

Tourists perception about Homestay Tourism in Sikkim

Dr. S kumaran

*Professor, Alliance school of Business, Alliance University,
Bangalore.subbaraman.kumaran@alliance.edu.in*

Dr. R. Kannan

*Asst. Professor, Department of Tourism and Travel Management, Central
University of Jammu, JammuManjeetsingh@cuammu.ac.in*

& Mr. Manjeet Singh

*Associate Professor, MEASI Institute of Management, Chennai,
latha.lavanya@measimba.ac.in*

ABSTRACT: *Homestay is the alternative food and accommodation arrangements provided by the host in the tourism destination. The Homestays were started in the remote tourism areas, where no hotel and lodging facilities are available. The visitors staying in homestays get good experience by understanding the culture, customs, and traditions and by visiting tourist attractions in the tourism destination. Under the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, states like Kerala, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, New Delhi, Goa, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Rajasthan, and Gujarat are adopted the concept of Homestays and formulated policy in operating homestays in the tourism destination. In India, foothills of Himalayas including Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Ladakh are offering guest rooms to the tourists in the existing residential house of the host. The accommodation could be single, double or for rooms up to three to four bedrooms with facilities like cot and bed, toilet, Television, internet etc. In Sikkim the idea of starting homestay was initiated by UNESCO and Ecotourism and conservation society of Sikkim in 2007. This research paper aims to analyse the tourist perception about Sikkim Homestay operations.*

Keywords: *Tourism, Homestay tourism, Tourist profile, Tourism facilities, Quality of service and Tourist perception.*

Introduction: Tourism is the act of travelling to different destination to understand the history, language, customs, and culture of the people in other lands. It is an opportunity to observe how others live, think, and interact with environment and gain experience in cultural attractions like food, drink, entertainment, or some other form of hospitality. The main elements of tourism products are Attractions, Accessibility, Accommodation, Food and Pricing. Out of this, Food and Accommodation are provided to tourist by Hotels, lodges, Guest houses, Resorts and Homestays. Homestay is the alternative food and accommodation arrangements provided by the host in the tourism destination. The Homestays were started in the remote tourism areas, where no hotel and lodging facilities are available.

The Homestay activities are differing from location to location. In Thailand, the homestay operators provide services ranging from giving morning alms to monks, learning weaving, participating in agricultural activities, visiting natural sites, and cooking Thai foods. In Australia, the main customers for homestays are International students. In USA, Farm tourists prefer homestays. In Kerala, the homestays are familiar in Hill stations and Backwater areas and offer backwater cruises for tourists and arrange trekking in hill areas. In Rajasthan, homestays arrange safaris by jeep or horseback into the countryside, to visit tribal villages and spot wildlife.

India has uniqueness in cultural and natural information, and it is known for its best hospitality. The Indian adage ‘Guest is God’ is truly lived up by the homestays in India and tourist are welcomed with delight to the home. The visitors staying in homestays get good

experience by understanding the culture, customs, and traditions and by visiting tourist attractions in the tourism destination. Under the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, states like Kerala, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, New Delhi, Goa, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Rajasthan, and Gujarat are adopted the concept of Homestays and formulated policy in operating homestays in the tourism destinationⁱ. The policy of the homestay could be experience based, socially responsible, home hospitality, eco-friendly and hotel comforts. The main product varieties offered by the homestay are Accommodation, Cuisine, Amenities, Local activities, and Sightseeingⁱⁱ.

The tourism spots in the Western Ghats, Himalayan mountain ranges and other interior forest places are having lot homestay facilities for the tourists. In India, foothills of Himalayas including Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Ladakh are offering guest rooms to the tourists in the existing residential house of the host. The accommodation could be single, double or for rooms up to three to four bedrooms with facilities like cot and bed, toilet, Television, internet etc.

Home stay in Sikkim: Sikkim has four districts namely East, West, North and South, Nine sub-division and eight towns. Sikkim is diverse in culture and traditions and has abundant natural resources. The main communities living in Sikkim are Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepales. The coordination among the communities are strong and they committed for the development of society. The idea of starting Home stay for

tourists were emerged after setting up of ecotourism models in four villages of the state in 2007 by Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim, a local non-profit making organisation and the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisations)ⁱⁱⁱ. Today, there are more than 600 Home stays are spread across in Sikkim and most of them are without formal certification or categorisation^{iv}. Majority of the home stays are familiarised by putting advertisement in social media and the business is facilitated by small travel agencies and tourism operators.

