driven endeavours to enable and embolden regional communities while establishing sustainable means of subsistence.

Best Practices and Lesson Learned from Existing Homestays Programs in Uttarakhand

The achievement of economic sustainability is a crucial element in guaranteeing the long-term feasibility of homestay initiatives in Uttarakhand. The aim of this study is to attain a fair distribution of economic benefits among all stakeholders and mitigate any potential revenue loss within the tourism value chain. It is crucial to provide local communities with the opportunity to participate in and benefit from tourism initiatives such as homestays. The deployment of direct booking channels can aid hosts in retaining a larger share of the revenue generated, thereby assisting in achieving the desired outcome. In addition, promoting the utilisation of locally procured goods and services in homestay enterprises can yield favourable outcomes for the regional economy and diminish dependence on external providers.

6. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACTS ON HOMESTAYS IN UTTARAKHAND:

Analysis of the Social Dynamics and Interactions between Hosts and Guests in Homestay Experiences

The homestay experiences in Uttarakhand facilitate social dynamics and interactions between hosts and guests, which in turn promote significant cultural exchanges. The spatial proximity and communal living arrangements afford guests the chance to engage in interpersonal exchanges with their hosts, thereby fostering prospects for cultural assimilation and cross-cultural education. The reciprocal sharing of customs, traditions, and narratives fosters a more profound comprehension and valuation of indigenous cultures. Furthermore, the amicable reception provided by hosts frequently results in the formation of enduring relationships and camaraderie, augmenting the overall encounter for both guests and hosts.

Implications for Cultural Preservation, Intercultural Understanding, and Local Identity in Uttarakhand

The homestays in Uttarakhand have been identified as playing a crucial role in the preservation of local culture and the promotion of intercultural understanding. Homestays play a significant role in the conservation and dissemination of cultural heritage by affording visitors the opportunity to experience local customs, traditions, and ways of life firsthand. Visitors are provided with the chance to engage in day-to-day undertakings, customary celebrations, and acquire knowledge on conventional handicrafts or culinary techniques. The exchange of cultural knowledge serves as a protective measure for local practises, mitigating the risk of their gradual decline. Additionally, homestays have been found to promote intercultural understanding through the dismantling of stereotypes and the cultivation of empathy, tolerance, and respect between hosts and guests of varying cultural backgrounds.

Assessing Community Perceptions, Challenges, and Opportunities Associated with Homestays

The assessment of homestay impacts in Uttarakhand necessitates a comprehensive comprehension of community perceptions. Homestays present both economic prospects and cultural preservation benefits, as well as challenges and opportunities for the local communities. It is necessary to evaluate the community's attitudes towards the impact of tourism on their daily routines, alterations in social interactions, and the commercialization of their cultural practises. The crucial task at hand involves addressing challenges that pertain to maintaining a balance between tourism activities and the preservation of local identity. The identification and utilisation of opportunities for enhancing capacity, developing skills, and empowering communities through training programmes, marketing support, and community-led initiatives is crucial.

7. DISCUSSION:

Synthesis of Findings and Key Insights

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The achievement of economic sustainability is a crucial element in guaranteeing the long-term feasibility of homestay initiatives in Uttarakhand. The aim of this study is to attain a fair distribution of financial benefits among all stakeholders in the tourism industry and mitigate any potential revenue losses throughout the tourism value chain. It is crucial to provide local communities with the opportunity to participate in and benefit from tourism initiatives such as homestays. The utilisation of direct booking channels can aid hosts in achieving their goal of retaining a larger share of the revenue generated. In addition, promoting the utilisation of locally procured commodities and amenities in homestay enterprises can yield favourable outcomes for the regional financial system and diminish dependence on external providers.

Critical Analysis of the Potential of Homestays in Uttarakhand's Tourism Development and Sustainable Tourism Principles

The potential of homestays in the development of tourism in Uttarakhand is significant and is in line with the principles of sustainable tourism. Homestays are believed to be a valuable addition to the tourism industry as they provide visitors with genuine and culturally immersive experiences. This, in turn, helps to diversify the tourism product and create distinctive selling points. Alternative accommodations offer tourists the opportunity to engage with local communities and make a direct contribution to their welfare, as opposed to traditional lodging options. In addition, homestays adhere to sustainable tourism principles by implementing eco-friendly measures to reduce environmental impact, promoting community empowerment, and safeguarding cultural heritage. The successful development of tourism in a destination is contingent upon addressing various challenges. These include the need to maintain a balance between tourism activities and the preservation of local identity, ensure equitable distribution of benefits, and address potential social and cultural conflicts. Careful attention must be paid to these issues in order to achieve sustainable tourism development.

Recommendations for Policymakers, Tourism Stakeholders, and Local Communities

The achievement of economic sustainability is a crucial element in guaranteeing the long-term viability of homestay initiatives in Uttarakhand. The primary aim is to attain a fair distribution of financial benefits among all stakeholders and minimise any potential revenue loss within the tourism value chain. It is crucial to provide local communities with the opportunity to participate in and benefit from tourism initiatives, such as homestays. The incorporation of direct booking channels can aid hosts in retaining a larger share of the revenue generated, thereby contributing towards the accomplishment of the desired outcome. In addition, promoting the utilisation of regionally procured commodities and amenities in homestay enterprises can yield favourable outcomes for the indigenous economy and reduce dependence on external providers.

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