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Motivations and satisfaction of tourists staying in homestays across Kashmir Valley

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Abstract: This study explores the motivations and satisfaction levels of tourists choosing homestays in the Kashmir Valley, an area renowned for its natural beauty and cultural richness. Despite the growing popularity of homestays, little research has been conducted on understanding the driving factors behind their selection and the satisfaction derived from such stays in this unique context. Utilising primary data collected through surveys and interviews from a sample of tourists, this paper employs Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and factor analysis to identify the underlying motivations for choosing homestays and to evaluate tourists' satisfaction levels.

The findings reveal that cultural immersion, personalised experiences, and the desire for authentic local interactions are primary motivations for tourists opting for homestays over traditional hotel accommodations. Satisfaction levels were significantly influenced by the quality of interaction with hosts, the comfort of the accommodation, and the ability to experience the local way of life. The study's results contribute to the theoretical understanding of tourist behaviour in the context of homestays and offer practical implications for hosts and policymakers aiming to enhance the homestay experience in the Kashmir Valley. By addressing the gap in the literature, this research provides valuable insights into the sustainable development of homestay tourism in culturally and ecologically sensitive regions.

Keywords: Homestays, Tourist motivation, Tourist Satisfaction, Cultural immersion and Kashmir valley

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1 Introduction

The concept of homestays has evolved significantly over the past few decades, becoming a cornerstone of the global tourism industry's shift towards more personalised and immersive travel experiences (Anwar et al., 2021). This transition is not merely about finding a place to stay but about seeking connections with local cultures, traditions, and everyday life that traditional accommodations often fail to offer. Homestays allow travellers to live with local families, sharing meals, stories, and the rhythms of daily life, thereby fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the local community and its culture (Jasrotia & Kour, 2022). This trend towards authentic travel experiences is particularly pronounced in regions like the Kashmir Valley, a gem in the crown of the Indian subcontinent's tourism landscape. Kashmir Valley, with its unparalleled natural beauty and rich cultural tapestry, presents a compelling case for the homestay tourism model (Anwar et al., 2021). The region's appeal lies not just in its picturesque landscapes—encompassing everything from tranquil lakes and verdant valleys to majestic mountains—but also in its profound cultural heritage, reflected in its art, cuisine, music, and festivals. For tourists, the opportunity to stay in a Kashmiri home means more than just a unique place to sleep; it represents a chance to immerse themselves in the local way of life and to learn from and participate in traditions that have been passed down through generations. This depth of experience is what many modern travellers crave, making homestays in Kashmir an increasingly attractive option (Thakur et al., 2023).

The burgeoning interest in homestays as a preferred accommodation option presents a unique opportunity and challenge for the tourism sector in Kashmir Valley. While the demand for authentic and immersive travel experiences grows, there remains a noticeable gap in comprehensive understanding and documentation of what drives this demand, especially in culturally and ecologically sensitive areas like Kashmir (Ahmad, 2022). The lack of detailed insight into the motivations behind

tourists' preference for homestays and their satisfaction levels with these experiences is a significant oversight. This gap hinders the ability of local communities, tourism operators, and policymakers to tailor the homestay experience to better meet the evolving needs and expectations of tourists, potentially impacting the sustainable growth and development of the homestay market in the region (Kumar *et al.*, 2023).

Recognising this need, the current study aims to bridge the knowledge gap by exploring the motivations that lead tourists to choose homestays over more conventional lodging options in Kashmir Valley and by assessing the impact of these stays on their overall satisfaction with the travel experience (Parray *et al.*, 2023). The objectives are twofold: to uncover the specific factors that attract tourists to homestay accommodations—be it the quest for cultural immersion, environmental sustainability, personal connections, or economic considerations—and to evaluate how these factors influence their satisfaction levels. This exploration is crucial not only for academic enrichment but also for its practical implications, offering valuable insights that can guide the strategic development of homestays in the region.

The significance of this research extends across various dimensions of the tourism industry. For local communities, it offers a pathway to harnessing tourism

for economic development while preserving their cultural heritage and environmental assets (Jeelani, 2013). For tourists, it provides a deeper understanding of the value and impact of their accommodation choices, potentially influencing future travel decisions. For policymakers and tourism operators, it presents actionable data to inform the creation of supportive policies, marketing strategies, and operational improvements that enhance the quality and sustainability of the homestay experience in Kashmir (Ahmad, 2022). In doing so, this study contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism, advocating for practices that respect and preserve the uniqueness of destinations like the Kashmir Valley for future generations.