The Sikkim Himalayan Home stay project is UNESCO funded project and its main aim is to promote employment opportunities and income generating activities at community level and thereby improving the community-based tourism activities. The Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim and UNESCO working closely with local communities in conserving the ecosystem and to improve the homestay activities. Home stays under UNESCO project are Dzongu Homestays, Kewzing Homestays, Yuksome Homestays, Pastanga Homestays, Hee-Bermiok Homestays, Lachen Homestays, Assangthang Model village, Kabi Homestays and Seven Hills resort^v. Most of the Homestays are run by Tourism Development Committee at village level. In general, the marketing activities are taken by the Department of Tourism, Government of Sikkim and financial help provided to Homestay operators for renovating existing homestay as well as constructing new homestays. This research paper aims to analyse the tourist perception about Sikkim Homestay operations.

Objectives:

- To analyse the tourism element and tourist attractions in Sikkim state.
- To analyse the profile of the tourists visiting Sikkim and utilizing the homestay services.
- To find out the tourist opinion about facilities available at Home stay.
- To find out the overall quality of services offered to tourists by the Sikkim Home stay operators.
- To provide better suggestion for Homestay operations.

Scope of the study: The present study is confined to tourists choosing Home stay. It focuses its attention on tourists coming for leisure, entertainment, and joy. The study covers home stay infrastructure, cost of facilities, cleanliness and hygiene and tourist satisfaction. It tries to give valuable means and methods to promote home stay services in Sikkim.

Methodology: Sources of Data: The study is a descriptive one, based on the data collected from various primary and secondary sources. Primary data is collected directly from tourists by researcher by conducting sample survey. Secondary data is collected from various sources including official websites, magazine, research publication and books.

Sample Design: The study involves a survey of selected sample of 100 tourists visited and stayed in Homestay at Sikkim. Unrestricted, non-probability convenience sampling technique has been applied in

the research study. For the study, tourists from different states have been selected.

Collection of Data: The type of questionnaire has been specifically designed for the collection of data from the tourists. Secondary data has been mainly collected from related websites, published articles, Newspapers and magazines.

Tourism in Sikkim: Sikkim is small state of India, located in the eastern part of Himalayas, bordered by Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet. It includes the world's second highest mountain Kangchenjunga at an altitude of 8586 meters^{vi}. Sikkim is home to glaciers, alpine meadows, and thousands of wildflowers. The beautiful Lakes, Waterfalls, Monasteries, Mountain peaks and valley views are attractive tourism places in Sikkim. It has 6.73 lakh population and nearly 15000 people directly involving in Tourism activities^{vii}. Tourism contribution to the state Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 7.68% during the year 2016-17^{viii}.

Number of Tourist visited Sikkim: During the year 2019, 133388 foreign tourists visited Sikkim, which is eighty six percent more than the number of tourists visited in 2018. The foreign tourists are mostly from Nepal and Bangladesh. The number of domestic tourists visited Sikkim during 2019 is six lakh, which higher than number 1426127 during 2018^{ix}.

Table: 1 Number of Tourists visited Sikkim

Year	Number of Foreign Tourists visited	Number of Domestic Tourists visited	Remarks
2016	NA	806000	
2017	NA	1425000	
2018	71712	1426127	
2019	133388	1600000	Foreign tourists are mostly from Nepal and Bangladesh

Source: Department of Tourism, Government of Sikkim

The above table indicate that the number of foreign and domestic tourists visiting Sikkim is increasing year by year.

