

# **Homestay Operations in Darjeeling Hills with Special Reference to Takdah**

A Dissertation Submitted

To

**Sikkim University**



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the  
**Degree of Master of Philosophy**

By

**Priyanka khaling**

Department of Tourism  
School of Professional Studies

February, 2019



# सिक्किम विश्वविद्यालय

(भारतीय संसद के अधिनियमद्वारा स्थापित केन्द्रीय विश्वविद्यालय)  
गुणवत्तापूर्ण प्रबंधन प्रणाली ISO 9001:2008 हेतु प्रमाणित संस्थान

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### DECLARATION

Date-07/02/2019

I, **Priyanka Khaling**, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the dissertation titled “**Homestay Operations in Darjeeling Hills with Special Reference to Takdah**” submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is my original work. Any content or any part of this dissertation has not been submitted to any other institution or for any academic purposes.

*Priyanka Khaling*  
**Priyanka Khaling** 7/02/19

Roll No. 17MPTM01

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We recommend that the dissertation to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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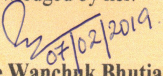
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All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by her.

  
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### CERTIFICATE OF PLAGIARISM CHECK

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

A tourism phenomenon is considered to be dynamic and one of the fastest growing industries in the world. According to the Ministry of Tourism, there was a huge growth in Foreign Tourists Arrival (FTAs) by 15.6% in the year 2017 compared to the FTAs of the same period of the previous year.<sup>1</sup> The Foreign Exchange Earning through tourism was Rs 1, 80, 379 crores in 2017 with a growth of 17 % compared to the preceding year.<sup>2</sup> The Ministry of Tourism has come up with different schemes and initiatives to boost the number of tourist arrivals in India. Different forms of niche tourism have been introduced in different parts of India especially the rural destinations in order to promote India as a 365 days destination which includes ecotourism, Community Based Tourism, and Rural tourism as the major tourism components. The concept of community-based homestay tourism is the result of the Rio Summit of 1992's concept of sustainable development (Budhathoki, 2013). The rural tourism as a concept has never been given much priority even when the tourism industry witnessed an exponential growth in the past few decades. Rural India consists of very rich traditions, varieties of art and crafts, and of course vast cultural peculiarities among the communities of the country (Kar & Sahoo, 2016). Showcasing the ethnic arts and crafts, culture and lifestyle in its traditional setting are some of the major activities that constitute rural tourism (Raghavendra, Reddy.S, & V., 2016). According to a Ministry of Tourism policy paper, “Any form of tourism that showcases rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the

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<sup>1</sup>[http://tourism.gov.in/sites/default/files/annualreports/MoT%20Annual%20Report%202016-17\\_English.pdf](http://tourism.gov.in/sites/default/files/annualreports/MoT%20Annual%20Report%202016-17_English.pdf) accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2018

<sup>2</sup><http://tourism.gov.in/sites/default/files/annualreports/Annual%20Report2017-18.pdf> accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2018

local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience, can be termed as rural tourism.<sup>3</sup> There are certain parameters of rural tourism like the location in rural areas, functioning mostly in the rural setting, based on small-scale and traditional activities and enterprises, relying mostly upon the traditional qualities of the countryside and most importantly are controlled by the local community (Singh & Narban, 2015). Ministry of Tourism in India has laid a great deal of emphasis on the development of such rural tourism villages which boasts of rich art, culture, handloom, heritage, and crafts. These villages are affluent in both natural beauty and cultural splendour.<sup>4</sup> The diverse parties like academics, NGOs, community and government organizations want to use tourism as a strategy to improve the economic standards by empowering the local community to start their own business ventures. Other objectives are pushing tourism towards rural areas, rebuilding rural socio-economy from declining agricultural based traditional livelihood, protect & promote traditional cultural values & systems and to ensure the sustainable development (Wijesundara & Gnanapala, 2016). Darjeeling, also known as the “Queen of the Hills”, located in the northern part of the Indian state West Bengal, is becoming popular with its famous tea tourism and rural tourism. The location of the hills on the base of the mighty Kanchenjunga is the primary reason for its popularity as a tourist destination. The historical background of Darjeeling adds charm to its natural beauty. It was the former summer capital of the British East India Company. The architectural buildings, schools, bungalows constructed during the British era also add positive remarks to the beautiful Darjeeling town layout. The hill tourism is greatly supported by its natural beauty and serene atmosphere which never

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.holidify.com/blog/rural-travel-in-india/> accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2018

<sup>4</sup><https://www.holidify.com/blog/rural-travel-in-india/> accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2018

fails to mesmerize people coming from various places. The world famous Toy train and the tea industry are the two main pillars holding the tourism industry in Darjeeling. The West Bengal Interim Report identified Darjeeling district as “the most highly frequented tourist destination in all of West Bengal”, with over 5,00,000 domestic and 50,000 foreign visitors annually in 2012 (Kannegieser, 2015, p. 5). The rapid growth of the industry and tremendous pressure of the present situation on it has started to destruct the resources of the tourism industry in Darjeeling for which alternative tourism development is required for sustention of the region. The two main forms of alternative tourism have gained popularity in Darjeeling viz. Rural and Tea tourism (Das & Roy, 2016). Rural Tourism of Darjeeling Hills is a unique experience with so much nature, so the origins of various ethnic tribes and clans find their roots in nature. Ethnic cottages and Homestay in the rural area is gaining popularity among tourists in Darjeeling hills day by day. The success of rural tourism in Darjeeling Hills owes to several factors like its location, climate, accessibility and the series of tour packages available. The varied landscape, eternal weather, and the slopes with tea plantations make up most of rural tourism in Darjeeling hills (Bhutia, 2016, p. 4). Rural tourism focuses on the upliftment of the rural community by eradicating many problems that prevail within the community like low-income levels and lesser job opportunities and by increasing level of awareness, growing interest in heritage and culture improves accessibility as well as environmental awareness (Singh & Narban, 2015). Almost 70% share of the total population consists of rural areas but it is secluded with zero communication infrastructures which have made the access to market very difficult. The inaccessibility to markets has led to the deterioration in the prices of agricultural produce leading to an accentuated exploitative structure especially for the farmers (Bhutia, 2016). However, a successful sustainable tourism

development always aims to satisfy the tourists while also developing the community because only satisfying tourists will be unfair to the community as a large number of tourists may lead to negative social and cultural impact (Kayat & Zainuddin, 2016).

### **1.1 Homestay Concept:**

Homestay service, a combination of tourism and recreation started in Europe as a holiday concept in the late 70's (Zainuddin & Bakar, 2008). Homestay as a concept started in India primarily in Kerala and Rajasthan around 10 years ago when people started opening their heritage and plantation homes to tourists.<sup>5</sup> Simultaneously various state governments also started seeing great potential in this segment as it is environment-friendly and is a responsible tourism option. In North-eastern India, Sikkim, Nagaland, Assam, and Darjeeling have registered some exotic homestays with rich natural biodiversity for tourists (Bhan and Singh, 2014). The number of tourists visiting India has increased manifold during the past few decades. Especially after the tourism attraction program of Incredible India, India is witnessing a large influx of tourists. Even our countrymen have started coming out of their shells and visit every nook and corner of the country. Not only foreign tourists, but many domestic tourists prefer staying in the comfort of a homely environment where one is not bounded by so-called protocols. One can freely mingle with the local people, enjoy homemade food and relax in the cosy comfort of a house away from the hustle and bustle of city life. The only chance of experiencing the Indian lifestyle is possible by staying with a family which is offered by homestays(Gangotia, 2013). Anyone would love to get the first-hand experience of all these. The desire for such holidays has given rise to a concept: homestay i.e. a home away from home. It has enabled

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<sup>5</sup><https://www.rediff.com/business/slide-show/slide-show-1-homestay-is-the-latest-buzz-in-the-tourism-market/20110613.htm#1> accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2018

tourists to enjoy their stay in these homestays and a scope to learn local culture and traditions. Various places in India have started the development of homestays exclusively for business purpose. Homestay has been recognized as a form of tourist accommodation only because of its distinct features or characteristics (Oranratmanee, 2011). The Indian homestays, especially in the north, have been considered even better than the five-star hotels. Tourist prefers these homestays more than the luxurious hotels. The natural environment and serene beauty of the location are the major attractions of the homestay facilities. The environment and culture are the two important commodities in a homestay. Their market value is created according to the demand of the visitors which in turn provides financial rewards to the local indigenous community for the preservation of environment and culture. Not only that, growth in tourism itself motivates people to pursue higher education and get formally trained in hospitality and basic guiding skills, hygiene and conservation techniques and provides opportunities for new generations to redefine and reclaim their cultural and ethnic identity (Thakuri, 2016). The most popular form of rural tourism has been the concept of homestays in Darjeeling which has gained popularity over a decade as it acts as a valuable tool for the empowerment of both individuals and community. Especially, the women of Darjeeling has gained an increasing level of confidence and feelings of pride and sense of ownership and also increased the level of hygiene. It is also a reliable source of income for them (Kannegieser, 2015).

“Homestay tourism is a sustainable community-based tourism concept through which the local community can get direct benefits and the money remain within the local community and also improve the visitor experiences and the satisfaction”(Wijesundra& Gnanapala, 2016).

“Homestays are such stays where a guest instead of being put up in a lodge or guesthouse or hotel is accommodated to a local house where he/she gets to partake in the activities of the house”(Budhathoki, 2013).

“Homestay is a combination of the comfort and destination of a boutique hotel with the personalized hospitality, the informal relation between host and guest and local knowledge of the host enjoyed when staying" (Thapa & Malini, 2018).