It is an important hub for tourism since the Kashmir Valley, which is located in the northern portion of India, as shown in Figure 1, is famous all over the globe for its magnificent natural beauty and rich cultural legacy (Anand *et al.*, 2012). The stunning surroundings of this region, which include snow-capped mountains, clean lakes, deep woods, and lush green meadows, are a major draw for tourists from all over the world. Dal Lake, Gulmarg, Pahalgam, and Sonamarg are some of the most famous tourist spots in the valley, and they provide visitors with a glimpse of the valley's breathtaking landscapes and various ecosystems (Bhat *et al.*, 2020). In addition, the valley's cultural legacy, which has been formed over the course of millennia by

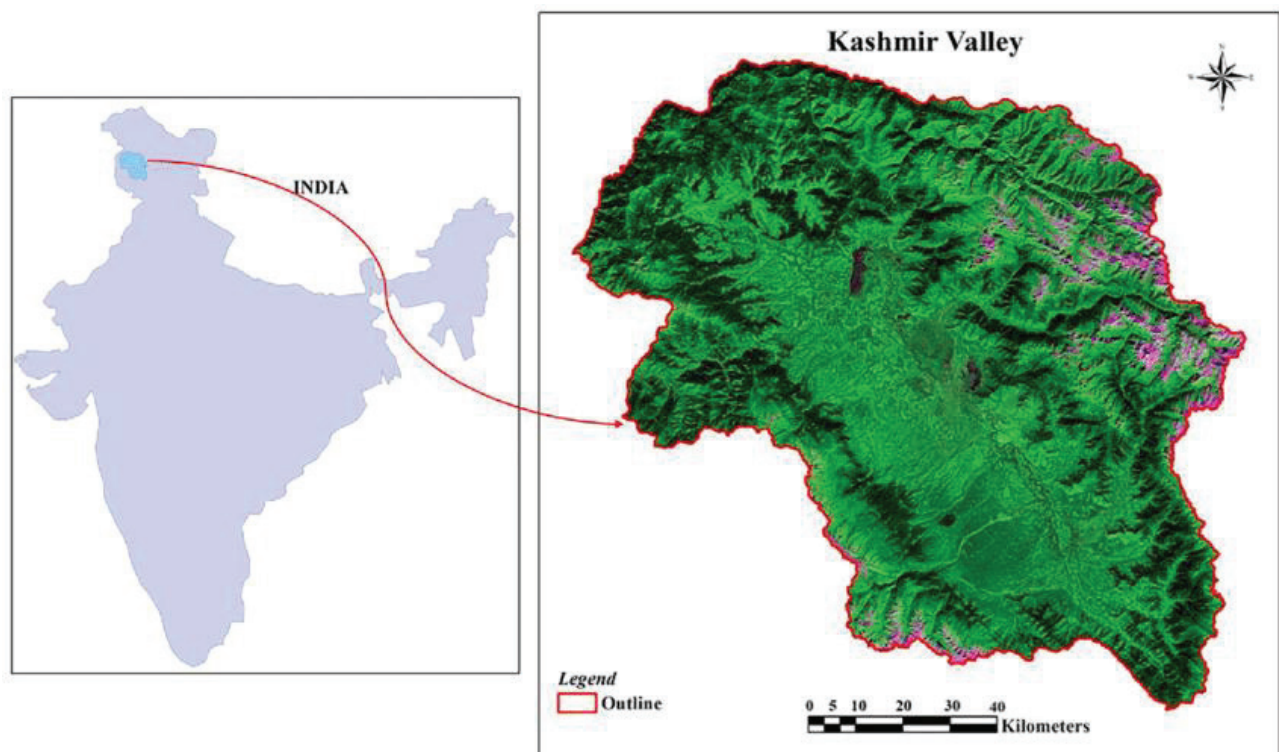


Figure 1: Map of Kashmir Valley
Source: Singh *et al.* (2021).

influences from Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, contributes to the valley's attraction. Traditional Kashmiri handicrafts, including beautifully woven carpets, magnificent shawls, and vivid papier-mâché items, are on show in the lively local markets, which visitors can explore. Other places of interest include historic temples, mosques, and shrines (Bhalla et al., 2016).