Table: 2 Tourism Elements and Components

Sl.No	Tourism Elements	Detail
1	Location	North East part of India and located in Eastern Himalayas.
2	Coordinates	27.5330° N, 88.5122° E ^x
3	Climate	Climate varies with the altitudes. Upper region is extremely cold and Southern part is humid. Alpine and subtropical climate.
4	Elevation	8586 metre ^{xi} .
5	Temperature range	4 to 22 Degree Celsius ^{xii}
6	Annual Rainfall	May to Early October. 3700mm ^{xiii}
7	Main season	March to May

8	Off season	October to December
9	Tourism attractions	Waterfalls, Monasteries, Mountain peak, Valleys. Lakes, Virgin forests, Glaciers and Gardens.
10	Flora	The Nobile Orchid, oak, chestnut, maple, birch, alder, magnolia and silver fir. The Rhododendron niveum
11	Fauna	Asian black bear, Himalayan Tahr, Snow leopard, Wolf, Jungle cat.
12	Avi-Fauna	Sikkim's avian population extends to almost 550 species
13	Specialities	90 percent of the total production of the Cardamom is produced in Sikkim ^{xiv} . Sikkim has significant, untapped natural resource reserves of coal, limestone, marble, quartzite, graphite, fire clay, feldspar, silica sand, granite & brick earth
14	Accommodation	Hotels, Lodges, Resorts, Guest Houses and Home stays are available.
15	Food facilities	All varieties of foods are available.
16	Shopping Facilities	Tea, Woollen carpets, Sikkimese traditional dresses
17	Approach Road	Moderate.
18	Guide	Available
19	Local People Hospitality	Moderate to good.
20	Total extent	7096 square kilometres ^{xv} .
21	Population	6.5 lakh ^{xvi}
22	Important cities	Gangtok, Namchi, Upper Tadong, Rangpo etc.
23	Airport	Pakyong
24	Train Facilities	Project yet to completed.
25	Local Transportation	Available- Bus, Car.

Tourism Attractions: The important tourist attractions are as follows:

Table: 3 Tourism Attractions

Sl.No	Place	Nature of attraction	Remarks
1	Gangtok	Monastery, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Banjhakri waterfalls. March to April would be the ideal time to visit.	Cable car rides, river rafting and Mountain biking.
2	Yuksom	Oldest monastery in Sikkim, First capital of Sikkim in the seventeenth century, Historical monuments, ancient monasteries, tranquil waterfalls and serene lakes	Famous for pristine beauty and rustic appeal. Gateway to Mount. Kanchenjunga. March to April and October to November.
3	Tsomgo Lake	Changu Lake located at 12400 feet and one of the highest lake in India. Ice skating on the frozen lake is an attractive event. Primula flowers and other Alpine vegetation are famous.	The lake water has medicinal value. The surface of the water reflects different colours in different season. March to April and October to November.

4	Nathula pass	One of the highest roads in the world, which connects Sikkim, Tibet, and China. Located at 4302 meters. It offers splendid views of Chumbi valley of Tibet along with snow laden mountains.	The temperature during winter is minus 25 degree Celsius. And it is inaccessible during winter due to heavy snow fall.
5	Pelling	This beautiful scenic town located at a height of 7200 feet and provide best views to Himalayas and Kanchenjunga peak.	Adventure options like rafting, kayaking, trekking, mountain biking is famous. Best time to visit May and July
6	Lachung	It is a most picturesque village of Sikkim and located at a height of 8610 feet in the Northern part of Sikkim. It is popular for its tall dark mountains, glacial rivers, gushing waterfalls and innumerable orchards.	Village becomes inaccessible during the monsoon and the winter, due to heavy rainfall and snowfall.

7	Ravangla	It located in the southern part of Sikkim and it nestled amidst the Maenam and Tendong Hills. It is the paradise for the bird watchers. One of the most beautiful sight of this place is Golden Buddha. Snowy mountains, waterfalls, tea gardens and monasteries are famous.	Birds like dark-throated thrush, verditre flycatchers, blue whistling thrush, babblers, cuckoos are spotted here.
8	Rumtek Monastery	It is the largest monastery in Sikkim. It resembles the original monastery in Tsurphu, Tibet. The monastery houses 1001 miniature golden models of Buddha, Thangkas and wall murals.	Famous place for Kagyu teaching.
9	Namchi	Namchi means “top of the sky” It is located 1675 meter and it is 92 km from Gangtok. The Shiva statue and	Best time to visit are between March and October.

