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Unheard Voices: The Dynamics of Local Non-Participation in Homestay Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir

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Introduction

Background of Homestay Tourism

Homestay tourism is a form of accommodation where tourists stay with local families in their homes, experiencing their daily life, culture, and customs (Nallanavar, 2021). This type of tourism offers a more intimate and authentic travel experience compared to traditional hotel stays. It allows tourists to immerse themselves in the local culture, gain unique insights into the community, and contribute directly to the local economy. Homestay tourism can promote cultural exchange, enhance mutual understanding, and provide significant economic benefits to host families and communities, particularly in rural and less developed areas (Saini & Singh, 2022).

Overview of Homestay Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir

In India, homestay tourism has gained popularity as a means of promoting sustainable tourism and rural development (Seth, 2019). The Indian government has been actively encouraging this form of tourism through various initiatives and policies aimed at boosting rural livelihoods and preserving cultural heritage. States like Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand have successfully implemented homestay programs, drawing tourists seeking authentic cultural experiences (Parmar & Kumar, 2022).

In Jammu and Kashmir, homestay tourism holds substantial potential due to the region's rich cultural heritage, diverse traditions, and stunning natural landscapes. Despite the growing interest in homestays, the region faces unique challenges such as security concerns, political instability, and infrastructural limitations (Singla, 2023). However, the government and local communities are making concerted efforts to develop homestay tourism as a viable economic opportunity. Initiatives include training programs for potential hosts, financial incentives, and marketing strategies to attract domestic and international tourists (Anwar et al., 2021).

The significance of homestay tourism in Jammu and Kashmir extends beyond economic gains; it also plays a crucial role in promoting peace and stability by fostering intercultural dialogue and understanding (Valeri, 2023). By opening their homes to tourists, local families can share their way of life and break down misconceptions, contributing to a more harmonious and inclusive society (Wijesundara & Gnanapala, 2016).

Problem Statement

Local communities in Jammu and Kashmir are largely reluctant to participate in homestay tourism, despite its potential to boost economies, promote cultural exchange, and foster sustainable development (Sharma & Yadav, 2018). This lack of awareness, reluctance to open homes, and minimal government involvement further exacerbate the issue.

Studying community non-participation in homestay tourism is crucial for sustainable tourism development. Understanding socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors can help identify gaps in policies and programs, enabling targeted interventions (Sood et al., 2017).

Sustainable tourism development requires active community involvement, promoting economic resilience, cultural heritage preservation, and environmental conservation.

Addressing non-participation in Jammu and Kashmir's homestay tourism sector is crucial for sustainable socio-economic development, strengthening community cohesion, and promoting a positive image (Anwar et al., 2021). This study aims to explore non-participation dynamics, identify barriers, and propose practical solutions to enhance community involvement in homestay tourism.

Objectives of the Study

1. To Explore the Reasons Behind Local Community Non-Participation in Homestay Tourism
2. To Identify the Barriers and Challenges Faced by Local Communities
3. To Suggest Strategies for Enhancing Local Participation in Homestay Tourism

Literature Review

Kala and Bagri (2018) emphasize the importance of local community involvement in remote tourism destinations, but four barriers hinder it. Choudhury et al. (2018) explore rural tourism's role in generating sustainable livelihoods, economic empowerment, and employment opportunities in North-East India, highlighting its benefits and government initiatives.

Jamal et al. (2018) and Kannegieser (2015) conducted studies on homestay tourism in India's Darjeeling district. Jamal et al. found that unique products and services in homestay villages are crucial for identity and business growth. Kannegieser's 2015 study examined the social, cultural, and economic benefits of rural homestays, finding consistent income, social upliftment, and socioeconomic improvements for women.

The 2015 paper by Kontogeorgopoulos et al. discusses the challenges of successful homestay tourism in Thailand and India, highlighting the need for future research and stakeholder questionnaires to understand the real problems and opportunities in these areas. The study is based on secondary data and scholarly studies.

Kumar et al.'s 2023 study explores the opportunities and challenges of homestay family businesses in India, highlighting environmental, infrastructural, tourism, social, and economic aspects. They recommend future research and stakeholder questionnaires.

The 2019 study by Kulshreshtha et al. explores the potential of homestays in India, highlighting their economic, social, and cultural benefits. The 2022 study by Bhutio et al. highlights the challenges faced by homestays, such as lack of financial assistance, limited local employment, and inefficient solid waste management, in contributing to sustainable tourism development.