The tourism industry in the Kashmir Valley is backed by a thriving hospitality sector, which provides a wide variety of accommodation alternatives to accommodate and cater to the preferences and financial constraints of each and every traveller (Bhat et al., 2023). In the middle of the tranquil surroundings of the valley, tourists can have a pleasant and immersive experience by staying in traditional homestays, warm guesthouses, and luxurious resorts that are hosted by local families (Dash, 2022).

In spite of its enormous potential, the tourism business in the Kashmir Valley is confronted with a number of obstacles, several of which include political instability, occasional unrest, and worries regarding security. In addition to having an effect on the region's tourism infrastructure, these variables have caused oscillations in the number of tourists who visit the area. On the other hand, the Jammu and Kashmir administration, in conjunction with tourism officials, is taking steps to resolve these difficulties and promote the valley as a destination that is both safe and hospitable for tourists (Jasrotia & Kour, 2022).

Visitors continue to be enthralled by the Kashmir Valley due to the region's natural beauty, diverse cultural heritage, and kind hospitality. The valley continues to be a timeless destination for those who are looking for an experience that they will never forget set against the backdrop of the natural wonders and the allure of Kashmiri culture, despite the fact that there are ongoing efforts to improve infrastructure and guarantee safety (Sanyal et al., 2023).

1.1 Importance of understanding tourist motivations and satisfaction in homestays

When it comes to homestays, it is of the utmost importance for both hosts and stakeholders in destination management to have a thorough understanding of the motivations and levels of satisfaction of tourists. This knowledge gives hosts the ability to modify their services so that they are in accordance with the needs and expectations of their visitors, which ultimately results in an improved experience for the guests (Jasrotia & Kour, 2022). When hosts have a thorough understanding of the specific reasons why tra-

vellers choose homestays, such as the desire to immerse themselves in the local culture, authentic experiences, or cost-effectiveness, they are able to tailor their services accordingly, thereby ensuring that their guests have a stay that is both memorable and satisfying (Kumar et al., 2023). This personalised approach not only encourages favourable reviews and suggestions from guests but also helps to create a customer base that is loyal to the brand, which ultimately drives occupancy rates and income.

Secondly, obtaining an understanding of the factors that motivate tourists and the level of happiness they experience while staying in homestays is essential to the development of sustainable tourism. In many cases, homestays play a catalytic role in fostering community engagement and empowerment by presenting local inhabitants with chances for economic participation and cultural interchange (Thakur et al., 2023). It is possible for hosts and stakeholders in the destination to capitalise on the potential of homestays as engines of local development while still maintaining the destination's authenticity and integrity if they have a thorough understanding of the levels of satisfaction attained by guests. This understanding helps to evaluate the effectiveness of community engagement initiatives and to identify areas in which improvements can be made (Sarkar, 2022).

Additionally, the understanding of visitor motivations and the level of happiness they experience in homestays is beneficial to the management strategies and planning efforts of destinations. To develop targeted marketing efforts, efficiently allocate resources, and formulate policies that encourage the expansion of the homestay industry, local tourism authorities can make use of this expertise (Anwar et al., 2021). By aligning tourism development initiatives with the preferences and requirements of travellers, stakeholders in the destination can improve the competitiveness and attractiveness of the destination, which will ultimately lead to economic growth and prosperity for the communities that are hosting the destination (Bhalla et al., 2016).

To summarise, understanding the factors that motivate tourists and the level of satisfaction they experience in homestays is not only essential for providing exceptional experiences for guests, but it also helps to foster sustainable tourism development and provides valuable insights for destination management strategies (Jasrotia & Kour, 2022). It is possible for hosts and stakeholders in the destination to create a win-win scenario by placing an emphasis on the satisfaction of guests and tailoring offerings to meet the preferences of guests. This will allow travellers to have experiences that they will

never forget while also allowing host communities to reap the socio-economic benefits of tourism in a manner that is sustainable (Sarkar, 2022).

