

## RURAL HOMESTAY ACCOMMODATION IN PAKYONG DISTRICT OF SIKKIM : AN ASSESSMENT OF GUEST SATISFACTION

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### ABSTRACT

*In the current global era, guests are more interested in peaceful vacation destinations than in the best possible journeys. A visit like this to a homestay provides guests with the opportunity to interact with locals and gain a true understanding of their culture and way of life. One type of establishment that meets a wide range of guests' requirements is the rural homestay. The present investigation aims to evaluate factors that influence guest satisfaction at rural homestay accommodations. A closed-ended questionnaire and face-to-face interactions with guests at rural homestays are used to collect the data. Primary and secondary data were used to learn more about the rural homestay accommodations in the Pakyong district of Sikkim state. Primary data were gathered through field surveys and personal observation, while secondary data were gathered through research papers, government reports, and online sources. All the variables, including Accommodation, Amenities & Supply, Ambiance, Safety & Security, Cleanliness & Hygiene, Comfort, Attached Bathroom Facility, and Well-Ventilated Room, have been labelled to support the important aspects of homestay. The investigation has been planned in such a way that it will evaluate various aspects of rural homestay accommodation that influence guests' satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In addition, it makes homestay hosts aware of their guests' requirements and enhances existing lodging facilities and services. The study's findings support the host and public administrators' suggestions for further improvement to increase guest satisfaction and contribute to the extensive promotion and development of rural homestays in the Pakyong district of Sikkim state.*

**Keywords:** - Rural homestay, Accommodation, Satisfaction.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

India is well-known throughout the world for both its wonderful hospitality and its integral tourist attractions. India welcomes tourists from all income levels cheers to its diversified environment, rich cultural legacy, and awesome natural wonders. To promote the development of the nation's tourist industry, the Ministry of Tourism is involved in developing effective policies and plans. The tourism and hospitality sector contributes significantly to the nation's growth momentum by

creating jobs and serving as a source of foreign exchange profits. Increased competition among service providers for a competitive edge results from an increase in tourists. The behaviour, buying habits, and decision-making of tourists must be understood on a fundamental level. A vacation experience is completed by a combination of the services and amenities offered to tourists as well as natural tourist attractions. India welcomes 6.33 million overseas visitors and 610.22 local visitors to its various regions in the year 2020.

Purpose-wise Foreign Tourist Arrivals during 2020, **Table 1**

Sr.No.	Purpose	FTA	Percentage
1	Leisure Holiday and Recreation	1597753	58.2
2	Indian Diaspora	381460	13.9
3	Business and Professional	320582	11.7
4	Others	262026	9.5
5	Medical	182945	6.7
<b>Total</b>		<b>2744766</b>	<b>100.0</b>

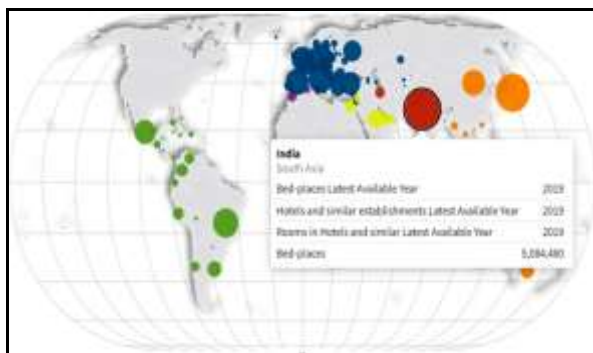
Sources –Ministry of Tourism, 2021

When visiting a place, guests have expectations about the services and facilities they will use. If those expectations are met, they are satisfied. When

the experience doesn't live up to the expectations, discontent sets in. The amount of guest satisfaction is a sign of the quality of the amenities and services

offered to them, which promotes tourism growth in general. When choosing an appropriate

accommodation that complements their.



Sources-UNWTO 2021

wants and requirements and guests pay special attention. Modern travellers not only want a comfortable, affordable place to stay, but they also want to learn more about traditional living customs and related behaviours. The ideal accommodation for such expeditions and a genuine traditional experience is a rural homestay. An experience of the rural lifestyle, cultures, and traditions is provided by a rural homestay facility, which also provides the necessity of a clean and hygienic bedroom along with home-cooked food-beverages. In the tourism and hospitality industry, the accommodation sector is focused on understanding and enhancing the quality of service and perceived value of the service for guests to achieve guest satisfaction and loyalty.