Homestay helps people to realize the importance of preserving cultural heritage (Ibrahim et al., 2013). But (Kimaiga, 2011) put forward that there is a need to pay special attention to factors influencing tourists’ choice of homestays and their satisfaction. However, the study of customer satisfaction and service quality has been focused only on the developed countries (Amissah, 2013).The tourism industry is sustained by various components of sustainability which results in economic, social and other benefits in a long run. Such components also include sustaining the quality of services and the satisfaction of customers (Biswakarma, On the Dimensionality of Measuring Tourist Satisfaction Towards Homestay, 2015). The several motivational factors include the services and facilities given by the homestay operators which include visually appealing facilities, security system, and even the knowledge and skills of the employees of the homestays. To create high customer loyalty, improving a destination’s competitive positioning and facilitate understanding, raising tourist’s satisfaction is very important (Ismail, Hanafiah, Aminuddin, & Mustafa, 2016).When the expectations of customers and the performance of the services or products are compared, it can either produce feelings of pleasure or disappointment in the minds of the customers. If the performance meets the expectations or exceeds it, the customers will feel happy or satisfied (Hayati & Novitasari, 2017). The service being intangible in nature are perceived by the customers immediately unlike tangible products where

the reaction comes late. Also in some cases, if the client or tourists have low expectations of a service then there is a high chance of perception of service surpassing their expectation even if the service is not of high quality (Morillo-Moreno & Cejas, 2011). Number of studies have revealed that the tourist satisfaction is an outcome of a better service quality, it is critical to understand the various concerns related with the service quality and customer's needs and desires. Customers' satisfaction can be affected by subjective factors like their needs and emotions as well as objective factors like products and services (Amissah, 2013).

### **1.2 Profile of the Study Areas:**

Takdah spur in the Darjeeling hills starts from about 28 km from the main town of Darjeeling District. The spur consists of many small hamlets like Lamahatta, Lopchu, Tinchuley and tea gardens like Rungli Rungliot, Gielle Tea Estate and Teesta Tea Estate. Of all these, Tinchuley and Lamahatta are the two places receiving more number of tourists every year and is becoming popular among the tourists from all over the world.

**TINCHULEY-** a quaint mountain village is located at an elevation of 5800ft, 32 km from the Queen of Hills, Darjeeling. The word Tinchuley was derived from the local language which means "three ovens" because it is surrounded by the three prominent hilltops giving it an appearance of an oven or chullahs. It is the hidden jewel of Darjeeling region with a population of 150 households and has now emerged as a self-sufficient eco-urban village, with the help of World Wildlife Federation and interest shown by the villagers to convert their village into a model village. Tinchuley has now floriculture projects, forest nursery, and by-compost and vermin-compost manure projects. The unflustered ambiance of Tinchuley while being endowed with the abundance of natural beauty has made Tinchuley the newfound offbeat destination of



Darjeeling. Tinchuley can be visited throughout the year due to its favourable weather but to catch an unhindered view of the snow-peaked Himalayan mountain range, mid-September till December is best.

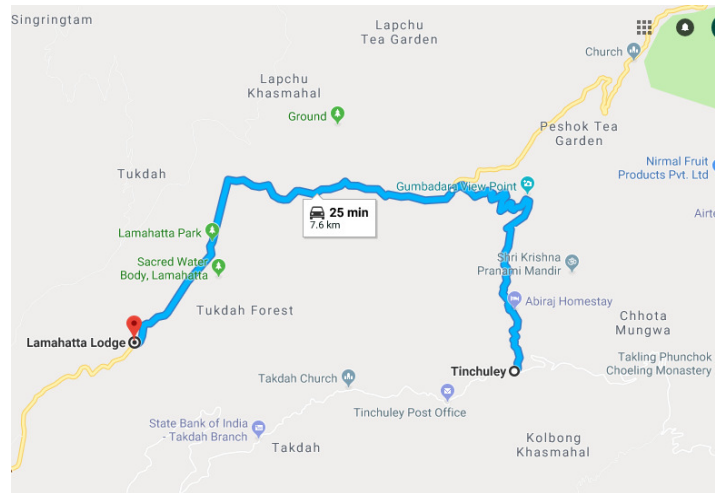


Fig. 1.2.1 Map showing the location of the study areas


**LAMAHATTA**- a small village located 23km away from the main Darjeeling town, is surrounded by pine forest and a beautiful view of Mt. Kanchenjunga in the forefront and has been developed as an ecotourism place in late 2012. Lama in Lamahatta stands for Buddhist monk and Hatta for hut- a monk's heritage at an altitude of 6800 ft. Dukpas, Yalmoos, and Sherpas are the main inhabitants of Lamahatta. One can visit Lamahatta throughout the year.

These two hamlets were chosen as the study area for several reasons:

- i) Presence of ample natural and cultural attractions, these two hamlets are located in a less visited area as compared to other homestays of Darjeeling (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013)
- ii) These two hamlets are situated in the Takdah spur and are connected by the Darjeeling-Gangtok road. Lamahatta, being accessible via the main route, is

much easier to reach there whereas, Tinchuley, lying a bit far from the main road, is quite difficult to reach. So, it would be interesting to study the differences in the homestay operations of both areas.

- iii) Several homestays have been established in both the villages but only a few have been functioning properly. The homestay owners still face many difficulties operating homestays which have resulted in the slow development of homestay tourism in both the villages. If proper measures are taken and proper planning is implemented for the development of homestays in these two villages, the government and the community as well would benefit tremendously from it. The fact that Darjeeling is a popular hill station of India, tourists look forward to experiencing the wilderness and natural offbeat places and since homestays play a major role in the rural tourism, the research on the homestays would be helpful for the betterment of the homestay operations in the study areas.

  
 (A Community based village Eco-Tourism)

### Tourist Halting Facilities

	NAME OF OWNERS	HOUSE NO.	TENT NO.	NO OF ROOMS	NO OF BEDS
1	SHRI PEMBA TSHERING SHERPA	.....	1,2,3	3 tents	2 per tent total 6 people
2	SHRI TASHI DUKPA	69	4,5	2 tents	2 per tent total 4 people
3	SHRI CHANDRA CHHETRI	87		1	2
4	SHRI TASHI SHERPA	79		2	2
5	SMT. SUJATA CHHETRI	89		2	2
6	SHRI KIRAN YELMO	10		1	2
7	SHRI TASHI YELMO	25		1	2
8	SHRI DAWA SONAM BHUTIA	50		1	2
9	SHRI TSHERING BHUTIA	77		1	2
10	SHRI RAM KUMAR CHHETRI	82		1	2
11	SHRI SONAM WANGDI DUKPA	73		1	2
12	SMT. PASANG LHAMU YELMO	23		1	2
13	SHRI R. B. CHHETRI	83		1	2
14	SHRI KARSANG YELMO	20		2	2
15	SMT. LUCKY YELMO	14		1	2
16	SHRI ASHOK YELMO	101		1	2

1. Divisional Forest Officer, DARJEELING FOREST DIVISION  
 (0354) 2252159(O)  
 2. Range Officer, TAKDAH FOREST RANGE, (M) 9800924284  
 3. Beat Officer, TAKDAH FOREST BEAT, (M) 9434379067

Figure 1.2.2: List of the homestay owners of Lamahatta (Source- Field Survey June- July, 2018)


**TINCHULAY HOME STAY**  
 Sponsored by:  
 Govt. of West Bengal  
**TOURISM DEPARTMENT**

NAME	CONTACT NO.	NAME	CONTACT NO.
RUBEN SUBBA	98325-87581	NEEPEN TAMANG	95638-27550
PARESH SUBBA	86091-66381	BUDDHA GURUNG	76029-88935
NABIN GURUNG	95637-72863	SARMILA TAMANG	96098-87054
ARJUN BHUJEL	95636-00386	PHURBA SHERPA	98325-11294
NITESH TAMANG	75840-99085	SUREN RAI	97332-81784
	86702-23692	PRAKASH GURUNG	97332-66633
	90029-03706		

Figure 1.2.3: List of the government aided homestays in Tinchuley (Source-Field Survey, July, 2018)

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Darjeeling receives about 4.5 lakh tourists every year and has been facing a tremendous pressure of accommodating tourists which have resulted in the establishment of numerous low -graded hotels (Das & Roy, 2016). The demand for homestay accommodation services has increased since the number of tourists' arrival has been increasing (Petenya, 2016). Nowadays, tourists visit Darjeeling to experience authentic Indian experience and engage more deeply with the local people, community, and culture (Kannegieser, 2015). This growing demand for rural tourism product has been fulfilled by the two options which are homestay or tea tourism. Numbers of homestay has been established in every nook and corner of Darjeeling but there are many problems and challenges faced by the owners to smoothly run their homestays. This has led to the underdevelopment of homestays in the hills. States like Kerala, Rajasthan, Sikkim etc. has given priority to the development of homestays and benefitted positively in the overall development of tourism business in their respective states and has also proven to be beneficial to the local community. Darjeeling has a very beautiful view of the mighty Kanchenjunga, presents wonderful sunrise panorama, blessed with the luscious tea plantation valleys, many off-beat areas with the orange farms, vegetable plantations, hiking routes etc. which could be a huge advantage for the ones who want to run the homestays but there are some of the unavoidable challenges and problems faced by the tourists as well as the homestay operators which has become a serious issue. The West Bengal government had not taken initiative in developing a full-fledged policy until late 2017 for the operators and has no readily available data on the trends of homestay across the state (Petenya, 2016).

#### **1.4 Research questions:**

1. What are the challenges faced by the various homestay operators of Darjeeling?
2. Are the homestay owners of Takdah benefiting both socially and economically by running homestays?
3. Is there any relationship between the customer's satisfaction and the quality of services provided by the various homestay owners of Takdah?
4. What are the future prospects of homestays in the hills?