A 2023 study by Thakur et al. Ranjeet found that homestays in the Indian Himalayan Region are a popular alternative to sustainable tourism, providing economic benefits and promoting local art, architecture, traditions, and food habits.

The 2023 research paper by Sanyal et al. examines the social, economic, and environmental challenges of homestay tourism in Indian Himalayan regions, proposing policies for safety, sustainable development, and marketing strategies for local communities.

Anwar et al.'s 2021 study explores the potential of transforming traditional Neelum Valley houses into home-based accommodation for sustainable home-stay tourism, preserving local cultural values.

Sood et al.'s 2017 study explores 'deliberate non-participation' in homestays in remote Indian Himalayan communities, highlighting challenges such as compliance with guidelines, inadequate infrastructure, and gender roles.

Ahmad, 2022 explores power struggles in rural tourism destinations like Pahalgam, arguing that the Indian State contests dominance, insurrection, and subversion, while subaltern dispositions create boundaries and limit capital access.

Nyaupane and Timothy's 2022 book delves into the unique characteristics of the Himalaya, focusing on sociocultural, environmental, and economic aspects, including tourism, development, poverty, justice, and Indigenous rights.

Mahajan et al.'s 2024 study examines learned helplessness in peer-to-peer accommodation (P2PA) and its implications for local residents in developing economies. Findings suggest negotiation strategies can reduce helplessness and encourage tourism.

Walia et al.'s 2021 study explores tourism micro entrepreneurship in Himachal Pradesh, India, revealing a gap between sustainable practices and sustainable development, despite lack of policies and support, but suggesting sustainable micro entrepreneurship can offer economic benefits and improved lifestyles.

The study by Jeelani et al. (2023) assessed local communities' attitudes towards sustainable tourism development using the Sustainable Tourism Attitude Scale (SUS-TAS), revealing agreement on six sustainable tourism development constructs.

Benefits and Challenges of Homestay Tourism

Benefits

1. **Economic Empowerment:** Homestay tourism provides direct economic benefits to host families and local communities (Bhutio et al., 2022). It offers an additional source of income, helping to alleviate poverty and improve living standards. By hosting tourists, local families can diversify their income sources, making them less dependent on traditional forms of livelihood such as agriculture (Kala & Bagri, 2018).
2. **Cultural Exchange:** Homestay tourism fosters cultural exchange between tourists and hosts (Valeri, 2023). Visitors gain a deeper understanding of local customs, traditions, and lifestyles, while hosts are exposed to different cultures and perspectives. This mutual exchange promotes tolerance, respect, and global understanding (Parmar & Kumar, 2022).
3. **Sustainable Tourism:** Homestay tourism supports sustainable tourism practices by encouraging environmentally friendly behavior and the preservation of local culture and heritage. It minimizes the environmental footprint of tourism by utilizing existing resources and infrastructure, and it encourages tourists to engage in responsible travel behaviors (Pusiran & Xiao, 2013).
4. **Community Development:** By promoting community involvement and ownership, homestay tourism strengthens social cohesion and community bonds. It often leads to improvements in local infrastructure, such as roads, sanitation, and communication, benefiting the entire community (Mohamed, 2010).

Challenges

1. **Quality and Standards:** Ensuring consistent quality and standards across homestays can be challenging. Variations in facilities, services, and hygiene can affect the overall tourist experience (Jeelani et al., 2023). Establishing and maintaining high standards requires training, monitoring, and investment.
2. **Cultural Sensitivity:** While cultural exchange is a benefit, it can also pose challenges. Misunderstandings and cultural insensitivity from tourists can lead to tensions and conflicts. Hosts need to be prepared to manage cultural differences and educate guests about local customs and expectations (Anand et al., 2012).
3. **Economic Viability:** The economic viability of homestays depends on a steady flow of tourists, which can be affected by external factors such as political instability, natural disasters, and global economic trends. Hosts may face financial instability during low tourist seasons or crises (Jamal et al., 2018).
4. **Infrastructure and Accessibility:** Many potential homestay locations, especially in rural and remote areas, suffer from inadequate infrastructure and accessibility issues. Poor roads, lack of public transportation, and limited communication networks can deter tourists and hinder the growth of homestay tourism (Jayara, 2017).
5. **Regulatory and Policy Support:** Effective regulatory frameworks and policy support are crucial for the growth of homestay tourism. Inconsistent policies, bureaucratic hurdles, and lack of government support can impede the development and sustainability of homestay initiatives (Choudhury et al., 2018).