2 Literature Review

Macek (2012) notes the unique combination of food and host culture in homestays in Munsiyari and Sarmoli, which strengthens the local community. They also investigated how villagers' involvement in homestay programs affects their attitudes towards ecotourism, indicating the need for further development and cooperation (Bhalla *et al.*, 2016). Other authors (Malik and Bhat, 2015) propose strategies for sustainable tourism management in Kashmir, focusing on minimising environmental impacts through careful planning and management. Kala and Bagri (2018) identify barriers to local community participation in tourism development, emphasising the need for enhanced community engagement and advocacy to overcome socio-cultural apprehensions and institutional impediments. They also identify practical, socio-cultural, and institutional barriers to community tourism growth in Uttarakhand, stressing the need for stronger community engagement and improved government coordination. The role of homestay tourism in preserving local architecture and cultural heritage in Neelum Valley suggests a delicate balance between modernisation and tradition (Anwar *et al.*, 2021). The authors also explore tourist behaviours towards environmentally friendly activities, suggesting that understanding these behaviours is key to aligning tourism development with sustainable economic practices (Payal and Jangid, 2021). The role of digitalisation and technological advances in promoting culinary tourism is highlighted by Raina and Sandilyan (2021), who suggest that technology can play a significant role in diversifying and enhancing tourist experiences. Also, visitor's expectations in the Kashmir valley also extend to desires for modern amenities and services, underscoring the need for integrating technological innovations in tourism offerings (Chaudhary and Islam, 2022).

Dash (2022) points to the crucial role of homestays in maintaining local culture, emphasising the need for private sector engagement in promoting culturally sensitive tourism marketing. The author also explores the factors determining visitor experience and satisfaction in homestays, underlining their importance in preserving local culture and promoting sustainable tourism. Moreover, studies stress the need for homestay operators in the Himalayas to adopt sustainable hospitality

practices, pointing towards a gap in awareness and knowledge among local stakeholders (Jasrotia and Kour, 2022), and also emphasise the importance of eco-friendly homestays in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Sikkim, urging authorities to promote sustainable hospitality practices. Sarkar (2022) reports on sustainable tourism development in India, focusing on conserving nature and indigenous culture, with Ryshop village serving as a case study. The rural tourism area in Kashmir Valley is a means to support local communities both economically and socially, emphasising its potential to showcase rural life, culture, and tradition (Akhtar, 2023). Baloch *et al.* (2023) touch upon the intersection of tourism development with the freedom movement in Kashmir, suggesting a complex relationship between political movements and tourism initiatives. They examine the constraints hindering tourism potential in Azad Kashmir, pointing out the lack of infrastructure as a major obstacle. Also, it explores the role of women's empowerment in sustainable tourism in Kashmir Valley, discussing government practices, strategies, and policies (Parray *et al.*, 2023). Singla (2023) views tourism as a societal phenomenon with the potential to drive economic development, especially through rural tourism, which supports local communities by promoting employment and increasing productivity. Singla discusses the broader economic benefits of tourism, specifically rural tourism's capacity to increase local productivity and profitability, highlighting the interconnectedness of sustainable and rural development. Bhat *et al.* (2020) examines how locals' support for tourism in Kashmir is influenced by various factors including political trust and the health of the local economy, indicating the nuanced impacts of political and social conditions on tourism development. These authors discuss the potential of entrepreneurship in pilgrimage tourism in Jammu and Kashmir, suggesting that engaging local communities can foster economic development despite infrastructural and political challenges.

3 Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-method approach to explore the motivations behind tourists' decisions to choose homestays in the Kashmir Valley and their satisfaction levels from such stays. Combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the research aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of tourist behaviour and preferences.

3.1 Research Design

The quantitative aspect of the research is centred on the use of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and factor analysis to examine the relationships between various variables influencing tourist motivations and satisfaction. IBM AMOS Version 21 is employed for SEM, while SPSS Version 27 is used for initial data analysis, allowing for a nuanced exploration of both direct and indirect factors affecting tourist experiences.

3.2 Sample Size and Composition

A purposive sample of 250 domestic tourists was selected, utilising a combination of electronic surveys via Google Forms and physical questionnaires to ensure a broad and representative dataset. This sample size is considered adequate for achieving reliable insights into the homestay experience in the region.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The study's data collection spanned from October 2023 to February 2024, employing a dual strategy of random and stratified sampling to capture diverse tourist experiences across seasons. The survey instrument included 18 questions, featuring both Likert scale items to measure motivations and satisfaction quantitatively and open-ended questions for qualitative feedback. Additionally, interviews were conducted to complement survey data with in-depth qualitative insights into tourists' experiences and perceptions.