#### **1.5 Objectives:**

The following objectives have been framed to conduct the study:

1. To study the problems and prospects of homestays in Darjeeling
2. To analyze the socio-economic aspects of homestays in Takdah.
3. To measure the level of satisfaction among the tourists visiting homestays of Takdah

#### **1.6 Scope of Homestays in India:**

A decade ago, homestays in India were only a niche item in domestic itinerary but it has gained a massive popularity among the tourists as it has now become a warm alternative to cold hotel lobbies for travellers. Since the hospitality industry is one the most important sector of the tourism industry, homestay plays a vital role as an alternative accommodation. Also, a report by an online travel community HolidayIQ showed there were 2,281 registered homestays in India in 2016 compared to 17 in 2004 which is more than 130- fold increase. Invest India

reported that the homestay segment has been gaining a strong foothold in the Indian hospitality market and would be worth 3 billion dollars by 2020.<sup>6</sup>The initial investment on homestay establishment is relatively lower than that of hotels which makes it economically feasible for everyone who wants to start up a new business. It is increasing the tourism opportunity in the places where building a big commercial hotel is not possible due to various constraints. Indian homestays offer a unique experience to the visitors because of the various cultural backgrounds present in the various states and regions. The northern part of India offers different types of homestay products from the other three zones of India, be it the homestay architectures, cultures, cuisines, languages, natural environments, and climates as well. For example, the southern parts of Indian homestays are mostly near the beaches, coconut trees farm, coffee farms etc. whereas the northern part offers homestays with pine forests, apple and orange orchards, tea gardens etc. The facilities of home that too away from home with amazing locations are provided at much lower prices as compared to the hotels are the key factor that tourists today prefer staying in a homestay rather than fancy hotels. India has seen an exponential growth in the number of homestays year by year and has become popular among all generation of tourists. The HolidayIQ reported that 49% of the families, 20% of groups, 16% singles and 14% singles picked homestay as their accommodation. Kerala has the maximum number of homestays which accounts to 40% followed by Karnataka having 27%.The top five states with a maximum share of homestays (88%) are Kerala, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu among which 71% of the homestays are shared by the southern states. The Indian Ministry of Tourism has included homestays in the Incredible India Bed &

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/homestays-witness-130-fold-rise-since-2004-says-report/story-ljQelpuu02vfKhoftPCLI.html> accessed on 15th April, 2018

Breakfast Scheme with an aim of providing a clean and affordable place for foreigners and domestic tourists to stay with an Indian family to experience Indian customs and traditions and relish authentic Indian cuisines. The homestay facilities are divided into two categories i.e, gold and silver and have given clear guidelines. The guidelines also include the classification criteria and the concerned authorities who look into this matter. The Ministry is even trying to make the license and registration process simple and remove some levied taxes on homestays.<sup>7</sup> The various state governments are also trying hard to promote and develop homestays in their respective states as they now have realized the role of homestays in tourism development and economic contribution of homestays from the grass root (local community) till the higher level (government). For instance, the Green People Organisation, in Nag Tibba, a village situated 28 km away from Mussourie, stated a scheme called “Pay what you like”<sup>8</sup> to attract tourists in which the tourists can book rooms for a maximum of two days and three nights and can pay according to their own wish. Also, the government has recently initiated a scheme called “Stay On Skill” under which people can travel anywhere in the world and share their skills, be it yoga, dancing or cooking and in return learn skills from the host of the homestays where they have been staying while also helping them in household activities, all for free. This scheme was started by Arjun Tuli and Rajshree Bothra. The main aim behind starting this scheme was to make travel more affordable for skilled people all around the world. The launched program was highly appreciated by the people. The number of applications reached 2000 within a duration of only two months. Currently, there are two campaigns under running under its viz- Skill India Campaign and India Tour 2017. Skill India Campaign facilitates people to

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<sup>7</sup><http://tourism.gov.in/sites/default/files/chapter/7.pdf> accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2018

<sup>8</sup><https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/travel/now-homestays-in-villages-allow-you-to-pay-what-you-like/articleshow/52073828.cms> accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2018

stay at different homestays and share their skills and learn different skills but India tour 2017 campaign facilitates people to travel to different major destinations in India like Agra, Leh, Goa, Rishikesh, Varanasi, Kufri, Coorg, Coorg, Gulmarg, Ooty, and Alleppey. For this scheme, the application was opened for three weeks and had got over 300 applications from highly skilled people. The idea to start up this scheme was to help the deserving properties get the visibility they require and complete three months program designed around that.<sup>9</sup> Further, the government has proposed that the homestays should be free from providing service tax or commercial tax, property tax, water tax, electricity tax and the online facility should be provided for renewing and obtaining a license.<sup>10</sup> India, being one of the destinations with its rich cultural heritage, historical monuments and abundant natural resources (Kar & Sahoo, 2016) has a potential scope for the better future of homestay in every aspect which will prove to be beneficial for the various stakeholders especially, the local community.

### **1.7 Scope of Homestays in Darjeeling:**

In Darjeeling, rural tourism is a new phenomenon as compared to urban tourism. Darjeeling's urban tourism caters to the need of the visitors by its beautiful small town whereas from the past decade; rural tourism is focused on connecting the tourists to the rural areas of Darjeeling as well as empowering those areas socially, culturally, and economically (Kannegieser, 2015). As the greatest role of rural tourism is to generate income providing various economic opportunities for the local communities (Bhutia, 2016), the state government is taking various measures and steps to promote

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<sup>9</sup><https://www.indianweb2.com/2017/05/23/pm-modi-inspires-platform-allows-people-skills-travel-world-free-homestay/> accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2018

<sup>10</sup><https://www.hellotravel.com/stories/government-emphasis-on-improving-homestay-tourism-in-india> accessed on 10th May, 2018



rural tourism in Darjeeling. Homestays being the most popular form of rural tourism in Darjeeling, people are very keen to experience this new form of accommodation provided with many other activities like tea garden tours, orange farm tour, soft trekking, hiking, farm tours etc. Today, tourists from all over the world visit Darjeeling mostly for the purpose of experiencing the activities at the offbeat destinations. There are nearly 3000 homestays in the hill region and 400 alone in Darjeeling region and with the new homestay policy, more than 50 homestay owners of Darjeeling, Kurseong, and Mirik have formed Himalayan Homestay Owners Association (HHOA)<sup>11</sup> which is, in fact, a very good step towards a better future of homestays in Darjeeling. The Government of West Bengal has realized the importance of homestays in generating income to the state as well as the local people so they have formed a full-fledged policy for the improvement of the sector. This will help the existing homestay owners to adhere to the norms of homestays and also the give the proper idea to those people who want to establish a new one. The objectives of the homestay policy of West Bengal include the promotion of homestay tourism, inclusive tourism strategies, skill upgradation, and capacity building, etc.<sup>12</sup> which will definitely prove to be helpful for the improvement of homestays of the entire state. The Government of West Bengal is also preparing an integrated tourism policy along with homestay and adventure tourism policies. The effect of neo-tourism in the hills can be seen clearly as the majority of tourists (especially outbound) visit the hills for the nature-based activities, be it adventurous or ecotourism. Takdah spur consisting of many small beautiful hamlets has been witnessing a consistent growth in the homestay sector. Tinchuley and Lamahatta being the most popular ones are receiving a number of domestic and international tourists every year. 80% of the tourists

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<sup>11</sup> <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/new-govt-norms-irk-darjeeling-homestays/articleshow/65209387.cms> accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018

<sup>12</sup> West Bengal Homestay Tourism Policy, 2017 accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018

visiting these places constitute Bengali visitors, 6 % of tourists are from Maharashtra, 6 % from Delhi and 2% visitors constitutes of foreigners. Foreigners constitute the majority of Australians, Asian (Thailand & Japan), Germans, British, French, and the Dutchess. Lamahatta was developed as an ecotourism destination in the late 2012 and the Ecotourism Park was also constructed to promote tourism in the place. Several homestays were started by the local villagers with the help of the state government. Now, Lamahatta has over 15 homestays which have been working with various travel agencies, online travel agencies and tour operators. Whereas, Tinchuley was declared as the first organic village in the year 1992. The biogas concept is becoming popular among the villagers of Tinchuley. Recently, the homestays of Darjeeling hills have come up with “say no to plastic” drive to avoid the usage of plastics mostly through the bottled drinking water, plastic cups etc. The owners have planned to replace them with filtered water and earthen cups to stop the Queen of Hills turn to a garbage dump<sup>13</sup>. This is a very good indicator of how the people of the hills are taking sustainability of the homestay operations earnestly.

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<sup>13</sup><https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/from-october-homestays-in-darjeeling-to-shun-plastic/articleshow/65987491.cms> accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018



Fig. 1.7.1: Government funded homestays with single room (Source- Field survey January, 2018)



Fig. 1.7.2: Private-owned homestays (Source: Field Survey, January, 2018)

## CHAPTER 2

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE, RATIONALE & SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

#### **2.1 Homestays in the Mountainous Region:**

Bhatt's (2011), study about the homestays of the Himalayan region highlighted that the homestay concept is the result of diversification of accommodation sector. The spiritual and religious significance of Himalayan range attracts a large number of tourists from all over the world. Homestays are in high demand due to the absence of hotels and guest houses and it is a viable source of income as well as an incentive to conserve the biodiversity within Community Conserved Area (CCA). The challenges faced by the homestays in the mountainous region include the creation of commercial homestays by the outsiders, disposal of wastes and plastics, and marketing being the biggest challenge.

According to Macek (2012), the transportation sector is very important for the development of mountain tourism. The absence of direct rail lines and airports results in the congestion of traffic in the existing narrow roadways. Activities like trekking lead to environmental issues like the extraction of resources like usage of firewood for fuel, garbages on the trail, grazing of pack animals etc. The study emphasized the low start-up cost, inexpensive and affordable lodging of homestays and also described as well as compared the existing mountain homestay models in India. It also highlighted the fact that prior to the development of homestays, the strategy implemented should be determined first whether it would be good or bad for the community.

Peaty studied about the homestays of three regions of northern India i.e, Ladakh, Spiti, and Sikkim. The study highlighted that the income generated through homestay programs are not distributed equally because the families that are willing to host the tourists get the main benefit. Preservation of culture can be done by controlling the number of foreign tourists in a single house or community and also by presenting culture as an attraction. The study addressed that the status of women and low castes in society has been uplifted because of the implementation of the homestay program. Not only that all the regions share similar goals, the system of payment and limitations of homestay activities with a very low or nil environmental impact.

An online report<sup>14</sup> stated that the homestay movement is diverse having one common pattern which has emerged is how the homestays have affected the lives of the guests, the surrounding ecology and most importantly, the community. The report also mentioned that the homestay movement is comparable to the Chipko movement of the 1970s. The report highlighted the 4 steps sustainable operations model i.e, include, train, evangelism and evaluate which is linked with the success of homestay movement.

## **2.2 Problems and prospects of homestays :**

There are voluminous financial challenges like charging high commercial rent, backpackers tourists, low management system, poor infrastructure and unsatisfied tourists says (Balasubramaniam & Aanchal, 2017).

(Bhalla, 2016) argued that the homestay operation can create problems like over crowdedness, loss of privacy, degradation of family quality time while also diversifying the income opportunities for the villagers.

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<sup>14</sup>Homestays in Indian Himalayas: An Overview- accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2018

According to Jayara (2017), people are not aware of the rules and regulations, changes in policies regarding homestay operations, different parameters or criterions' regarding the operation and establishment of homestay.