Community Participation in Tourism

Importance of Community Participation for Sustainable Tourism

Community participation is critical for sustainable tourism development. It ensures that the benefits of tourism are distributed equitably, promoting social and economic development within local communities (Sanyal et al., 2023). Engaging local communities in tourism planning and decision-making processes fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, leading to more sustainable and resilient tourism practices (Anup & Fernandez, 2022). Community participation also helps preserve cultural heritage and environmental resources. By involving locals, tourism activities can be tailored to respect and showcase cultural traditions and natural landscapes, enhancing the authenticity and appeal of the destination (Jayara, 2017).

Barriers to Participation

1. **Socio-Economic Barriers:** Socio-economic factors significantly impact community participation in tourism, with financial constraints, low income levels, economic instability, and limited access to education and training being major barriers (Kannegieser, 2015). These factors hinder the effective participation and benefit of tourism in local communities.
2. **Cultural and Psychological Barriers:** Cultural norms and traditions significantly influence community attitudes towards tourism, often limiting locals' willingness to open their homes to strangers. Psychological barriers, fear of cultural dilution, and social pressures contribute to reluctance, while family dynamics also play a role (Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2015).
3. **Institutional and Policy-Related Barriers:** Barriers to community-based tourism include inadequate government support, inconsistent policies, bureaucratic hurdles, insufficient government incentives, and poor infrastructure, which can discourage community involvement and hinder the development and sustainability of tourism initiatives (Kulshreshtha & Kulshreshtha, 2019).

Research Methodology

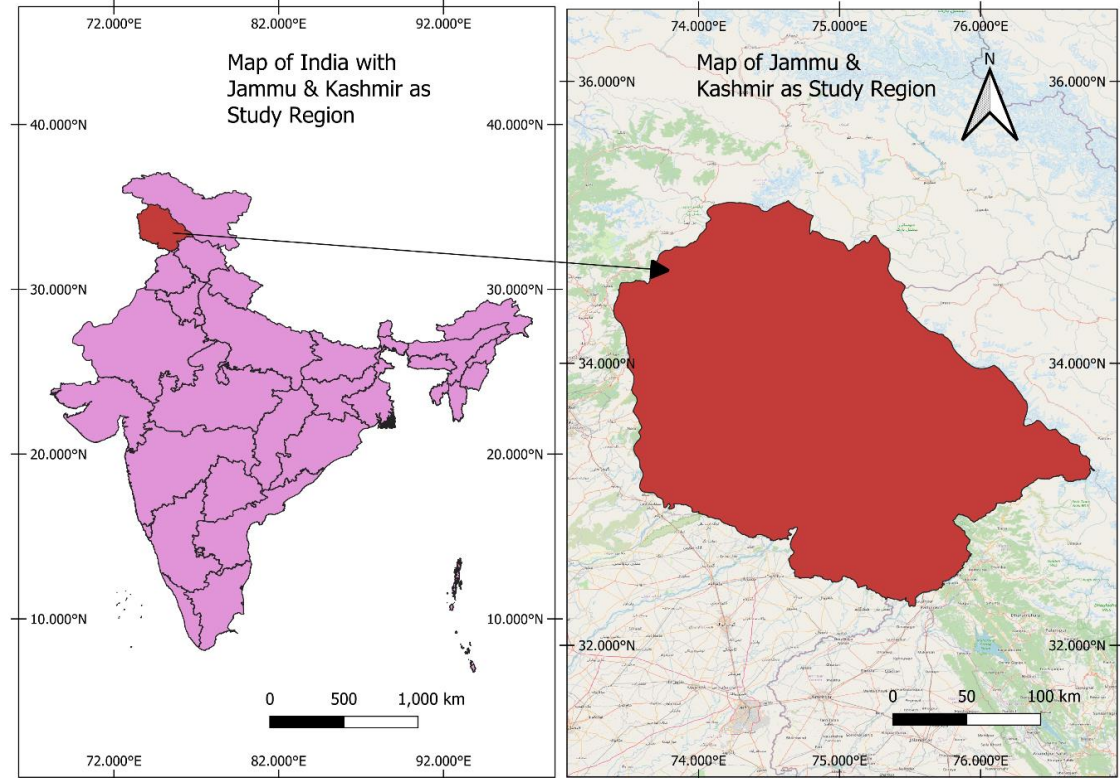
Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design, using thematic analysis to explore and understand the factors influencing local community non-participation in homestay tourism in Jammu and Kashmir. The qualitative approach is chosen for its ability to provide in-depth insights into the lived experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of the community members.