4 Results

The demographic profile of the surveyed population reveals a diverse range of characteristics, as given in Table 1 and shown graphically in Figure 2. In terms of age distribution, the largest portion of respondents fall within the 25-34 age bracket, comprising 24% of the total sample, followed closely by individuals aged 35-44 at 20%. The age groups of 18-24 and 45-54 each constitute 16% and 18%, respectively, while those aged 55-64 and 65 or older make up 12% and 10%, respectively. Regarding gender representation, males outnumber females, constituting 60% and 40% of the total sample, respectively.

Educational qualifications indicate a significant proportion of respondents have completed a graduate degree, accounting for 56% of the total, followed by postgraduates

Table 1: Demography Profile

Demography Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-24	40	16
25-34	60	24
35-44	50	20
45-54	45	18
55-64	30	12
65 or older	25	10
Total	250	100
Gender		
Male	150	60
Female	100	40
Total	250	100
Educational Qualification		
Diploma or Below	50	20
Graduate	140	56
Post Graduate or above	60	24
Total	250	100
Annual Income (in rupees)		
less than 5 lacs	70	28
5 to 10 lacs	100	40
more than 10 lacs	80	32
Total	250	100
How often do you travel for leisure purposes in a typical year?		
Once a year	100	40
2-3 times a year	80	32
4-6 times a year	50	20
More than 6 times a year	20	8
Total	250	100

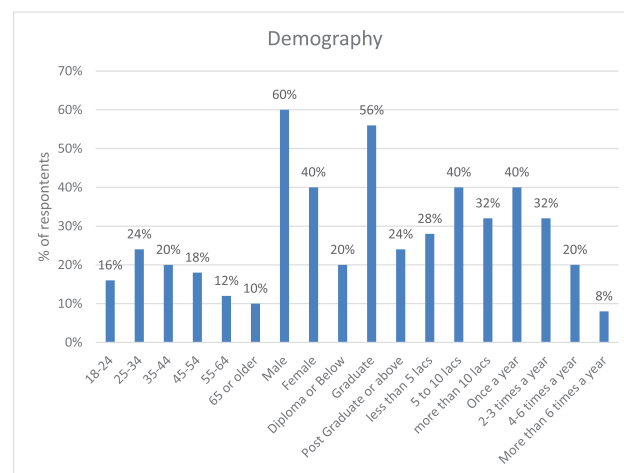


Figure 2: Demographic Profiles

or those with higher qualifications at 24%. Individuals with a diploma or below make up the remaining 20%.

Income distribution showcases that the largest segment of respondents earns an annual income ranging from 5 to 10 lacs, making up 40% of the sample, while those earning less than 5 lacs and more than 10 lacs represent 28% and 32%, respectively.

In terms of leisure travel frequency, the survey reveals that the most common pattern is travelling once a year, with 40% of respondents engaging in this level of leisure travel. Following closely, 2-3 times a year is the next most prevalent category, accounting for 32%, while 20% travel 4-6 times a year, and 8% travel more than 6 times annually. Overall, the demographic profile underscores a diverse range of characteristics within the surveyed population, including age, gender, education, income, and leisure travel habits.

4.1 Factor Analysis

Table 2 shows that at 0.83, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) surpasses the 0.6 cutoff, indicating sufficient sample size. It seems like factor analysis might be a good fit for this sample. When using 105 degrees of freedom and a significance level (Sig.) of 0.00, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yields an estimated Chi-Square of 117.186.

Table 3 shows each factor's variance explanation before extraction in the 'Initial Eigenvalues' column. A frequent criterion for picking the number of elements to maintain is that the eigenvalues must be larger than 1, and only the first six components meet this requirement. These six components, which amount to 50.162%, may explain the whole variation.

The 'Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings' show the variance explained by each factor after it has been extracted. This is typically the same as the initial eigenvalues for factors with values above 1. Again, the first six factors are listed, explaining the same 50.162% of the variance.