Whereas, Bhan and Singh (2014), stated that the challenges of homestay are innumerable, which can be solved with appropriate strategies and careful planning. The livelihood of people of a particular place has been affected positively but their lifestyle has been influenced negatively as well due to the development of tourism at a particular place. Their study also highlighted that homestay tourism will serve as a momentous tool for the development of rural sector including economic, cultural, social and environmental sphere but there are some negative impacts too. Increase in crime, an increase in the sex trade among women, alcohol consumption, impacts on lifestyle and religions of local people, exploitation of local resources are some of the negative impacts of tourism in India.

A study done by Ashikin and Kalsom(2010), revealed that there are two different types of challenges i.e., external and internal which may negatively affect the success of community-led homestay projects. Internal challenges being the challenges faced by the owners of homestays and the host communities whereas the external challenges being the ones that are beyond the control of both the parties.

Lama (2013), mentioned homestay tourism has emerged as the form of sustainable tourism with the beginning of village tourism in the year 1997. The study highlighted that homestay tourism plays a major role in ecologically, economically and culturally. The article highlighted the issues of sustainable tourism development in Nepal along with the different patterns of homestays. The study revealed the issues and challenges of sustainable tourism development which has not been taken care of by the Nepal

Government. Lastly, homestays operation and village tourism is the most important tool for the development of sustainable tourism development in Nepal.

According to the study done by Wong (2014), operating homestay has given joy to the people of Sabah and a sense of cultural pride. It highlighted that the homestays act as an additional source of income. Although the villagers are keen to preserve their culture and tradition, they also welcome in their lifestyle allowing them to learn many new languages especially English. The study mentioned the various challenges faced by the owners like lack of funding and difficult access to the market, lack of support from the government, lack of infrastructure especially accessibility, overdependence on political networks, etc. The study also revealed that there are homestays who are getting full support of the government but the poor families are not allowed to participate in homestay operations contradicting the pro-poor term.

Othman et al. studied about the issues and challenges of Muslim-friendly homestays and highlighted the guests are having a problem with keeping up their privacy. The spaces are shared all the time between the host and the guests which results in the limited movement and privacy circulation. Safety being the second issue, the hosts should be careful enough to build an external barrier to separate the homestay and nearby houses or neighbourhood to avoid the misconduct by trespassers. The last and not the least challenge or issue of the homestay operation found out by the study is cleanliness or hygiene of the preparation of meals, conditions of bathrooms and washrooms which all the homestay owners should be very careful.

Pusiran & Xiao (2013), found out that the external challenges of homestays were the misconception of Homestay programmes by the locals who do not have proper ideas about the running of homestays because they were confused regarding why their

application of getting registered was not getting approved. The study also found out that though the volume of visitors was large enough, the owners were not able to receive the payment promptly due to the letter of order through the government which usually is very slow which resulted in the withdrawal of many participants from the homestay operations. The study also highlighted some of the major internal challenges such as unbalanced demography which included the lack of young participants due to migration problems, a very passive community which can hamper in the smooth running of the homestays and irregular monitoring of their homestays, poor communications, poor external relations, lack of transparency and alleged corruption, etc. Also, there are various weaknesses and threats of homestays. Some of the weaknesses being weak administration and management, incomplete infrastructure facilities, lack of investment capital, expertise and entrepreneurial ability, etc. and threats being competition from agro tourism and ecotourism, exploitation by external parties, competition from other accommodation providers, the emergence of fake or false homestay, etc.

According to Talib & Sulieman (2017), the various challenges faced in the homestay operations of Kota Aur, Malaysia include the cultural differences, the extreme weather conditions, passive homestay owners And workers, narrow and rough roads, lack of funds to maintain the homestays, communication difficulties due to language barriers, less promotional activities, more focus on island tourism, no up-to-date facilities and frequent power cuts.

### **2.3 Socio-economic impacts of homestays:**

According to Kimaiga (2013), different countries have a different description of homestays. Homestays as an extended form of Community-based tourism, it



facilitates source of earning to an individual household from tourism industry but also highlighted the fact that it is still unclear whether the homestay operators are benefiting fully from the venture.

Bhuiyan, Siwar, & Ismail (2013), mentioned that the communities are benefitting indirectly from the homestays by getting indirect employment opportunities and preservation of cultures and traditions. It also increases the awareness of sustainability among the locals as well as the tourists.

Ibrahim (2012:19), addressed that the homestay projects “require participation from not just the host family but the whole community, including school children, youth clubs, women’s clubs, etc. As a result, the homestay program helps in maintaining the traditional values of teamwork that creates the feeling of togetherness as well as nourishes social values within the community”.

Oranratmanee’s (2011) study highlighted that it is the social and cultural characteristics of host and guests that play a major role in facilitating or complicating the situation in the homestays. The study also highlighted that the host-guest interaction is limited which contradicts the fact of experiencing the local culture of the host community. Also, the generosity and service of the rural people to the tourists have been reinterpreted as commercialized hospitality which is one of the dominant characteristics of rural homestays. They are a very good source of earning foreign currency reduces the gap in the balance of payment, increases tax revenue, employment opportunities and provides new markets for selling of local products etc., Budhathoki (2013) & Gangotia (2013).

According to Thakuri (2016), homestay operations have been identified as the best for self-employment and income generating activity and it also provides marketing

opportunities for other local products. The income of homestay operators solely depends on the expenditure capacity of the tourists.

Acharya & Halpenny (2013), studied the homestays managed by women of Nepal which became a vehicle for community development, a tool for eradication of gender inequality and conventional labor division. The social upliftment of women's status through a homestay program was highlighted. Individual identity, recognition of women, women's ability to contribute to society was addressed in the study.

According to Thapa & Malini (2018), the involvement of local communities in tourism activities will improve the social and economic conditions leading to better living standards. The economic growth and progressive development of the areas where the Community-based tourism (CBT) has been adopted have been proven to be promptly stimulated. The study also addressed that Community-based tourism is the successful component of pro-poor tourism aiming to increase the involvement of local people in tourism maximizing the beneficial outcome.

#### **2.4 Tourist Satisfaction and Service Quality:**

Service quality has been defined differently by different authors. According to the Basiony et al. (2014), service quality has been defined by Parsuraman et al., as the degree and discrepancy between customers' perceptions and expectations," and Perceived Service quality as the gap between customers' expectations and perceptions as a measurement of service quality. So, smaller the gap, the better the service quality provided and the greatest the customer satisfaction. The study revealed that high service quality and resulting satisfaction leads to positive word of mouth endorsement, referrals and repeat visits leading to increased financial benefits to the tourism suppliers.

According to Prebensen, satisfaction has been analysed by tourism researchers within a variety of dimensions of tourist trips. The main goals of these studies are to develop instruments or measures of satisfaction with tourist product-elements, often with the purpose of suggesting tourists' perceived importance regarding the overall satisfaction and, to a certain extent, making suggestions for the industry as what to focus on regarding product developments.

Biswakarma<sup>15</sup>, the study revealed that to recognize tourist's perceived satisfaction of tourism product is critically important since it affects the individual's subjective perception and consequent behaviour and also destination choice. Also, tourist satisfaction determines the success rate of a particular destination.

Similarly, Canny (2013), in his study mentioned that the service quality has been identified as the key factor in maintaining the destination's competitiveness. More profits and low marketing expenditures will be initiated, since achieving tourist satisfaction is one of the important objectives for most of the tourism service business and organization.

Also, Tak et al. mentioned in their article, tourist's perception of the homestay attribute satisfaction will definitely cause the propagation of positive gen to the potential visitors. As long as the level of visitor's satisfaction increases, tourists will hopefully visit and participate in the Homestay programmes in the future as a result of reward ship experiences during their visit.

Whereas, Kunjuran & Hussin (2015), highlighted the fact that there are some homestay handlers who neglect to improve the service quality and infrastructure of

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<sup>15</sup>When small things are impressive" - Tourist Satisfaction towards Homestay in Nepal

their homestays. Their study also highlighted that the safety aspects and service based on gender can be a significant indicator to measure the satisfaction level of tourists.

Seubsamarn's (2009), study revealed that there are three main factors namely location/lodging, general tour attraction, and offering/information that increases tourists' satisfaction with homestays in Thailand. Of these three factors, general tour attractions had a more significant relationship with the overall satisfaction of tourists. The study also highlighted that there were differences in the satisfaction level of the tourists in terms of education levels.

According to Munhurrun et al. (2016), a successful destination marketing highly depends on the tourists' satisfaction and it is equally important that tourists revisit and recommend the destination. The study also used a new dimension, 'adventure and discovery' to assess the service quality and customer's satisfaction though it did not have any positive effect. The three dimensions namely people and hospitality, accommodation and food, and tourists satisfaction were the major determinants of customer loyalty.

Kwok, Jusoh, & Khalifah (2016), studied the influence of service quality on satisfaction level among the different genders in the Malaysian tourism context. The study found out that the service quality was positively associated with the satisfaction level and the relationship was moderated by the gender. The study also found out that the satisfaction level of male and female tourists with the perceived service quality was not equal.

Tazreen (2012), studied about the implication of SERVQUAL scale for measuring service quality taking the differences between the customers' expectation and perception of the service quality. The study revealed that the responsiveness factor

had the biggest gap among all the attributes showing more dissatisfaction among the customers comparatively.

### **2.5 Rationale of the study:**

There are only a few studies conducted on Indian homestays till date and very little has been studied about the homestays of Darjeeling. The previous studies conducted on homestays of Darjeeling did not provide the information on the problems and challenges faced by the operators, the future prospects of homestays. Service quality and the satisfaction level of the tourists staying in the homestays are the major factors that were not determined. Many studies on the challenges faced by homestays of several regions, states and country have been done but it seems that there is hardly any study done on the homestays of Darjeeling district. This research is an attempt to bridge the gap. The present study is done using PZB Gap Model of Service Quality to measure the satisfaction level of tourists with the services provided by the homestay operators. Based on the literature reviewed, this type of model has never been applied previously to study the homestays of Darjeeling. Nowadays the most important objectives for most tourism businesses and organizations is to achieve tourist satisfaction because it leads to an increase in the generation of more profits and also lowers the marketing expenditures (Canny, 2013). It could prove to be beneficial to the homestay owners to understand the needs and preferences of the tourists and the higher authorities in drafting homestay policy for the local, regional and state level. It would also give a clearer picture to the regulatory authorities about the problems and challenges faced by the homestay operators while running homestays.