Research Area

Figure 1

Jammu and Kashmir, India, has been taken as the study area for this research.



Source: Author Generated using QGIS

Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with local residents, potential homestay hosts, and community leaders. This method allows for flexibility in questioning, enabling respondents to express their views and experiences freely while ensuring that all relevant topics are covered.

Criteria for Participant Selection

Participants are selected based on the following criteria:

- Local residents who have lived in the community for a significant period.
- Potential homestay hosts who have the capacity and interest to participate in homestay tourism.
- Community leaders and influential figures who can provide insights into community attitudes and decision-making processes.

This purposive sampling ensures that a diverse range of perspectives is captured, reflecting the views of different segments of the community. To get the comprehensive insights, a total of 30 respondents were taken for an in-depth interview.

Data Analysis

The data collected from interviews are analyzed using thematic analysis. This involves systematically identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within the qualitative data.

The data is coded and categorized to facilitate the identification of recurring themes and sub-themes. Coding involves assigning labels to segments of text that represent specific concepts

or ideas. These codes are then grouped into broader categories, which are analyzed to identify overarching themes that address the research objectives.

Table 1. Demographics of the Respondents

| Category | Sub-Category | Number of Respondents |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Age | 20-29 | 3 |
| | 30-39 | 11 |
| | 40-49 | 11 |
| | 50-59 | 5 |
| Gender | Male | 15 |
| | Female | 15 |
| Occupation | Farmer | 6 |
| | Shopkeeper | 4 |
| | Teacher | 4 |
| | Retired Army | 2 |
| | Artisan | 1 |
| | Weaver | 4 |
| | Homemaker | 5 |
| | Tailor | 2 |
| | Carpenter | 2 |
| | Electrician | 2 |
| Education Level | Primary School | 5 |
| | Secondary School | 8 |
| | High School | 12 |
| | College Graduate/Bachelor's Degree | 5 |

The table provides a comprehensive overview of the demographic characteristics of the 30 respondents participating in the study. The majority of participants fall within the 30-39 and 40-49 age groups, each comprising 11 respondents. There are 3 respondents aged 20-29 and 5 respondents aged 50-59. The sample is evenly split between genders, with 15 male and 15 female respondents.

The respondents come from a diverse array of occupations, reflecting the varied economic activities in the region. The most common occupations are farmers (6 respondents) and shopkeepers (4 respondents). There are also 4 teachers, 4 weavers, 5 homemakers, 2 retired army personnel, 2 tailors, 2 carpenters, 2 electricians, and 1 artisan.

The education levels of the respondents vary significantly. The largest group comprises those who have completed high school (12 respondents), followed by those with secondary school education (8 respondents). Five respondents have a primary school education, and another five have attained a college graduate or bachelor's degree.

Findings

Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis focuses on understanding the reasons behind local community non-participation in homestay tourism in Jammu and Kashmir. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 30 respondents. The analysis identifies key themes emerging from their responses.

Table. 2 Themes and Sub-Themes Identified

| Theme | Sub-Theme | % of Respondents |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Awareness and Perception | Limited Awareness | 78% |
| | Perception | 64% |
| Participation | Minimal Participation | 100% |
| Economic Barriers | High Initial Investment | 85% |
| | Need for Financial Support | 91% |
| Cultural and Social Barriers | Cultural Norms and Privacy | 71% |
| | Social Pressure | 67% |
| Institutional and Policy Barriers | Ineffective Policies & Programs | 78% |
| | Lack of Institutional Support | 81% |
| Personal Attitude and Beliefs | Perceived Benefits & Drawbacks | 71% |
| | Impact on Daily Life | 54% |
| Suggestions & Recommendations | Increased Awareness & training | 69% |
| | Simplified Access to Resources | 83% |
| | Involvement of Local Leaders | 51% |

1. Awareness and Perception

- **Limited Awareness:** Most respondents (78%) learned about homestay tourism through government officials, community meetings, or media. Despite these sources, general awareness remains low, with many still unfamiliar with the specifics.
- **Perception:** While some respondents (64%) see potential economic benefits, others are skeptical about the practicality and readiness of their community to host tourists.