### 1.1 An Overview and Tourist attraction in Pakyong

The name Pakyong is developed from the Lepcha word where "pa yong" signifies "bamboo of the bow". Prior it was a typical act of the Lepcha nation to name a spot after the necessary things found at the place. Found 30 km from the clamouring town Gangtok, Pakyong the upcoming traveller location of Sikkim brings a great deal to the table to its guests together with moderating climate and amazing glory. The focus on this exciting destination was brought by the main Greenfield Air terminal of Sikkim. Agri-business assumes a significant part in the existence of individuals of Pakyong and they usually produce ginger and round chillies (Dalle khursani) for a huge scope. Alongside ginger and round chillies, goondruk, Kinema, and Sinki are well-known matured food sources sold in the nearby market of Pakyong. Aside from being honoured with normal assets, Pakyong equally has numerous symbolic destinations in and around it which might publicity

the interest of travellers venturing out to Pakyong. Pakyong with its peaceful ambience house several sacrosanct destination Dikling mane-Lhakhang, Shivalaya sanctuary, Pacheykhani cave, Changey religious community, Devi Mandir, Karthok cloister, and Priests' Retreat Place. Travellers can allow themselves to be submerged in the peaceful atmosphere while relaxing in seeing rippling petitioning God banners and lavish Moving Glades spotted with tall conifer and pine trees in Pakyong. The tranquil village has its commercial centre and on work days known as Wednesday Bazar 'hart', it is where travellers can purchase organic vegetables while attempting some neighbourhood Sikkim treats. Wednesday Bazar is a well-known neighbourhood fascination in Pakyong. The RDD complex situated in the virgin valley is one more preferred place in Pakyong. Surrounded by pine trees and a little park, the best opportunity to visit the RDD complex is viewed as the colder time of year season when the little ice is covering the pine trees making it seem to be a captivating spot. Guests can go travelling to Jhandi Dara, which is situated at the highest piece of Pakyong, and see the astounding perspective of the nearby valley and snow-covered mountains. It is around three hour's drive on foot from the fundamental town. Noab Gaon a spot close to Pakyong likewise called the virgin valley is an incredible spot to go for travelling. The peaceful village with its religious communities, bewildering journeying trails, and natural flora has tempted guests heading out to Sikkim. The simplicity of Pakyong, yakten village and many more has made it a place of haven for nature lovers.

Lying in the lower regions of the Eastern Himalayas, Pakyong a classic district of Sikkim is blessed with strange normal excellence. Spotted with the lavish woods of pine and conifer trees and

lodging at Greenfield air terminal, Pakyong has entrapped the core of guests who long to be near nature.

## 1.2 Homestay concept

A homestay, which connects guests with hosts who have offered their homes to tourists, is becoming increasingly common. Since visitors don't remain in an empty condo or house yet rather share the conveniences with the host and their loved ones. Homestay convenience shifts from other normal kinds of private housing in that the host is available. Homestays are a popular choice for guests of all ages who want an experience that is more individualized, immersive, and authentic. As travellers need all the more genuine, important, and long-lasting encounters, homestay facilities are turning into a more famous pattern around the world. The first step toward a wonderful homestay experience for both parties is selecting the ideal host and homestay. putting it another way, locating the ideal match. Other visitors might just want nice, reasonably priced lodging in a good location with a friendly host, whereas some guests are seeking an immersive and cultural experience. Some people, like hosts, like to talk with guests for hours over dinner, while others like to let them be themselves. The term "homestay" refers to a type of overseas stay where guests rent a room from a local family to learn about the culture, way of life, and language of the area. A host or host family provides this arrangement, which involves staying in a furnished home. During a local visit, the guest would stay in a homelike setting with shared facilities and amenities. Most of the time, utilities and needs are covered, and the size can be daily, weekly, monthly, or unlimited except for some other situations by the host (Rivers, 1998).

Aside from housing home Stays give various activities which give an organization the exceptional chance to ride the special lifestyle of the locale. The activities will vary depending on where you are and where you live. Giving morning alms to monks, learning how to weave silk or cotton cloth, participating in agricultural activities, going on nature tours, and researching a skill practiced by nearby villagers, such as making nearby handicrafts or cooking Thai food, are just a few examples of things to do at a homestead in Thailand. Dollmaking art can be studied in Japan.