Fig. 2.5.1: Vegetables and brooms grown nearby the homestays of Tinchuley (Source: Field survey, January, 2018)



Fig. 2.5.2: Room of a government funded homestays (Source: Field Survey, January, 2018)

## **2.6 Significance of the study:**

Tourism is an important fast growing smokeless industry of Darjeeling Hills. The concept of rural tourism is becoming popular as the pressure is increasing on the urban resources. IT plays a major role in economic development. Since it plays a vital

role in the economic development of the entire region, changes in the lifestyle and attitudes of the local inhabitants are becoming visible these days. But this is only possible if the management of tourism is well organized and planned. To reduce the negative impacts of urban tourism in Darjeeling hills, homestays have been advocated in many places which have been found to benefit both homestay owners and the communities in which they reside. Homestays resulting in increased economic stability have also been linked to providing various social benefits to other members of rural communities, the extent of which hinges on the level of involvement from the community itself. The formation of rural homestays in small villages has also supported the opening of others in the same area (Bhutia, 2016). Homestays are one of the most popular forms of Community-Based Tourism (CBT). Since this form of tourism products are mainly based in the offbeat areas, several issues like lack of proper infrastructures, lack of proper legal regulations, improper management of the homestays, etc. have been a major concern. This research will help the local communities to understand the importance of homestays. The findings of the study will also help the government to understand the overall challenges and opportunities of homestays in the study area. The local communities will benefit more with the help of this study because the socio-economic benefits of homestays will also be analysed by the research. Lastly, this study will help the policymakers in drafting the policy for homestay which would be applicable to the homestays of all categories, big or small.

## CHAPTER 3

### DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

#### **3.1 Sampling Design & Data Collection:**

The study was carried out in the two hamlets of Takdah spur in the Darjeeling district namely Lamahatta and Tinchuley. Convenience sampling method was used for the study. Primary data was gathered with the help of questionnaires (semi-structured open-ended), formal and informal interviews whereas the secondary data was collected with the help of different electronic media like published journal articles, e-news, etc. The data was collected in the month of June till October. The duration of field visit was divided into two sections, first being the month of June till July and second, September-October. The peak season had just ended in the month of June so the homestay owners were able to give enough time and information without hurrying. This proved to be helpful in collecting a lot of information regarding the first two objectives i.e. what are the problems and prospects of homestays in Darjeeling? And what are the socio-economic aspects of homestays in Takdah? The peak season began from September so it became easier to collect the next set of information from the tourists regarding the third objective i.e. what are the level of tourist's satisfaction from the services provided in the homestays? The number of samples (owners) taken from each place was 6 so the total number of homestay operators interviewed was 12. The number of tourists interviewed from each place was 55, the total of 110. The interviews took place in the respective homestays where the tourists were residing. The whole process took place with the willingness of the participants who were first assured that the data provided they would be used altogether while drawing the conclusion and their identity would not be revealed.



### 3.2 Data analysis:

**A.PZB Gap Model or SERVQUAL Model-** SERVQUAL model is a multi-dimensional research instrument which is designed to measure the quality of service with the help of 22 items (A.Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithmal, 1991). It was developed by A. Parasuraman, Leonard L. Berry and Valarie A, Zeithmalin the year 1985. First, it consisted of ten determinants of service quality which were Reliability, Responsiveness, Competence, Access, Courtesy, Communication, Credibility, Security, Understanding, and Tangibles. After more quantitative research, in the year 1988, they came to the conclusion that the consumers use five underlying dimensions in judging service quality (Basiony et al., 2014). The first gap is called the Customer's gap, whereas the remaining gaps are known as the Provider's gap (Nargunde, 2016). The five generic dimensions are Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy.

Dimension	No of items in the Questionnaire	Definition
RELIABILITY	5	Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurate
ASSURANCE	4	The knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence
TANGIBLES	4	The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials
EMPATHY	5	The provision of caring, individualized attention to customers
RESPONSIVENESS	4	The willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service

Table 3.2.1: Five dimensions of SERVQUAL Model by Parasuraman et al.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SERVQUAL#cite\\_note-3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SERVQUAL#cite_note-3) accessed on 9<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2018

The five gaps in the SERVQUAL Model are as follows:<sup>17</sup>

1. GAP I – Customer Expectations - Management Perceptions Gap: This is a result of the lack of marketing research orientation, inadequate upward communication and too many layers of management.
2. GAP II - Management Perceptions - Service Quality Specifications Gap: This is a result of an inadequate commitment to service quality, a perception of unfeasibility, inadequate task standardization and an absence of goal setting.
3. GAP III - Service Quality Specifications - Service Delivery Gap: This is a result of the role of ambiguity and conflict, poor employee-job fit, inappropriate supervisory control systems, lack of perceived control and lack of teamwork.
4. GAP IV - Service Delivery-External Communications Gap: This is a result of inadequate horizontal communications and propensity to over-promise.
5. GAP V- Expected Service- Perceived Service Gap or Service Performance Gap:- This is a result of the influences exerted from the customer side and the shortfalls on the part of the service provider.

**B. Multiple Regression Analysis:** Multiple Regression Analysis is a powerful technique used for predicting the unknown value of a variable from the known value of two variables- also called the predictors. More precisely, it helps us to predict the value of Y for a given value of  $X_1, X_2, \dots, X_k$ .<sup>18</sup>

The multiple regression equation is stated as-

$$Y = b_0 + b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2 + \dots + b_k X_k$$

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<sup>17</sup> The SERVQUAL Model-  
<https://www.stat.auckland.ac.nz/~mullins/servicequality/ServQualModel.pdf> accessed on 11th October, 2018

<sup>18</sup> <https://explorable.com/multiple-regression-analysis-> accessed on 12th October, 2018

**CHAPTER 4**  
**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**4.1 Challenges of Homestays:**

The method of collecting information was through a field survey in different homestays. Though the numbers of targeted samples were more, due to some reasons, all information could not be collected from all of them. Bonafide student certificate was provided prior to the interview but some participants who gave interviews were a bit hesitant to answer some of the questions asked during the survey. Some did not want to participate because they were busy with their own work while some said that the owners were out of town. Total 12 homestay owners were interviewed by Lamahatta and Tinchuley. Out of which 3 were female and the remaining 9 were male owners. The interview started with greetings and it was assured that their information would not be used against them or it would only be used to find the majority of similar responses among the owners and that it was strictly for educational purpose. First, the general questions were asked like the name of the respective homestays, the establishment, costs per night, number of tourists hosted, etc. The questions then asked were related with the respondents' personal feelings on running homestay. When asked about the types of tourists who have already visited, one female respondent responded joyfully saying that an old couple from Thailand wanted to make her their daughter and even invited her to their country. Some respondents said that running a homestay can be boring and hectic sometimes but overall it's a very good opportunity because it gives them something to look forward to and also is a sustainable source of income. They shared their experiences of how tourists had learned traditional way of cooking different vegetables with them. The income from

homestay is the primary source of income for all of them, besides that, some of them had small sweet shops owned by them. Majority of the participants said that it is utilized for children's education, household expenses, further maintenance of homestay only, the homestays that received a maximum number of tourists, added the fact that they use the income also to pay the monthly salary of the staffs. The next sections of the questions asked were about the challenges faced by the owners while running homestays. In Lamahatta, the most common answer received was a water problem. Water, one of the most valuable resources in homestay operation was lacking in Lamahatta area which has been a major challenge to the operators of Lamahatta. The shortage of regular supply of water in the area has been a major difficulty for proper functioning of homestays.

**Box**

A 55 year old lady, Chandra Chettri, runs a small single room homestay in Lamahatta. She also runs a small sweet shop as a side income. She mentioned that her family does not understand the importance of homestays and does not support her to provide services to the tourists. For instance, her husband scolds her when he gets irritated with the noise created by the tourists. Further, she gave an example of her daughter not helping her even to pick a glass from the dining table which was used by the tourists. Having a daughter is of no help when it comes to providing services to the tourists. But overall she looked satisfied when she said that she also learned different languages especially Hindi and Bangla, though only a few words and phrases from the tourists.

The field survey revealed the controversy between land reform department and the forest authority. In the year 2013, the Forest Authority had given some amount of

subsidy to each house of Lamahatta (depending on the willingness of the locals and the location) to start up homestays in their respective houses. The Ecotourism Park was also opened in Lamahatta in the same year to attract tourists from all over the world. When the development took place, tourists started coming there and the homestay flourished well as a business opportunity for the local people. After a few years of establishment, the land reform authorities sent a notice and a bill to all those who were in homestay operations. Minimum Rs.30, 000bills per homestay was sent by the land reform authority saying that on whose authority they have been operating the homestays and who are they paying the tax to? This came as a major threat to all the operators who were already having financial challenges to maintain their homestays.

In Tinchuley, the most common problem mentioned by the participants was the bad condition of roads and the electricity problem. All the four respondents put forward similar problems. During the field visit, the condition of roads leading to Tinchuley was noticed to be very rough and patchy but the natural beauty, scenery and the serene environment en-route could not be ignored.



Fig 4.1.1 Condition of road leading to Tinchuley (Source- Field Survey- September, 2018)



Fig. 4.1.2 Condition of roads leading to Tinchuley (Source-Field survey- September, 2018)



Fig. 4.1.3 Roads in Tinchuley village (Source- Field survey- September, 2018)

As far as electricity is concerned, fluctuation of power, load shedding, power cuts for long hours have been very problematic to the homestay owners of Tinchuley. Further, one of the famous homestay operators of Tinchuley village said, “the unusual problems also include the dishes or cuisines. Our traditional foods are kinema<sup>19</sup>, churpi<sup>20</sup>, ningure<sup>21</sup>, kaalo daal<sup>22</sup>, sidra<sup>23</sup> etc. which the tourists don't like so we have to provide them with the dishes they like, so the authenticity of local cuisines here vanishes. What's the use of homestays being purely authentic and local if the ones who are eating them don't like it at all?” The different type of taxes imposed by the Government of West Bengal has been a serious problem among the homestay operators of both the study areas. The taxes paid to the government are very high i.e., 12 percent. The registration process itself is very lengthy and complex. One

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<sup>19</sup> Kinema is a traditionally fermented soybean curry taken with rice or roti.