		Buddhist Padmasambhava statue are main attractions. In the month of October Namchi Mahotsav and tourism festival are famous.	
10	Jawaharlal Nehru Botanical Garden	Situated close to Rumtek monastery and home to exotic species of plants and trees.	Best time to visit this place is March and May and October to December.
11	Zuluk	This village is located at a height of 10000 feet and it takes the pride of vantage point to enjoy panoramic views of the Mount Kanchenjunga. Zuluk lake is a sacred lake of Sikkim.	August and September would be an ideal time to visit this place.
12	Yumthang Valley	A scenic valley located at an altitude of 3500 meter and home to several exotic rare and wildflowers. Primrose, cobra-lilies, louseworts,	April to June would be the ideal time to visit this place. Yumthang valley can be compared with

		and cinquefoils are most found species in Yumthang. It is a nature sanctuary with free-flowing rivers and rolling meadows and hot springs.	valleys of Switzerland.
13	Gurudongmar	It is the freshwater lake, located at a height of 17,800 feet. It is frozen during the winter and it is believed that certain portion of the lake never freezes due to the blessings of Guru Padmasambhava.	Best time to visit this place is April, May, October, and November.

Analysis and Interpretation:

Sex: For effective tourism planning the demographic variable are to be analyzed critically. Sex plays an important role in tourist behaviour. Of the 100 total domestic tourists, 74 per cent are male and the remaining 26 per cent are female.

Table 4 Gender

Sex	Number of Tourists	Percentage
Male	74	74
Female	26	26
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

The study reveals that most of the tourists are male. It is inferred that male were interested to visit different tourism places.

Age: Willingness to travel for seeing the tourism destination declines with age. Age is an important factor which helps to plan suitable type of tourism product to be developed. Out of hundred tourists, 2 are in the age group of less than 20 years, 12 are in the age group of 21-30 years, 32 per cent are 31-40 years, 38 per cent are 41-50 years and remaining 16 per cent are in the age group of above 50 years.

Table 5 Age of the tourists

Age	Number of Tourists	Percentage (%)
Below 20	2	2
21-30	12	12
31-40	32	32
41-50	38	38
Above 50	16	16
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

The study reveals that majority of the tourists are having age range between 31-50 years.

Education: The study also analyses the educational status of the respondents. Of the 100 tourists surveyed, 22 per cent has completed schooling, 52 per cent are graduates and 18 per cent completed higher education and the remaining 4 per cent are not having formal education.

Table 6 Educational status

Particulars	Number of Tourists	Percentage
High School	22	22
Graduation	56	56
Higher Education	18	18
Others	4	4
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data.

The study indicates that majority of the tourists are graduates. It appears that educated persons are showing interest in tourism.

Occupation: The study analyses the occupation of the domestic tourists, 16 per cent of the tourists occupation are Business, 32 per cent are Professionals, 16 percent are Government officials, 28 per cent are private employees and the remaining 4 per cent of tourists are from other categories like House wife, children, Agriculturist, etc.

Table 7 Occupation

Particulars	Number of Tourists	Percentage
Business	16	16
Professional	32	32
Government Official	16	16
Private Employee	28	28
Others	4	4
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

It is inferred from the above table that the majority (60 per cent) of the tourists are professionals and employees in private concerns.

Monthly Income: Earning capacity of the tourists is one of the urging factors inducing people to travel to tourism destination for leisure and learning. Of the 100 tourists surveyed, 13 percent of the tourists are having monthly income between 10000 - 25000, 32 percent of the tourists have monthly income in the range of Rs. 25001 to 50000 and remaining 55 per cent of the tourists have monthly income above Rs50000.

Table 8 Monthly Incomes

Particulars	Number of Tourists	Percentage
10000 – 25000	13	13
25001 – 50000	32	32
Above 50000	55	55
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

From the above table it is observed that majority (55 %) of the tourists are having income more than Rs.50000. It is inferred that people from higher income category are frequently visiting the destination with long duration of stay with high spending capacity.

Accompanied Persons: The researcher tries to study the persons who accompanies the tourists. Twenty per cent of tourists are accompanied by spouse, 64 per cent are family members. 10 per cent are friends & relatives and mixed groups constitute 6 per cent. The table reveals that most of the tourists are accompanied by their family members and spouse.