In India, numerous Homestays in Kerala give backwater travels in houseboats and excursions

down limited trenches in kayaks. Some Homestays in Rajasthan offer safaris into the countryside on horseback or in a jeep to visit tribal villages and look for wildlife. Visitors to plantations and hill stations can go trekking or take guided walks through spice gardens and forests with their hosts. Contingent upon the family, many hosts will give to take organization circular the focal points of their city or town, sharing nearby bits of knowledge and an excursion was wiped out from the standard voyager walk.

Homestays are more than just a base for a few days of local exploration; they are also destinations for excursions on their own. Frederick (2003) also defined homestay as a stay for tourists or an international student staying with a local family. Homestay programs can be found in any location in the world; Homestay countries encourage homestays to grow their tourism industry. In addition, the idea of homestays brings people from a variety of experiences together under one roof and provides the best platform for relationships that last a lifetime.

## 2. MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

In Sikkim tourism is attractive due to the presence of its natural beauty, rich biodiversity, favourable climate, local hospitality and many more. Maximum number of tourist arrival can be found in the Gangtok district (formerly East Sikkim) of Sikkim the capital city of the State. In December 2021 Pakyong has formally declared a district (formerly part of East Sikkim) by the government of Sikkim. Apart from other districts of Sikkim Pakyong has several tourism products in attracting a maximum number of tourists. Since this is a very novel district therefore researcher has chosen this area to encourage the homestay host to work with full zeal and enthusiasm to make Pakyong a rural homestay model district, and also highlight the need for concerned authorities to undertake necessary development in the region for the promotion of cluster rural homestay.

## 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Homestay convenience refers to accommodation including a full board that permits holidaymakers to run over native language, culture, and social design (Agyeiwaah et al., 2013). Fruitful execution of the homestay does not just benefit the host regarding money-related gains, yet in addition, contributes towards local area advancement as far as financial changes, acquired social capital, working on

personal satisfaction, and so on ((Ibrahim and Razzaq, 2010). The provincial travel industry is a type of travel industry where the travel industry happens on the wide open Path (1994), with every one of the exercises occurring in the provincial arrangement liberated from metropolitan impact.

According to Kulshreshtha and Kulshreshtha (2019), the convenience of homestays is likely a tool for the development of the country's travel industry. According to Wang (2007), provincial homestay convenience is paid to open a door for the host community, which centres on administration excellence, resulting in visitors' contentment and steadfastness (Ismail et al. 2016), which in turn increases the likelihood of attracting anticipated guests.

#### 4. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To evaluate the attributes that lead to satisfaction of the guests staying in a rural homestay in Pakyong district.
2. To explore the opportunities for rural homestay accommodation in the Pakyong district of Sikkim.

#### 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To examine the growth and development of homestay tourism in Sikkim, as well as how guests

view the rural homestay accommodations and services, primary data was gathered through a digital questionnaire survey in 2022. The primary data was gathered using the purposive sampling method. For the secondary data, the published article and research papers, government reports related to homestays were studied, relevant websites such as Sikkim tourism, and other government agencies were accessed and internet e-resources were also inculcated in the study. The information gathered from both sources was tabulated, examined using basic statistical methods and represented through pie charts and bar graphs.

#### 6. DATA ANALYSIS

The present research paper inculcates seven attributes of Accommodation operation i.e., *Ambiance, Amenity & Supply, Cleanliness & hygiene, Well Ventilated Room, Comfort (Bed & Linen), Bathroom Facility and Safety & Security* to evaluate the satisfaction of the guests staying in a rural homestay in Pakyong district of Sikkim State.

##### 6.1 Demographic profile of the respondents

In this section, an attempt has been made to present the demographic profile of the respondents from the valid questionnaires.