<sup>20</sup> Churpi is the traditional cheese made with milk.

<sup>21</sup> Ningure is a wild edible fern which is cooked as a vegetable by the people of hills and is best when prepared with churpi.

<sup>22</sup> Kaalo dal in English is known as lentils and is popular among the hill people.

<sup>23</sup> Sidra is a fermented dry sardine consumed by the Nepalese community. It is mostly used to prepare chutneys.

respondent said that the registration process is very lengthy and complex. To make a trade license various kind of documents are needed like land documents, then that land should be converted to commercial land. Not only that the map of the land where the homestay is built is required to be shown. The pollution document of gas (commercial) is also compulsory to get their homestay registered which the owners feel unnecessary. Another major problem faced by the operators of both the study areas is the political instability of the district. Darjeeling has been facing a lot of political disturbances since many years which has affected the tourism business badly, be it transportation, accommodation or any industrial sector related to tourism. The homestay owners referred to it as their worst nightmare because political instability leads to long day strikes or bandhs. This hampers the stability of homestay business as well and the ones whose primary source of incomes are from homestay, they won't have any source of living. A respondent from Lamahatta mentioned, "It's very tough for us to get hold of tourists because my homestay is not that famous as others' and when this kind of incidents happen, we have to start from square one which is very online tour operators but we just rely on word of mouths and tourists' recommendations to their family and friends, sometimes they take my contact number and give it to those who are willing to stay at my homestay." Further, a respondent from Tinchuley added, since it's a hilly region, natural calamities like landslides during rainy season act as a hurdle in the development of homestay tourism sector. Another common challenge that prevails among the homestays in Darjeeling is the lack of proper policy in the past few years. This is one of the most important drawbacks of the homestays of not only Lamahatta and Tinchuley but whole Darjeeling district. The failure of the higher authorities of West Bengal Tourism sector in drafting a fully developed policy for homestay establishments has always



been a major drawback. Only on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2017, a full framed policy was drafted for the homestay sector which still is unknown to most of the owners of the study areas.

#### **4.2 Future Prospects:**

Moving on to the next question, when asked about the future prospects of Darjeeling homestay industry, everyone responded with a positive answer. The fact that the homestays of Darjeeling have a lot of drawbacks and faces numerous challenges; it can still be improved to be one of the best homestay destinations in India. Since homestays are the most successful form of rural tourism according to (Kannegieser, 2015) and how the growth has been increasing since the last decade it would be wiser to say that the homestay tourism in Darjeeling will prove to be glorious in the upcoming future. The vision of the West Bengal Policy is, "To promote homestays across West Bengal as an important driver of equitable growth and prosperity offering an alternative source of livelihood, development, and growth in remote locations, preservation of local skills, enterprise development at the micro level thereby ensuring inclusive growth and sustainable environment management". With this, the hope for the development of homestay sector in Darjeeling hills along with the study areas has become stronger than ever. The respondent from both the study areas have already planned to increase the number of rooms in their homestays and are very eager to host a number of tourists in their beautiful homestays in the near future. Tourists from all over the world come every year any time of the year because the homestays operate all 365 days of the year which is very one of the most amazing facts about them. One of the respondents from Tinchuley mentioned, "Peak or offseason, there is always some tourists in my homestay, only the number of tourists' increases during peak season. This year also all the rooms are booked from the month of September but now

also there are tourists already staying.” Field survey from the study areas resulted with a positive feedback about the homestays.

### **4.3 Socio-Economic Impacts of Homestays:**

#### **4.3.1 Social Aspects of Homestays:**

STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
Homestay increases business opportunities for the local people	0	0	0	2	10
Homestay creates employment opportunities for local people	0	0	0	3	9
The homestay program has helped to improve the socio-economic situation of a community	0	0	0	8	4
Homestay is helpful to preserve the tradition and culture	0	0	0	12	0
Homestay is helpful in maintaining the social equity of the community	0	0	0	9	3
Homestay increases the stability of lifestyle of the local people	0	0	1	6	5
Homestay provides an opportunity for local people to interact with people having different cultures from various parts of the world	0	0	0	7	5

Table 4.3.1 Statements showing the socio economic impacts of homestays

Statements	Mean	Std.dev	Strongly Agreed	Neutral	Agreed
Homestay increases business opportunities for the local people	4.8333	.38925	84 %	0 %	16 %
Homestay creates employment opportunities for local people	4.7500	.45227	75 %	0 %	25 %
The homestay program has helped to improve the socio-economic situation of a community	4.3333	.49237	34 %	0 %	66 %
Homestay is helpful to preserve the tradition and culture	4.0000	.0000	0 %	0 %	100 %
Homestay is helpful in maintaining the social equity of the community	4.2500	.45227	25 %	0 %	75 %
Homestay increases the stability of lifestyle of the local people	4.3333	.65134	42 %	50 %	8 %
Homestay provides an opportunity for local people to interact with people having different cultures from various parts of the world	4.4167	.51493	42 %	0 %	58 %

Table 4.3.2 Mean Score of the statements of the participants

The descriptive analysis of the perception of the participants on the socio-economic impacts of homestays shows a high range mean score. 84 percent of the participants strongly agreed that the homestay operations increase business opportunities for the local people while 16 percent agreed to it. 75 percent of the participants strongly agreed to the statement that the homestays create employment opportunities for the local people while 25 percent agreed to it. Only 34 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that the homestays have helped to improve the socio-economic situation of the community, 66 percent only agreed to it. There were no participants who strongly agreed that the homestay operation is helpful to focus and preserve the tradition and culture. This section yielded a lowest mean score implying that the homestays are not that helpful to focus and preserve the tradition and culture. 25 percent of the total participants strongly agreed that the homestays are helpful in maintaining the social equity of the community while 75 percent only agreed to it. The statement "homestay increases the stability of the lifestyle of the local people" resulted with 42 percent of the total participants strongly agreeing to it and 50 percent agreeing while 8 percent of the participants felt neutral about it. They did not agree or disagree. The last statement was whether homestays provide an opportunity for the local people to interact with people having different cultures from various parts of the world and it resulted in 42 percent of the total participants strongly agreeing to it whereas 58 percent agreed to it.

#### 4.3.2 Economic aspects of homestays:

VARIABLE	AMOUNT	FREQUENCY
Monthly Living Expenses	1500-3000	5
	5000-10,000	4
	>10,000	3
		2
Initial Investment	50,000	2
	70,000-90,000	5
	>90,000	5
Monthly Income	≤5000	7
	10,000-25,000	5

Table 4.3.2.1: Economic impact of homestays on the homestay operators of Takdah  
The regression model is,

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{i1} + \beta_2 X_{i2} + \beta_3 X_{i3} \quad (1)$$

Where, Y= Monthly Income

X<sub>i1</sub> = Monthly living expenses

X<sub>i2</sub> = Initial investment

X<sub>i3</sub> = Targeted annual revenue

#### Results of the Multiple Regressions: Model Summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.972 <sup>a</sup>	.946	.925	2656.71100

Table 4.3.2.2 Result of the multiple regression analysis

The results of the multiple regression analysis show that the R value is .972 which signifies that there is a very strong correlation between the dependent and independent variables. Also the value of R square and adjusted R square is .946 and .925

respectively which indicates that this model explains a strong relation among the variables.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	f	sig
Regression	981597593.116	3	327199197.705	46.358	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	56464906.884	8	7058113.361		
Total	1038062500.00	11			

Table 4.3.2.3 Anova table

a. Dependent Variable: MONTHLY INCOME

b. Predictors: (Constant), INITIAL INVESTMENT, MONTHLY EXPENSE, TARGETED ANNUAL REVENUE

From the ANOVA table F statistic is .000 which indicates that the model is about 99% true and the dependent variable (monthly income) is strongly associated with the independent variables (initial investments, monthly expenditures and targeted annual revenue).

NOTE: The initial investments includes the expenditures made by the owners to start up the homestays, room infrastructures including the furniture, electric appliances like television sets, water boilers and geysers, etc. It also includes the investments done on advertisements of the homestays, be it online or offline and daily wages of the human resource who were engaged in the construction of the homestays.

**Coefficients:**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
<b>(Constant)</b>	-13219.89	3311.166		-3.993	.004
<b>Monthly Expense</b>	-.205	.509	-.069	-.403	.697
<b>Initial Investment</b>	.074	.059	.429	1.252	.246
<b>Targeted Annual Revenue</b>	.310	.177	.610	1.755	.117

Table 4.3.2.4: Coefficients

Here at 0.05 %level of significance,the coefficients from the above table are statistically significant which proves that above table shows a positive relation between independent variable, initial investment, targeted annual revenue and the dependant variable, monthly income.

$$Y = -13219.894 + (-.069) X_{i1} + .429 X_{i2} + .061 X_{i3}$$

The regression model also shows that the monthly expense affects the monthly income negatively indicating that more the monthly expense less will be the monthly income. Since the monthly expense of the homestay operators includes children's education, household expenses etc. it tends to be adversely affecting the owners having less income. Targeted annual revenue affects the monthly income indirectly and also gets affected when the monthly income increases or decreases. It includes the revenue collected from other side businesses such as shops, transportations, local handicrafts, etc.

### **Box**

Abiraj Bhandari, owner of Abiraj Homestay at Tinchuley, started homestay in his own residence with only one room in the year 2010. Now, he has established a full-fledged homestay with an increased number of rooms. In the year 2018, he started a new venture of village lodge which has some exclusive features and facilities for the guests. He stated, “The idea of setting up a lodge started when he saw the potential and the scope of homestays and ecotourism in the area. Guests are fascinated by the view of the mighty and the most beautiful Kanchenjunga which is one of the USP of his homestay. “He further added that, nowadays the tourists have become modern in their minds and they are also tired of the same old fancy destinations which offer mostly man-made attractions. The new modern tourists now prefer exploring the offbeat destinations like Tinchuley where the natural beauty and wilderness is in abundance.