What we call "Communalities" are the variables that account for a certain percentage of each variable's variation. A higher value indicates that more of the variable's variance is accounted for. In this data, the communalities after extraction range from 0.336 to 0.714, indicating varying degrees of common variance explained by the retained factors.

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.83
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	117.186
	df	105
	Sig.	0.00

Table 3: Total Variance Explained

Component	Total Variance Explained						
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Communalities
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Extraction
1	1.522	10.143	10.143	1.522	10.143	10.143	0.504
2	1.349	8.992	19.135	1.349	8.992	19.135	0.516
3	1.260	8.403	27.539	1.260	8.403	27.539	0.543
4	1.198	7.985	35.524	1.198	7.985	35.524	0.714
5	1.139	7.592	43.115	1.139	7.592	43.115	0.470
6	1.057	7.047	50.162	1.057	7.047	50.162	0.383
7	0.997	6.646	56.808				0.336
8	0.991	6.605	63.413				0.575
9	0.953	6.354	69.768				0.493
10	0.874	5.825	75.593				0.515
11	0.856	5.707	81.300				0.438
12	0.789	5.259	86.559				0.411
13	0.773	5.155	91.714				0.450
14	0.648	4.318	96.031				0.679
15	0.595	3.969	100.000				0.496

4.2 Structured Equation Model

4.2.1 Latent Variables

‘Tourist Motivations,’ a latent variable, is indicated by observed variables such as ‘Authentic Experience’ (path coefficient = 0.78), ‘Personal Connection’ (0.48), ‘Environmental Sustainability’ (0.78), ‘Seeking Uniqueness’ (0.02), and ‘Value for Money’ (0.80). ‘Satisfaction with Homestays’ is another latent variable, indicated by ‘Overall Satisfaction’ (path coefficient = 0.41), ‘Comfort and Cleanliness’ (0.40), ‘Host Interaction’ (0.55), ‘Culture and Lifestyle’ (0.14), and ‘Community Contribution’ (0.14).

4.2.2 Demographic Variables

Demographic variables such as ‘Age’ (path coefficient = -0.07), ‘Gender’ (path coefficient = 0.03), ‘Nationality’ (path coefficient = 0.04), ‘Previous Visit’ (path coefficient = -0.10), and ‘First Homestay’ (path coefficient = -0.17) are modelled as influencing ‘Tourist Motivations’.

4.3 Interpretation of Path Coefficients

High positive coefficients like those for ‘Authentic Experience’ (0.78) and ‘Environmental Sustainability’ (0.78) suggest these are strong motivators for tourists choosing homestays. The ‘Seeking Uniqueness’ has a negligible coefficient (0.02), indicating it has little to no influence on ‘Tourist Motivations’ in this model. The ‘Value for Money’ has the highest positive coefficient (0.80), indicating it is a significant motivator for tourists. On the satisfaction side, ‘Host Interaction’ has a relatively high positive influence (0.55), suggesting that personal connections with hosts are vital for satisfaction.

The model indicates that while some motivations like ‘Authentic Experience’ and ‘Value for Money’ are strong predictors of satisfaction with homestays, other factors like ‘Seeking Uniqueness’ are not as influential. Additionally, the negative values associated with ‘Previous Visit’ and ‘First Homestay’ suggest that these demographic factors may slightly detract from the motivational factors driving tourists to choose homestay accommodations. The overall satisfaction with homestays is positively influenced by tourist motivations, especially the desire for