Table--2

Sr. No.	Guest profile	Factor	Frequency	Percent
1	Natiolity	Indian	66	93
		Forigners	05	07
2	Gender	Male	34	48
		Female	37	52
3	Age group	15-25	09	12
		26-35	15	21
		36-50	38	54
		51-60	08	11
		61 Above	01	02
4	Qualification	10 <sup>th</sup>	04	05
		10+2	21	30
		UG	28	40
		PG	14	20
		PhD. & Above	02	03
		Un-schooled	02	02
5	Marital status	Married	54	76
		Unmarried	17	24
6	Occupation	Salaried	50	70
		Self-employed	14	20
		Homemaker	02	03
		Student	04	05
		Retired	01	02
Total			71	100

Sources –Primary data, 2022

In this context, the present data referring to table – 2 is based on the demographic profile of the

respondents which is further divided into six variables i.e. Nationality, Gender, Age Group,

Qualification, Marital Status and Occupation. The data collection survey was carried out with 71 respondents out of which 93% are domestic travellers while foreign travellers constitute only 07%. There are 34 male and 37 female respondents which share 48 % and 52 % respectively in the gender base of the demographic profile. The third variable of the demographic profile is the age group which is further divided into 5 divisions namely ages 15 to 25, age between 26 to 35, age between 36 to 50, age between 51 to 60 and 61 above. The majority of the respondents fall under the age category of 36 to 50 which holds 54 % of the share with 38 respondents. However, the other significant age group of respondents fall under 26 to 35 which has 21% of the share with 15 respondents.

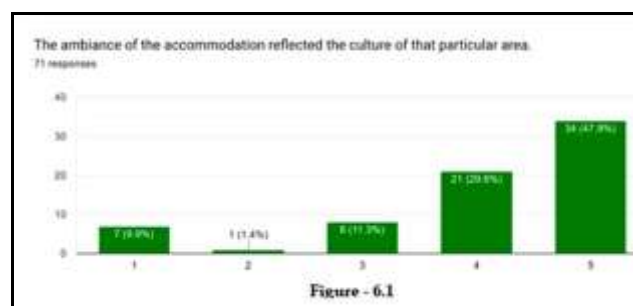
The next variable in the demographic profile of the respondents is their educational qualification. There are six levels of educational qualifications attributed to the respondents. The majority of the respondents are undergraduates which contribute 40 %. However, the other significant category of the respondents falling under class 10 to 12 is also remarkable because it shares 30 %. In totality, if we consider all three categories i.e. class 10 to 12, undergraduate and PG all together the figure comes out to be 90% which plays a significant role in identifying the educational background of the respondents staying in the rural Homestays of Pakyong district.

If we look towards the data collected in terms of the marital status of the respondents opting for the rural homestay, we get that 76% of them are married while 24% are unmarried. So far as the occupation of the respondents staying in rural homestays is concerned, salaried people are ranked first with 70% while Self-employed persons stand second with 20%. In other words, out of a total of 71 respondents, 64 respondents play a key role in financially supporting rural home stays operations through their stays in the Pakyong district. However, the other categories like students, homemakers, and retired persons all together constitute only 10% of the share.

## 6.2 – The assessment of Guest Satisfaction

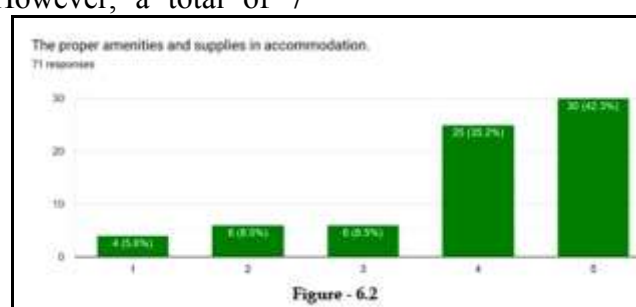
The assessment of the satisfaction of the guests staying in the rural homestay in Pakyong district was done by adopting the five-point Likert scale questionnaire denoting 1 High Dissatisfaction to 5 High Satisfaction. In this study, 71 valid questionnaires were collected through the online mode by adopting a purposive sampling method with direct questions.

Regarding the satisfaction of the guest who stayed in Pakyong district rural homestay accommodation, the below-listed bar charts clearly define and express their satisfaction level based on the attributes mentioned earlier.



The result of the ambiance of the accommodation (Figure 6.1) reflected the cultural ambiance of rural homestays in the Pakyong area showing 34 respondents felt highly satisfied and 21 were satisfied i.e. if taken together they constitute 77.5 % of the total respondents. However, a total of 7

respondents (10%) expressed their experience as highly dissatisfied. The researcher has to identify the reason/s for the dissatisfaction and the focus should be to resolve the issues for future promotion of rural homestay in Pakyong.