**4.4 Tourists' satisfaction: Gap analysis of expectations and perceptions:**

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	56	60 %
	Female	38	40 %
	Total= 94		100 %
Age	8-18 years	5	1.31 %
	18-40 years	35	37.23 %
	40 above	51	54.25 %
Education level	Secondary	5	5.31 %
	Graduate	33	35.10 %
	Post Graduate	56	59.57 %
Occupation	Retired	3	3.1 %
	Professionals	74	78.2 %
	Self-employed	12	12.76 %
	Students	5	5.31 %
State of Origin	Kolkata	100 %	100%
Travelling with group or alone	Group	94	100 %
	Solo	0	0 %
Length of Stay	1-2 nights	39	41.48 %
	Above 2 nights	55	58.51 %
Have stayed before or not	Yes	26	27.65 %
	No	68	72.34 %
Main reason behind choosing the homestay:	Because the service/facility is good.	23	24.46 %
	Because the owner/staff is friendly.	40	42.55 %
	Because the food is good.	0	0 %
	Because the rate is cheaper.	8	8.51 %
	Others	26	27.65 %

Table 4.4.1: Profile of the tourists (Source- Field survey- September, 2018)

A total of 110 questionnaires were given of which 94 questionnaire were usable with a response rate of 85.5 percent. Table 4.4.1 shows the profile of the respondents. Out of 94 tourists, 38 participants were female (40 percent) and 56 were the male tourists (60 percent). In terms of age, majority of the tourists were above 40 years (54 percent), 37 percent of the tourists were aged between 18 to 40 years followed by 5



percent tourists who were below 18 years. Again, 60 percent of the tourists were post graduates, 33 percent were graduates and again 5 percent were a secondary school student. All of the respondents were travelling in a group. 59 percent of the tourists had planned to stay in the respective homestays for more than 2 nights whereas 41 percent had planned only for 1 to 2 days. The respondents who were staying for the first time in the respective homestays were about 28 percent and 78 percent had already visited a couple of times. The tourists had visited the respective homestays even for the 5<sup>th</sup> time because they liked everything about it. Majority of the tourists (40 percent) had visited the homestays of Takdah because of the friendly nature of the staffs and the owners, followed by 26 percent whose reason of staying in homestays was a cheaper rate compared to the hotels or other forms of accommodations. 23 percent of the tourists gave their perception of the reason behind staying in homestays was because the services and the facilities were good. Lastly, only 8 percent of the tourists chose food as the main reason for choosing the respective homestays.



Fig. 4.4.1 Tourist filling up the questionnaire (Source-Field Survey- September, 2018)

Following table shows the SERVQUAL attributes' statements for the customers' perception on the service quality of the homestays. Five-point Likert scale is used to determine their opinion.

	<b>SATEMENTS</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>TANGIBLES 1</b>	Visually appealing facilities					
2	Adequate equipment and capacity					
3	Clean environment					
4	Appearance of host					
6	Visitor's privacy					
<b>RELIABILITY 7</b>	Records tourist's data					
8	Ability to perform promised services					
<b>RESPONSIVENESS 9</b>	Programs was offered as in the package					
10	Provide prompt service					
11	Prioritize the visitor's need					
12	The host is polite, kind and educated					
<b>ASSURANCE 13</b>	Courtesy of host					
14	Inspire trust and confidence					
15	Host's knowledge and skills					
16	Offer safe and secure activities					
17	Offer safe precautions					
<b>EMPATHY 18</b>	Understand visitors' need					
19	Individualized attention					
20	Treating guests in a friendly manner					
21	Specific attention to visitor's special need					
22	Providing assistance in other required areas					

Table 4.4.2: Statement showing the perceptions regarding the services and facilities of the homestays

Following table shows the SERVQUAL attributes' statements for customer's expectation on the homestays. Five point Likert scale is used here also.

	<b>SATEMENTS</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>TANGIBLES</b> 1	Homestays should have all the visually appealing facilities (natural beauty, surroundings, beautiful architecture etc.)					
2	Homestays should have adequate equipment and capacity					
3	Homestays should have clean environment (Clean toilets, bathrooms, kitchens, surroundings, rooms etc.)					
4	Appearance of host should be neat, smart and tidy					
6	Visitor's privacy should be of big concern					
<b>RELIABILITY</b> 7	Homestay owners should records tourist's data					
8	Homestay owners should have the ability to perform promised services					
<b>RESPONSIVENESS</b> 9	Programs should be offered as in the package					
10	Owners should provide prompt service					
11	Owners should prioritize the visitor's need					
12	The host should be polite, kind and educated					
<b>ASSURANCE</b> 13	Courtesy of host should be nice					
14	Host should inspire trust and confidence					
15	Hosts should be knowledge and with skills					
16	Host should offer safe and secure activities					
17	Host should offer safe precautions					
<b>EMPATHY</b> 18	Host should understand visitors' need					
19	Host should give individualized attention					
20	Guests should be treated in a friendly manner					
21	Hosts should pay specific attention to visitor's special need					
22	Hosts should provide assistance in other required areas					

Table 4.4.3: Statements showing the expectations regarding the services and facilities of the homestays

The difference between the customers' expectation perception and their expectation is then calculated. Following table shows the differences between the customers

'perception and their expectation:

Average gap scores between customer perception and their expectation of the various services attributes of homestays of Takdah.

Attributes	Expectations	Perceptions	Gap
Tangibles	17.2022	16.5362	-0.4897
Reliability	15.9362	15.9149	-0.0123
Responsiveness	16.5001	15.9362	-0.5639
Assurance	21.649	20.6703	-0.9787
Empathy	19.9043	19.7234	-0.1809

Table 4.4.4: Overall mean gap between the participants' perception and expectation of the services and facilities of the homestays

The descriptive statistics of the gap model shows that the tourists are overall satisfied with the service quality provided by the hosts of the study areas. Of all the attributes, assurance has the biggest gap which means that the satisfaction level from these particular services is lower than the rest of the four segments. Higher the gap between customers' expectation and perception lesser will be the level of satisfaction. In case of the homestays Tinchuley and Lamahatta, what tourists felt most dissatisfied was there were no adequate equipment and capacity. But this statement came under the "Tangibles" which had a very small overall gap score. The smallest gap score was seen in the "Reliability" segment followed by empathy, tangibles and responsiveness.

**Box**

A group of tourists from Tinchuley while filling up the satisfaction questionnaires gave an important input for the research. The tourists seemed very satisfied about the service they got and the beautiful environment of the homestay they were staying in. They were all in a happy mood saying that the satisfaction level is very high but they felt a little unhappy about one thing, just one thing and that was the food quality, taste wise. They were comparing the quality of food they got in Lepchajagat and the study area. One respondent said, “The food here tasted a little bad compared to Lepchajagat because they offered the same items as in Lepchajagat.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 CONCLUSIONS:

The present study dealt with the homestay operations in Darjeeling Hills. During the study, it was observed that the homestays of Darjeeling are still developing. The huge influx of tourists during the peak seasons have left the tourism handlers of the hills in a dilemma due to the less number of hotels and over congestion of tourists in the places of interests around the main town. The homestays have become the only solution to this critical problem. There are nearly 3000 homestays in Darjeeling but there is no uniformity in their development. The study revealed that there are several issues regarding the operation and performance of homestays are apparent which are overpassed by the higher authorities. Some of the major challenges include the Government's pressure on the owners for paying several taxes, political instability, lack of infrastructural development especially roads, water scarcity, etc. The importance of homestays in the tourism industry of Darjeeling wasn't acknowledged by the locals until recently, so the development of homestays has been somehow detained in Darjeeling. The socio-economic aspects of the homestays are of great importance to the owners and the local community as well. The findings of the study revealed that the social aspects of homestays such as "homestays increase business opportunities for the local communities", and "Homestay creates employment opportunities" yielded the highest mean scores of 4.8333 and 4.7500 indicating that the local community does get business and employment opportunities. The study also revealed that the statements " Homestay is helpful in maintaining social equity of the community and the "Homestay is helpful to preserve the tradition and culture" yielded the lowest mean scores of 4.2500 and 4.000 indicating that the homestays are not that

helpful in preservation of culture and maintaining the social equity. The monthly income of the homestay owners is negatively related with the monthly expense. If the monthly expense of the owners increases then the monthly income decreases. But most importantly the monthly income of the homestay owners was found out to be directly proportional to the targeted annual revenue and the initial investments made by the owners. There were various challenges faced by the homestay operators which were observed during the study. The most vital challenges included the water and the electricity problem which has been creating interruption in the proper running of homestays. The scarcity of a permanent source has been a major drawback for the homestay operators. Water being a basic but the most essential component of daily life is very limited in the study area which is a great challenge faced by the operators. Electricity fluctuation has been another big problem. The study revealed that the tourists are often annoyed by the frequent cut of power supply. Not only tourists, the owners feel helpless about the power cut because it creates various problems like the problem in cooking, heating or boiling waters in an electric appliances, charging their phones etc. Another major problems associated with the homestay operations was found out to be the bad road conditions. One of the major tourism components includes transportation but the roads are observed to be rough and patchy which are unavoidable. The tourists as well as the homestay owners face a lot of difficulties while travelling through such patchy roads which also is a big hindrance in the development of the homestays. The next challenge which was revealed during the field survey was regarding the food. The local dishes served in the homestays were not liked by the tourists which forces the owners to provide them with the food that tourists prefer. This occurs as a threat to the traditional aspects of the hill community. Another important challenge faced by the operators includes the veiled dispute

between the Land Reform Authority and the Forest Authority over the establishment of homestay. Another major observation during the field survey was the difficulties faced by the owners due to the political instability of the place. The complications they face during the times of strikes and bandhs results in loss of income and also the tourists. This also revealed the homestay operators' fear of facing the same kind of situation again in the near future. The findings of this research also revealed that the homestay policy of the state had come up very late which proved to be objectionable to the owners because the homestay policy had such criterion which could not be applied on the existing homestays. The drawn-out registration process, the hyped taxes of various things, natural calamities especially the landslides and the earthquakes are also the important challenges faced by the homestay operators of Darjeeling. Beside all these problems and challenges, the future prospect of the homestays of Darjeeling still looks positive. The newly formed Himalayan Homestay Owners Association with over 50 members is a great step for the progress of homestay sector of Darjeeling. Though late but the homestay policy of the state has been framed which might prove to be motivating for the ones who are planning to start up a new homestay. The field survey revealed that the tourists prefer staying in a homestay more to have a peaceful holiday which make homestays never unoccupied throughout the year. This proves the unseasonal character of homestay accommodation motivating many other entrepreneurs to start up new homestays in the hills. The local community of the study areas are coming up with many innovative ideas to draw the attention of tourists who are eco-friendly. The hybridization of lemon and tea plants is one of such innovative ideas to add some uniqueness to the homestay destination of the hills. The field study also revealed that the young homestay owners are trying to employ their fresh minds in creating many new