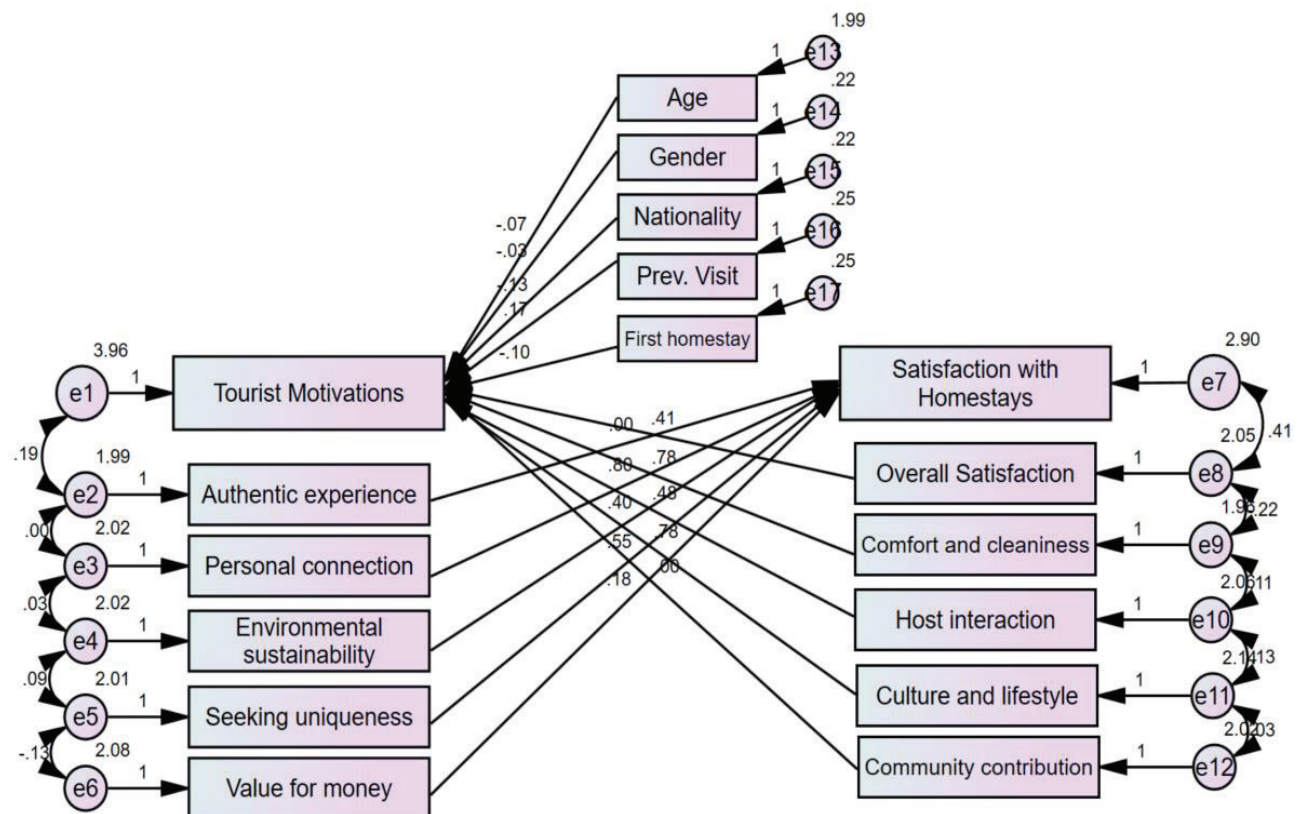


Figure 3: Structured Equation Model

an authentic experience and value for money, suggesting that these are key areas for homestay providers to focus on to enhance guest satisfaction.

4.4 Varimax Matrix

Table 4 and Figure 4 explain that the first component (1) has strong positive loadings on the first variable (.686) and moderate positive loadings on the second (.345) and third variables (.446), suggesting that this factor is most strongly associated with these variables.

The second component (2) has strong positive loadings on the sixth variable (.594) and moderate negative loadings on the second variable (-.476), indicating that this factor is primarily related to these variables but in opposite directions.

The third component (3) shows strong positive loadings on the third variable (.594) and moderate positive loadings on the fifth variable (.506), suggesting that this factor captures the variance related to these variables.

Table 4: Component Transformation Matrix

Component Transformation Matrix						
Component	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	.686	.584	-.274	-.215	-.226	.122
2	.345	-.476	-.560	.565	.033	.141
3	.446	-.254	.594	-.048	.310	.534
4	.263	.074	-.043	-.040	.763	-.583
5	.252	.094	.506	.563	-.385	-.454
6	-.280	.594	.000	.560	.348	.366