Table 9 Accompanied persons

Particulars	Number of Tourists	Percentage
Spouse	20	20
Family members	64	64
Friends & Relatives	10	10
Mixed group	6	6
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

It is also observed that spouse and family members are more helpful and attentive to each other.

Purpose of visit: The main purpose of visit to Sikkim is for Business, Tourism and visiting friends and relatives. Of the 100 tourists

surveyed, 85 per cent are coming for recreation and leisure, 7 per cent for visiting friends and relatives and the remaining are for tourism plus business. The study reveals that the majority (85 per cent) of the tourists come for recreation and leisure

Table 10 Purpose of visit

Particulars	Number of Tourists	Percentage
Business	8	8
Recreation / Leisure	85	85
Visiting friends & relatives	7	7
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

It is inferred that tourists concentrate only on recreation and leisure.

Number of Visit: The study gathered information regarding the number of visits of tourists to Sikkim. About 68 per cent of the tourists have visited Sikkim for the first time, 20 per cent for the second time, 10 per cent for the third time and the remaining 4 per cent has visited more than thrice.

Table 11 Number of visits

Number of times	Number of Tourists	Percentage
One	68	66
Two	18	20
Three	10	10
Above three	4	4
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

The study shows that majority (68 per cent) of the tourists are visiting Sikkim for the first time.

Reason for choosing Home stay: The study attempts to find out the reason for choosing Home stay in Sikkim. The main reason includes “authentic socio-cultural experience”, “security and warmth of the home”, “economic and cheap price”, “environmental preservation” and “Educational knowledge”.

Table 12 Reason for choosing homestay.

Sl.no	Motivational factors	Ranking number
1	Authentic socio-cultural experience	3
2	Security and warmth of Home	5
3	Economic and cheap price	1
4	Educational / knowledge acquisition	4
5	Environmental preservation	2

Source: Primary data

From the above table, it is observed that the reason for choosing Homestay is Economic and cheap price and followed by Environmental preservation, Authentic socio-cultural experience, knowledge acquisition and security and warmth of Home.

Number of times stayed in Home stay: The study gathered information regarding number of visits to Sikkim. Out of 100

respondents, 66 visited first time, 19 percent visited two times, 10 percent visited three times and remaining visited more than three times.

Table 13 Number of times stayed in homestay

Number of times	Number of Tourists	Percentage
One	66	66
Two	19	19
Three	10	10
Above three	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

From the data it is found that majority of the tourists visited Sikkim for the first time.

Period of Stay: The period of stay is one of the most important yard stick for tourism promotion of any country. The longer the duration of the stay of tourists, the greater will be the earnings from tourism. Of the 100 tourists surveyed, 81 per cent of the tourists stayed in Home stay between 1-2 days, 16 per cent stayed between 3-4 days and the remaining 3 per cent stayed more than 4 days.

Table 14 Period of stay.

Number of days	No. of Tourists	Percentage
1 -2	81	81
3-4	16	16
More than 4 days	3	3
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

The study reveals that majority (81 per cent) of the tourists stayed between 1-2 days. Period of stay varies depending upon the tourism places in the destinations.

Local Transportation: The study analyses the mode of transport used by the tourists within Sikkim. Of the 100 tourists surveyed, 30 per cent used their own vehicle, 65 percent used rental car and remaining used other sources like auto, bike etc. for visiting tourists places.

Table 15 Local transport

Particulars	No. of Tourists	Percentage
Own vehicle	30	30
Rental car	65	65
Other sources	05	05
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

The study shows that majority of the tourists used rental car for local visits. Local transport facility plays a major role in the promotion and development of tourism.