The findings through figure 6.2 regarding the amenities and supplies in rural homestays indicate a positive sign of satisfaction because around 77% of the respondents are satisfied with the host's behaviour, attitude and interaction during their stay.

A total of 30 respondents (42%) felt highly satisfied and 25 respondents (35.2%) were satisfied. At the same time, 10 respondents (14.1%) felt dissatisfied while 4 respondents (5.6%) were highly dissatisfied.

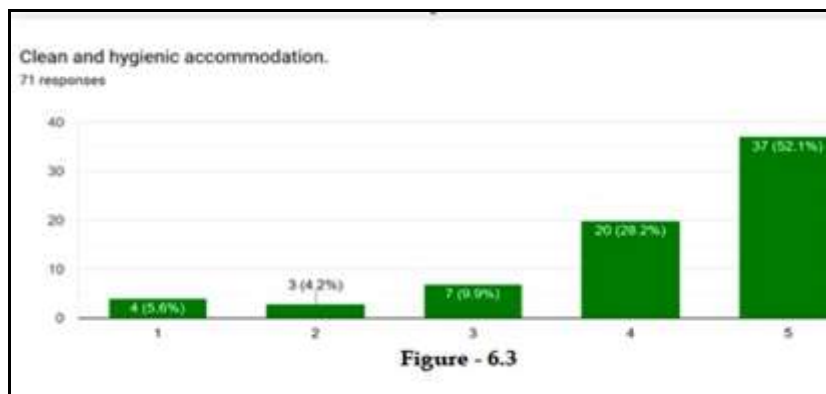
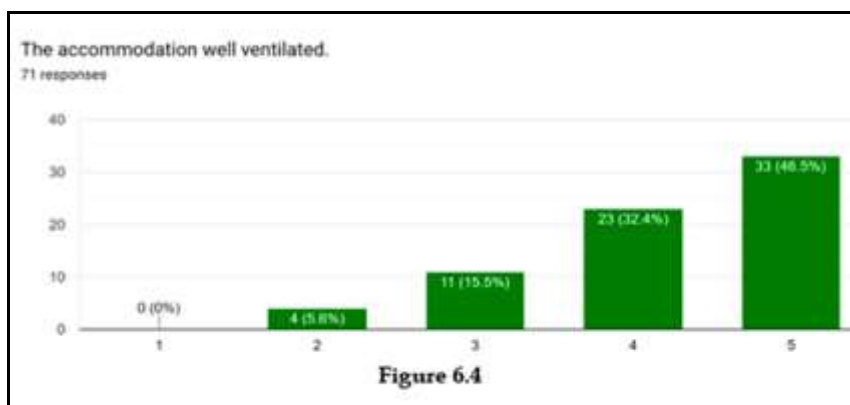


Figure 6.3 represents the cleanliness and hygiene of the rural homestay in Pakyong, As per the analysis of the data it has been found that 37 respondents were highly satisfied (52%) and 20 respondents (28.2%) were satisfied which indicates that a total of 57 respondents (80.3%) were satisfied on

cleanliness and Hygiene parameters of the homestay accommodation. Only 7 respondents (9.8%) expressed their dissatisfaction. The reasons for dissatisfaction need to be considered while improving and finding opportunities for the growth of homestay business in the Pakyong district.



The analysis shown in figure 6.4 is related to the ventilation of the room in the rural homestay accommodation. A total of 56 respondents (78.9%) were found to be satisfied, out of which 33 indicated (46.5%) were highly satisfied. Only 4

respondents (5.6%) show their dissatisfaction. The positive sign is that no one marked high dissatisfaction. This figure (6.4%) justifies that maximum rural homestay accommodation provides well-ventilated rooms for their guests.