adventure opportunities for the tourists. The study revealed the homestay owners of the hills have come up with a “say no to plastic” drive to make the homestay operations eco-friendly. The satisfaction level of tourists is of utmost importance to the service providers. The study revealed that the tourists visiting Tinchuley and Lamahatta are satisfied with the service quality provided to them. The gap model revealed that out of 5 attributes, Assurance had the largest gap than the rest four attributes indicating the lesser customer satisfaction. But looking individually, the largest gap seen was in the Tangibles segment relating to the “adequate equipment and facilities”, which indicates that the customer had the highest dissatisfaction in this segment. The “Reliability” segment had the lowest range of gap which means that the customers’ satisfaction level is high in this section. Homestay acts as a catalyst of generating income in the local community. It also facilitates the local people to get employment opportunities eradicating the existing poverty of the community. The homestays have also facilitated the women to be self-employed which has helped them to be self-dependent and confident of themselves. During the field study, it was observed that the female owners were contented with their work and they also think that providing service to the tourists gives them joy, passes their time along with getting monetary benefits. The number of tourists from different states, country and cultural background staying in the homestays enables the hosts and the local community to interact and learn about the language and culture about them and vice versa. Homestays, if taken seriously can prove to be very helpful in the enhancement of the society and boost up the economy of the destination as well as the state.

## **5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Darjeeling is one of the famous hill stations of India consisting of various interesting places to visit, renowned educational institutions, World Heritage Toy Train and the

word famous tea industry but it is becoming over populated day by day. On top which, the tourists influx is rapidly increasing over the past few years leading to the destruction of tourism resources as well as the crisis of the hotel rooms and lack of ample accommodation for the tourists. Darjeeling has many low budget and budget hotels which are mostly opted out by the budget tourists or the GIT's. The heavy inflow of the tourists, mostly the domestic tourists have resulted in the congestion of the hotels. Eventually, the establishment of many low graded hotels which do not meet the basic expectations of the tourists visiting Darjeeling have occurred. No doubt, the homestays have been a great help in balancing the equation of the problems faced by the tourists as well as the tourism service providers. Homestays has proven to be a sustainable way of accommodating tourists because it does not need extra plot of land, additional construction charges, trained chefs or staffs, etc.

Looking at the current situation of the homestay establishments in Darjeeling, some of the recommendations can be stated as follows:

- 1) The homestay operators of Darjeeling should be made aware of the rules and regulations regarding the running of homestays. This is one of the most important things that need to be taken care of by the higher authority. The policy drafted by the West Bengal government mentions about the norms to be followed by all the homestay owners of Darjeeling which they should follow strictly.
- 2) There should be a regular inspection regarding the functioning of homestays, the food quality, hygiene factor and also the performance of the staffs.
- 3) The homestay owners should be able to make sure that the overall development of the community is the primary motive of its existence so that the community also gets profited.

- 4) The homestays are the aftermath of the sustainable tourism so the higher authorities should assure that the human resources related to this sector including the tourists acts more responsibly towards the environment and the natural resources so that the whole practice takes place in a sustainable manner.
- 5) The owners and the staffs engaged in the homestay services is strongly recommended to treat their tourists in a friendly, polite manner and make them feel homely because the tourists are much fascinated by the way they are treated in a homestay.
- 6) The owners/staffs should attend the capacity building workshops or seminars which will empower them in delivering the better service quality to the tourists.
- 7) There is a need for proper construction of the roads connecting the villages of Takdah which is at present in a very bad condition so that the tourists can travel hassle-free.
- 8) The electricity department should look into the problems faced by the homestays of Takdah because the homestays face various kinds of difficulties with various complaints from the tourists.
- 9) Water, being the most important component of human lives should be provided with a perennial source to the villages of Takdah so that the homestay owners can run their respective homestays without any pressure.
- 10) The community plays a major role in the homestay sector hence, they are recommended to cooperate with the homestay owners so that the income generated stays within the local community.

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## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A: Questionnaires

### I. QUESTIONNAIRES ON THE PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF HOMESTAYS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF HOMESTAYS

Dear Respondent,

The under named (Priyanka Khaling) is pursuing M.Phil. in Tourism at Sikkim University, Sikkim. As a part of my study, the under given questions are a part of survey, is being conducted to understand your response and socio-economic benefits of the homestay of Takdah (Tinchuley and Lamahatta). I will be highly indebted for your cooperativeness in the fulfilment of questionnaire given below. Any information provided by you will be kept confidential and only group data will be presented for statistical purposes.

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#### SECTION I

##### GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT HOMESTAYS OF TAKDAH

1. Name of your Homestay.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How long have you been operating/running your homestay?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you the sole owner of your homestay?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How many tourists you receive each year?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the cost per head/night at your homestay?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How many rooms do you have in your homestay?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How many guests can you accommodate?  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Is the income generated from homestay your primary or secondary income?

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9. How do you utilize the income generated from homestays?

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10. What kind of feelings do you experience from running the homestay?

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11. What are some of the challenges you face mostly running a homestay?

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12. What do you think about the present condition of homestays in the hills of Darjeeling?

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13. What are major drawbacks of homestays in Darjeeling?

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14. What do you think of the future prospects of homestays in Darjeeling?

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**SECTION II**  
**QUESTIONS REGARDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF**  
**HOMESTAYS**

**Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 your perception on the following socio-economic benefits of Homestay accommodation to host families and the community. (Tick appropriately)**

**1= Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree**

STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
Homestay increases business opportunities for the local people					
Homestay creates employment opportunities for the local people					
The homestay program has helped to improve the socio-economic situation of a community					
Homestay is helpful preserve the tradition and culture					
Homestay is helpful in maintaining the social equity of the community					
Homestay increases the stability of lifestyle of the local people					
Homestay provides opportunity for the local people to interact with people having different cultures from various parts of the world					

## II. QUESTIONNAIRES ON TOURISTS SATISFACTION

### Questionnaire for Visitor

Dear Respondent,

The under named (Priyanka Khaling) is pursuing M.Phil. in Tourism at Sikkim University, Sikkim. As a part of my study, the under given questions are a part of survey, is being conducted to understand your response and experiences towards the homestay facilities of Takdah (Tinchuley and Lamahatta). I will be highly indebted for your cooperativeness in the fulfilment of questionnaire given below. Any information provided by you will be kept confidential and only group data will be presented for statistical purposes.

---

### SECTION I

#### III. TRAVEL-REALATED INFORMATION

1. How did you arrive here?
  - i) Bus
  - ii) Car
  - iii) Other, what? \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. From where did you hear about this homestay?
  - i) I already knew it.
  - ii) Internet
  - iii) Friends and relatives
  - iv) Media
  - v) Other, what? \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Is this your first time stay in this homestay? Yes/No
  
4. If No, then how many times have you stayed in this homestay? \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. How many days are you planning to stay here? \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. What is you main reason for choosing to stay in this homestay?
  - i) Because the service/facility is good.
  - ii) Because the owner/staff is friendly.
  - iii) Because the food is good.
  - iv) Because the rate is cheaper.
  - v) Other, what? \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION II**  
**VISITOR'S SATISFACTION**

Following are the various factors with their key attributes regarding your perceptions of the services and facilities of the homestay. Please give a score to your satisfaction level ranging from 1 to 5.

1-Very Unsatisfying, 2-Unsatisfying, 3-Average, 4-Satisfying, 5-Very Satisfying

	STATEMENTS	1	2	3	4	5
<b>TANGIBLES 1</b>	Visually appealing facilities					
2	Adequate equipment and capacity					
3	Clean environment					
4	Appearance of host					
6	Visitor's privacy					
<b>RELIABILITY 7</b>	Records tourist's data					
8	Ability to perform promised services					
<b>RESPONSIVENESS 9</b>	Programs was offered as in the package					
10	Provide prompt service					
11	Prioritize the visitor's need					
12	The host is polite, kind and educated					
<b>ASSURANCE 13</b>	Courtesy of host					
14	Inspire trust and confidence					
15	Host's knowledge and skills					
16	Offer safe and secure activities					
17	Offer safe precautions					
<b>EMPATHY 18</b>	Understand visitors' need					
19	Individualized attention					
20	Treating guests in a friendly manner					
21	Specific attention to visitor's special need					
22	Providing assistance in other required areas					

Following are the various factors with their key attributes regarding your expectations of the services and facilities of the homestay. Please give a score to your satisfaction level ranging from 1 to 5.

1-Very Unsatisfying, 2-Unsatisfying, 3-Average, 4-Satisfying, 5-Very Satisfying

	<b>SATEMENTS</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>TANGIBLES</b>						
1	Homestays should have all the visually appealing facilities (natural beauty, surroundings, beautiful architecture etc.)					
2	Homestays should have adequate equipment and capacity					
3	Homestays should have clean environment (Clean toilets, bathrooms, kitchens, surroundings, rooms etc.)					
4	Appearance of host should be neat, smart and tidy					
6	Visitor's privacy should be of big concern					
<b>RELIABILITY</b>						
7	Homestay owners should records tourist's data					
8	Homestay owners should have the ability to perform promised services					
<b>RESPONSIVENESS</b>						
9	Programs should be offered as in the package					
10	Owners should provide prompt service					
11	Owners should prioritize the visitor's need					
12	The host should be polite, kind and educated					
<b>ASSURANCE 13</b>						
	Courtesy of host should be nice					
14	Host should inspire trust and confidence					
15	Hosts should be knowledge and with skills					
16	Host should offer safe and secure activities					
17	Host should offer safe precautions					
<b>EMPATHY 18</b>						
	Host should understand visitors' need					
19	Host should give individualized attention					
20	Guests should be treated in a friendly manner					
21	Hosts should pay specific attention to visitor's special need					
22	Hosts should provide assistance in other required areas					