Opinion about the facilities in Home stay:

Table 16 Opinion about the facilities in home stay:

Facilities	OPINION										Total	Rank
	Very good (5)		Good (4)		Moderate (3)		Poor (2)		Very poor (1)			
	Number	Score	Number	Score	Number	Score	Number	Score	Number	Score		
Parking	0	0	0	0	25	75	45	90	30	30	195	7
Cleanliness	0	0	0	0	55	165	34	68	11	11	244	2
Security	0	0	0	0	25	75	45	90	30	30	195	7
Guest room	0	0	0	0	51	153	25	50	24	24	227	3
Host interaction	0	0	0	0	32	96	54	108	14	14	218	4
Food	0	0	0	0	23	69	59	118	18	18	205	5
Local transport	0	0	0	0	19	57	60	120	21	21	198	6
Cost of accommodation	10	50	18	72	55	165	17	34	0	0	321	1

Source: Primary data

The facilities in Home stay includes Local Transport, parking, security, guest room, food, cleanliness, host interaction and cost of accommodation. Cost of accommodation at home stay scored highest points (321) and ranks first followed by “cleanliness” (244 points), “guest room facilities” (227 points), “host interaction” (218 points) “food ” (205 points), “Local transport” (198 points) and “parking and

security” (195 points). From the table it is inferred that the parking, security and local transport facilities are need attention.

Opinion about general image of home stay: The opinion about the home stay includes staff at the home stay, image and popularity of the destination and the natural environment in the home stay.

Table 17 Opinion about home stay

Details	Opinion about Home stay										Rank		
	SA(5)		A (4)		MA (3)		DA (2)		HDA (1)			Total No	Total Score
	No	Score	No	Score	No	Score	No	Score	No	Score			
Most people have positive opinion about the home stay	76	380	12	48	12	36					100	464	1
Host at the home stay are friendly towards guests	36	180	28	112	32	96			4	4	100	392	4
Home stay has unique image	32	160	60	240	4	12	4	8			100	420	3
Home stay is popular	44	220	40	160	16	48					100	428	2
Host are always put guest first	24	120	36	144	36	108	4	8			100	380	5

Source: Primary data

The opinion “ most people have positive opinion about the home stay” scored highest points (464) followed by “Home stay is popular” scored 428 points, “Home stay has unique image” scored 420 points, “Staff at the home stay are friendly towards guests” scored 392 points, “Staff at the home stay always put guest first” scored 380 .

Quality of the Home stay: Quality is the relationship between requirements and actual performance. It is the difference between what we expect and what we get. Quality helps us difference between good and bad, tolerable, and intolerable. Quality is based on values and it is expressed by varieties. Home stay quality is a complex and faceted phenomenon that is perceived and evaluated by the client through several factors, including the quality of destination, the quality of accommodation, transport, food, services etc. Of the hundred tourists surveyed, 16 per of the respondents felt the quality of home stay is excellent, 64 per cent felt the quality of home stay is good and remaining 20 per cent felt moderate.

Table 18 Quality of home stay

Particulars	No. of Tourists	Percentage
Excellent	7	16
Good	51	64
Moderate	42	20
Poor	0	0
Very poor	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

From the above table it is understood that majority of the tourists felt good about the quality of Home stays.

AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS

CA – Completely Agree, A – Agree, MA- Moderately Agree,

DA – Disagree, CDA – Completely Disagree.

The tourists have given their consent about the home stay for the statement like I am pleased that I decided to visit this home stay, The visit to this home stay exceeded my expectations, I will recommend this home stay to my friends and colleagues and I feel at home in this home stay. The statement “I am pleased that I decided to visit this home stay” scored highest points 420, followed by “The visit to this home stay exceeded my expectations” scored 356 points “I will recommend this home stay to my friends and colleagues” scored 354 points, and “I feel at home in this home stay” scored 344 points.

Table 19 Agree with statements

Details	Agree with statements										Total No.	Total Score	Rank
	CA(5)		A (4)		MA (3)		DA (2)		CDA (1)				
	Number	Score	Number	Score	Number	Score	Number	Score	Number	Score			
I am pleased that I decided to stay at home stay.	36	180	48	192	16	48	0	0	0	0	100	420	1
The stay at this home stay exceeded my expectations	16	80	32	128	44	132	8	16	0	0	100	356	2
I will recommend this home stay to my friends and colleagues.	28	140	40	120	30	90	2	4	0	0	100	354	3
I feel at home in this home stay.	16	80	24	96	48	144	12	24	0	0	100	344	4

Source: Primary data

From the table it is observed that the tourists have agreed that the home stay exceeded their expectation, and they will recommend this home stay to their friends and relatives and colleagues.