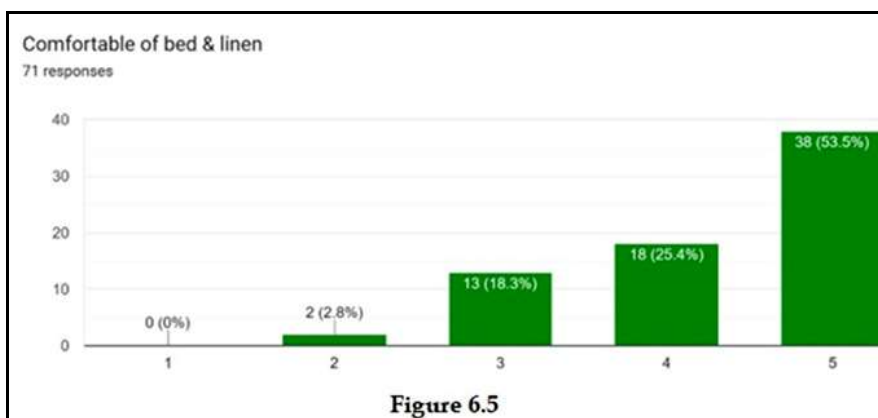


Figure 6.5 shows the comfort of stay felt by the guests by considering the bed & Linen provided in

the rural homestay accommodation. A total of 56 respondents (78.9%) felt more comfortable with the

bed and linen, among them 38 were (53.5%) highly satisfied. Similar to the cleanliness of the comfort zone no one mentioned highly dissatisfied, only 2 respondents (2.8%) were felt dissatisfied. From this

figure (6.5%) we come to understand that rural homestay accommodation in the Pakyong district provides comfort, clean, hygienic bed and linen for their guests.

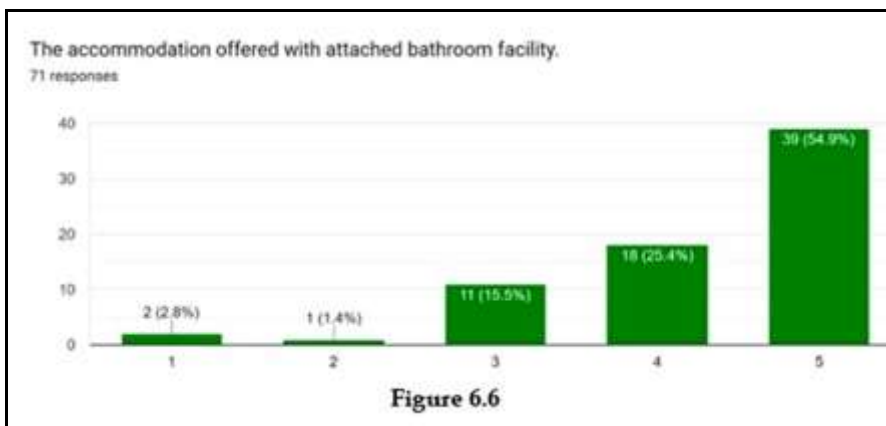
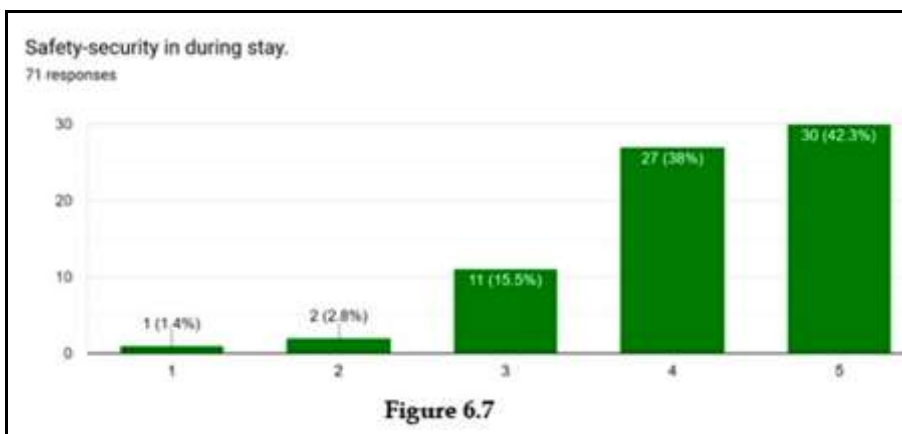