2. Participation

- **Minimal Participation:** None of the respondents or their community members had participated in homestay tourism (100%). The main reasons include a lack of information, financial constraints, and cultural reservations.

Figure 2. Themes and Sub-Themes Identified

3. Economic Barriers

- **High Initial Investment:** The cost of setting up a suitable homestay is a significant deterrent (85%). Respondents expressed concern about the financial risk and uncertainty of regular tourist inflow.
- **Need for Financial Support:** Respondents (91%) suggested that financial grants, low-interest loans, and marketing support would encourage participation.

4. Cultural and Social Barriers

- **Cultural Norms and Privacy:** Strong cultural norms valuing privacy and hospitality limited to known guests make it challenging to open homes to strangers (71%).
- **Social Pressure:** Fear of social judgment and the impact on family life are significant deterrents (67%). The idea of hosting outsiders is met with apprehension and resistance from family members.

5. Institutional and Policy Barriers

- **Ineffective Policies & Programs:** While some respondents are aware of government schemes, they feel these programs are poorly advertised and hard to access (78%).
- **Lack of Institutional Support:** Respondents (81%) highlighted the need for better infrastructure, comprehensive training programs, and more accessible government support to facilitate participation.

6. Personal Attitudes and Beliefs

- **Perceived Benefits & Drawbacks:** Respondents (71%) acknowledged potential economic benefits and opportunities for cultural exchange. However, they also expressed concerns about privacy, safety, and the disruption of their traditional way of life.
- **Impact on Daily Life:** Many respondents (54%) felt that accommodating tourists would require significant lifestyle adjustments, which they are not prepared to make.

7. Suggestions and Recommendations

- **Increased Awareness and Training:** Respondents (69%) emphasized the need for more awareness campaigns and practical training sessions. They believe that success stories from similar communities could build confidence.
- **Simplified Access to Resources:** Suggestions (83%) included simplified procedures for accessing financial and institutional support and culturally sensitive promotion strategies.
- **Involvement of Local Leaders:** Active involvement of local leaders in planning and promoting homestay tourism was seen as crucial (51%) to gaining community trust and participation.

Discussion

The study reveals that economic constraints in Jammu and Kashmir hinder community participation in homestay tourism due to high initial investment and uncertainty of tourist flow. Income, education, and employment status also play a crucial role in participation, with lower-income households having less disposable income. Higher education levels show more interest but skepticism about practical implementation.

Cultural norms and traditions significantly influence community participation in homestay tourism, with traditional values emphasizing family privacy and hospitality. Gender roles and family dynamics complicate participation, with male members often deciding, while women worry about disruptions to family routines and apprehension about outsiders.

The study reveals inadequate government policies and support mechanisms for homestay tourism, with inadequate communication, bureaucratic hurdles, and lack of transparency. Infrastructure deficiencies, such as poor road connectivity and unreliable electricity, deter tourists and hinder locals from maintaining standards, limiting the potential for successful programs.

Conclusion, Implications and Suggestions

Summary of Findings

This study explored the reasons behind local community non-participation in homestay tourism in Jammu and Kashmir through a qualitative analysis involving semi-structured interviews. The key themes identified include socio-economic barriers, cultural and social barriers, institutional and policy-related barriers, and community perceptions and attitudes. Economic constraints, such as high initial investment and financial risk, were significant deterrents. Cultural norms emphasizing privacy, gender roles, and family dynamics also played a critical role. Furthermore, the study highlighted the inadequacy of government policies, lack of effective support mechanisms, and infrastructure deficiencies as major obstacles. Community perceptions revealed both recognition of potential benefits and apprehensions about the impact on daily life and cultural integrity.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The interviews suggest several strategies to boost local participation in homestay tourism, including financial support, awareness campaigns, infrastructure development, culturally sensitive promotion, and community engagement. These include providing low-interest loans and grants, promoting tourism through training programs, investing in basic infrastructure, designing culturally sensitive promotional strategies, and involving local leaders in tourism planning and decision-making processes.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further research should explore the impact of homestay tourism on cultural preservation, tourist perceptions and expectations in Jammu and Kashmir, and the potential of digital platforms in promoting homestay tourism.

Ethical Considerations

The study ensures participant informed consent, maintains confidentiality and anonymity, and respects cultural sensitivity. Participants are provided with detailed information about the study, and personal identifiers are removed. Data is securely stored and accessed only by the research team. The process minimizes disruption to the community and ensures participants feel valued and respected throughout the study.

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