Findings:

- Majorities (74 percent) of the tourists are male and majority of their age is 31-50 years.
- Majority of the tourists choosing home stay are graduates.
- Majority (60 per cent) of the tourists are professionals and employees in private concerns.
- Majority (55 %) of the tourists are having income more than Rs.50000.
- Majority of the tourists are accompanied by spouse and family members.
- Majority (85 per cent) of the tourists come for recreation and leisure
- Majority (68 per cent) of the tourists are visiting Sikkim for the first time.
- The facilities in Sikkim Home stay includes Local Transport, parking, security, guest room, food, cleanliness, host interaction and cost of accommodation. Cost of accommodation at home stay scored highest points (321) and ranks first followed by “cleanliness” (244 points), “guest room facilities” (227 points), “host interaction” (218 points) “food ” (205 points), “Local transport” (198 points) and “parking and security” (195 points).
- The main reason for choosing the Homestay is economic and cheap price.
- Majority of the tourists visited Sikkim for the first time.
- Majority (81 per cent) of the tourists stayed between 1-2 days.

- The opinion “ most people have positive opinion about the home stay” scored highest points (464) followed by “Home stay is popular” scored 428 points, “Home stay has unique image” scored 420 points, “Staff at the home stay are friendly towards guests” scored 392 points, “Staff at the home stay always put guest first” scored 380 .
- Majority of the respondents felt good about the quality of Home stay.
- Majority of the tourists have agreed that the home stay exceeded their expectation, and they will recommend this home stay to their friends and relatives and colleagues.

Suggestions:

- ✓ Awareness must be created among tourists about home stay services and facilities. Proper advertisement must be planned and executed effectively.
- ✓ An exclusive information center should be created at Bus stand and Railway station to facilitate the tourist to have successful home stay.
- ✓ An advertisement sign board should be installed in highways to draw more visitors.
- ✓ Since most of the visitors are accompanied with spouse and family members, security must be strengthened.
- ✓ Most of the tourists are visiting Sikkim for the first time and they may not have clear about attractions. So, the host should

explain about the tourist's places and facilitate them for proper planning.

- ✓ The host should explain the local culture of area and if possible, they can arrange interaction with local people.
- ✓ Cleanliness in the home stay should be improved and hygienic food should be served.
- ✓ Local transport and parking arrangement have to be improved in the home stay.
- ✓ The tourism department often meet the homestay committee and provide training for Homestay operators on Housekeeping and Customer relationship management.

Conclusion: Sikkim is endowed with pristine forest, waterfalls, Tea gardens, Cardamum gardens and monasteries. Most of the tourist attractions in the village side and main accommodation available for tourists is Homestay. The concept of Homestay is successful because it is maintained by village tourism development committee and state tourism department. The main advantage of Homestay is cost effective accommodation and traditional hospitality of the local communities. Based on the research conducted among the tourists about the Homestay operations, few suggestions were provided. By effectively implementing the above suggestions, the economic level of local community will get developed and there by overall tourism activities will be steadily improved.

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 - ^v https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325076920_Potential_of_Homestays_as_Tourism_Product_in_Sikkim
 - ^{vi} <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikkim>
 - ^{vii} <https://en.gaonconnection.com/sikkim-is-synonymous-with-homestays-but-covid-19-lockdown-has-brought-this-sector-to-its-knees/>
 - ^{viii} *ibid*
 - ^{ix} <https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/sikkim-calling-record-14-25-lakh-tourists-visited-himalayan-state-in-2017/1165207/>
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 - ^{xi} <https://www.incredibleindia.org/content/incredibleindia/en/destinations/states/sikkim.html>
 - ^{xii} <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gangtok>
 - ^{xiii} <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/india/sikkim-climate.htm>
 - ^{xiv} https://home.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/hindas/PDF/2019/01_joshi%E3%83%BBpiya.pdf
 - ^{xv} <https://www.sikkim.gov.in/departments/sikkim-information-commission>
 - ^{xvi} https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/sdf-govt-to-incentivize-indigenous-women-to-produce-two-119033000585_1.html
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