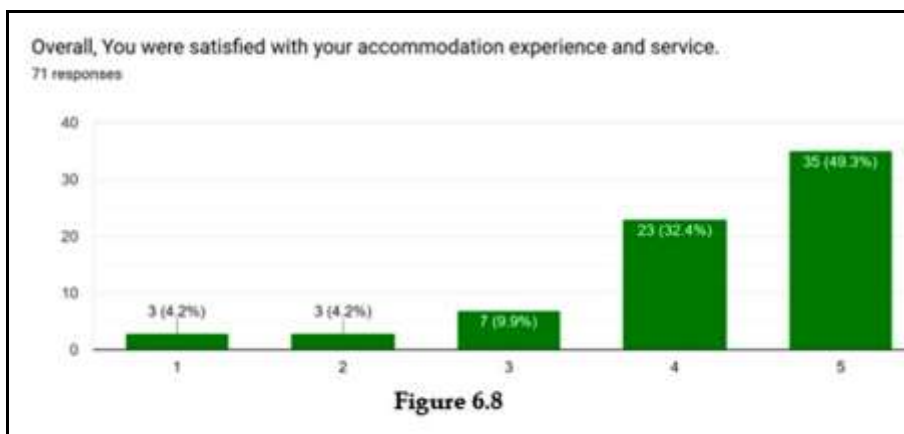
Figure 6.6 in terms of satisfaction with the secondary indicator like attached bathroom (washroom) facility in rural homestays indicates that out of 71 respondents, 57 respondents (80.3%) were found to be highly satisfied and satisfied with the facilities provided by the homestay operators.

But only 3 respondents (4.2%) expressed their dissatisfaction with washroom facilities. Because few of the homestay operators located in the study area do not provide an attached bathroom rather it is located in a separate area as per their cultural/traditional construction.



In this study, figure 6.7 interprets the safety and security in the rural homestay accommodation in the Pakyong district as so impressive that around 27 respondents (38%) were satisfied and 30 respondents (42.3%) were highly satisfied. In

totality, it can be said that 57 respondents (80.3%) were satisfied with the safety and security concerns provided by the homestay operators. Only 3 respondents (4.2%) were found to be dissatisfied.



In this figure 6.8, the overall satisfaction of the guest is measured when they enjoyed the services offered by homestay operators. It can be observed from the chart that in totality 58 respondents (81.7%) record their fullest satisfaction both satisfied and highly satisfied, individually 35 were (49.3%) notified as Highly satisfied and 23 were (32.4%) notified as satisfied. At the same time, 6 respondents (8.4%) recorded their dissatisfaction while 3 among them expressed their concern as highly dissatisfied.

## 7. RESULT & DISCUSSION

In general, guests prefer to stay for no more than two or three nights at a rural homestay. The researcher looked at the Pakyong district from the perspective of tourists in this setting. The findings of the study indicate that measures can be taken to create opportunities for rural homestays to extend the guests' stay in the area.

The second goal of this study is to find out what kinds of homestay options there are in Sikkim's Pakyong district. Some products are broken up into modules based on natural landscapes and cultural attractions. Folk culture, customs, rituals, performing arts, and the traditional flavour of food are some of the cultural heritages that attract tourists the most. Rituals, stories, songs, legends, traditional performances, and idioms can also become important contributors to cultural elements and history when the experience of a destination is much more intense. Indeed, even UNESCO brought up that the public legacy can be very much saved through the provincial social scene.

Unless the knowledge and ecosystem are preserved through a sustainable model, the rural cultural destination of today faces the threat of disappearing due to rapid urbanization. The study's authors and researchers explain that tourism is a way for vacationers to see sights and participate in activities. Local participation frequently expresses alternative perspectives on these aspects to enhance the local community's sense of identity.

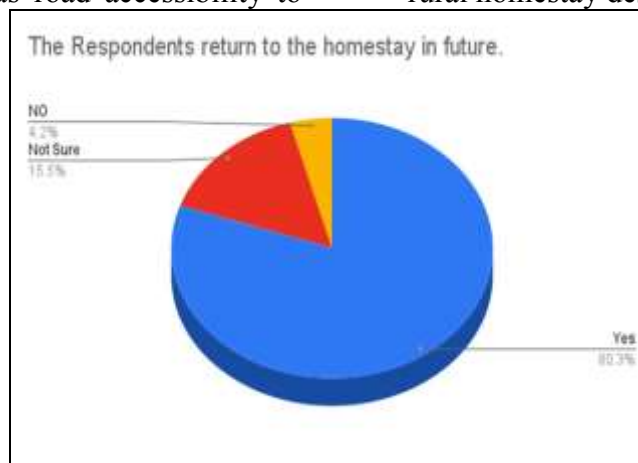
The local community receives information and learns about cultural and traditional practices that they can use in their daily lives as part of the government and non-governmental organizations' continuous awareness programs. Sometimes, even idioms, stories, songs, legends, traditional performances, and rituals become important parts of cultural elements and history. Most of the time, veterans from the community are involved in this

program because they can connect the present with the past and explain how culture changed over time; This creates a compelling narrative that attracts tourists.

### 7.1 Challenges and Opportunities of Rural Homestay in Pakyong

- One of the main concerns is that the inaccessible infrastructure is becoming a barrier to opportunities and the expansion of rural homestay tourism.
- The promotion of rural homestay was unsuccessful due to a lack of awareness and a limited supply of professional, skilled, and systematic human resources.
- The main flaw in the homestay operation is the lack of coordination among the main service providers of the business. Rural homestay provides cross-cultural exchange, and the guest-host interaction is the best example of this. However, there are issues with registration, grading, periodic monitoring of homestay operations, and booking through modern internet platforms.
- More domestic and international tourists are drawn to rural homestays as a result of host and guest community awareness of the trend, which reduces poverty and migration (to urban areas).
- Benefits to the local economy through handicrafts, organic foods, souvenirs, etc. Additionally, the locals participate in tourism activities (directly or indirectly), which generate employment and boost confidence in the community.
- The locals of Pakyong will gradually become more independent as a result of the expansion of homestay tourism.
- The rural homestay guest typically enjoys observing natural and cultural wonders. Therefore, the locals will be aware of the conservation and preservation of their own natural and cultural nativity.
- The rural homestay is popular and familiar among the age group of 26 to 50. The married educators preferred the rural homestay. Through the interaction with the guest and from the feedback, they are shown 80.3% willingness to revisit the homestay in future and 15.5% responded not sure in future. At the same time the homestay service providers, the local community and the government have to develop

the infrastructure such as road accessibility to rural homestay destinations.



To extend the guest stay in the rural homestay the service providers and stakeholders have to develop/implement activities like interaction, observing the rural lifestyle, farming, agriculture, day-to-day lifestyle, etc... of the local public.

Apart from this, they can highlight the unique performing and arts of their cultural, traditional, and heritage practices and handicrafts too. From the data analysis, the researcher finds around 9 respondents (12.6%) expressed their dissatisfaction with Ambiance, Amenities and supplies, and Clean and Hygienic factors. While resolving this the government has to frame a committee (local body), which periodically observes and updates the portal to obtain extension and recognition/approval of homestay in the homestay services in future.

## 8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since Pakyong is a new district in Sikkim State, the government should carefully focus on developing an adequate plan and strategy for building good roads, transportation connectivity, ATMs, telecommunications, health care, roadside amenities, and all other residential facilities in the district. Develop the public & private partnership model to identify a novel destination, uniqueness of rural homestay & activities.

As community-based tourism, rural homestay operations are primarily made up of locals who interact directly with their guests. The appropriate training in leadership, operational and managerial

skills, traditional hospitality services, soft skills, and personality development, as well as the improvement of rural homestay guest satisfaction, must be provided by the relevant authority or government to enhance the skills of local people or host family members. To become skilled guides, all homestay hosts should receive proper training under the supervision of the Sikkim government's tourism and civil aviation department.

As a result, the homestay operator or host community in a rural area of Pakyong district has received financial support from the government and the relevant authority to meet their requirements. But from time to time, needs to keep an eye on and help sustain rural homestays and stakeholders as a whole. Because Pakyong District is so novel, proper marketing, promotion, and activities are essential for both the growth of the existing rural homestay business and the development of the cluster rural homestay concept in the district.

Stakeholders as well as entrepreneurs in tourism should take on the responsibility of conducting campaigns and developing the branding and image of the destination to promote rural homestay in the Pakyong district. According to the findings of this study, guests are more likely to return to rural homestays in the Pakyong district due to the peace they find there, the social security they receive, the welcoming nature of the local hospitality community and budget-friendly experiences.

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