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

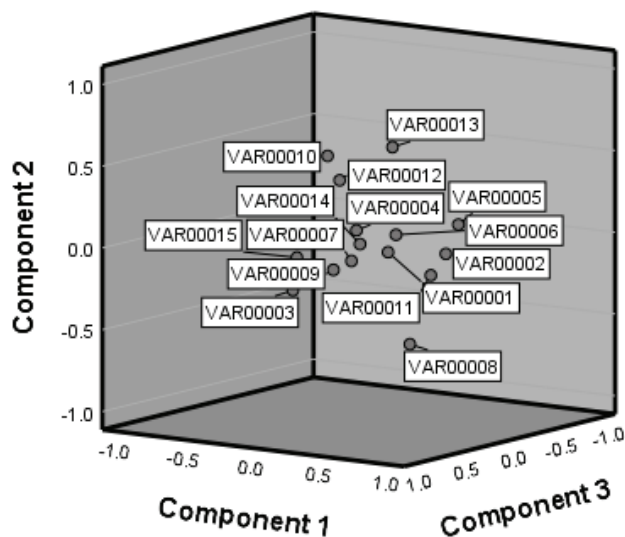


Figure 4: Three-dimensional scatter plot of variables

The fourth component (4) has strong positive loadings on the second variable (.565) and the fifth variable (.563), indicating a significant association with these variables.

The fifth component (5) has very strong positive loadings on the fourth variable (.763), meaning this factor is most strongly associated with this variable.

The sixth component (6) has moderate positive loadings across the third (.534), fifth (.366), and sixth variables (.366), showing a more diffused pattern of associations.

5 Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Results

The findings from this study offer a compelling look into the motivations and satisfaction levels of tourists staying in homestays across the Kashmir Valley, a region noted for its unique cultural and natural offerings. Our analysis, grounded in Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and factor analysis, underscores cultural immersion, personalised experiences, and authentic local interactions as primary motivators for tourists, aligning with Dash's (2022) emphasis on the importance of immersive experiences in the tourism and hospitality industry. Furthermore, our study reveals that satisfaction levels are significantly influenced by the quality of interaction with hosts, the comfort of accommodation, and the opportunity to experience the local way of life, resonating with Jasrotia and Kour's (2022) findings on the significance of eco-friendly hospitality and sustainable practices in enhancing tourist experiences.

Moreover, the high coefficients for 'Authentic Experience' (0.78) and 'Value for Money' (0.80) as motivations reflect Payal and Jangid's (2021) discussion on tourist behaviour towards environmentally sustainable tourism activities, suggesting that tourists value experiences that are not only authentic but also offer good value. These insights extend the work of Singla (2023), who conducted a SWOT analysis on homestays in Kashmir by providing empirical evidence on the specific aspects that contribute to tourist satisfaction.

The existing tourist offer in the Kashmir Valley is deeply rooted in its natural beauty and cultural richness, offering a variety of attractions and accommodations to meet the diverse needs and preferences of travellers from around the world. The region is celebrated for its stunning landscapes, which include tranquil lakes, verdant

valleys, majestic mountains, and rich cultural heritage. This unique combination of natural and cultural attractions makes Kashmir a compelling destination for tourists seeking authentic and immersive experiences.

Homestays have emerged as a popular accommodation option, providing guests with personalised experiences that traditional hotels often lack. These accommodations allow travellers to live with local families, share meals and stories, and participate in daily life, thus fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the local culture. The motivations behind tourists opting for homestays in Kashmir include a desire for cultural immersion, authentic local interactions, and personalised experiences, with satisfaction levels significantly influenced by the quality of interaction with hosts, the comfort of the accommodation, and the ability to experience the local way of life.

The main demand markets for tourism in the region include domestic travellers and international tourists attracted by Kashmir's natural beauty and cultural offerings. The demographic profile of tourists opting for homestays is diverse, with a significant proportion of respondents having completed a graduate degree and falling within the 25-34 age bracket. Income distribution and travel frequency vary, indicating a wide range of economic backgrounds and travel preferences among tourists visiting the Kashmir Valley.

The findings from the study highlight the importance of enhancing the homestay experience in Kashmir by focusing on cultural authenticity, sustainable practices, and quality guest interactions. This approach can significantly enhance tourist satisfaction and contribute to the sustainable development of the region's tourism sector. Policymakers and tourism developers are encouraged to support homestays that emphasise these elements, while marketing professionals should tailor campaigns to highlight the unique experiences offered by homestays, targeting specific demographic segments based on their motivations and preferences.

5.2 Implications

Some future implications of this research include:

- **Enhancing Cultural Immersion Experiences:** The tourism sector should focus on promoting and developing homestays that offer rich cultural immersion experiences. This could involve training programs for hosts to help them better share their culture, traditions, and stories with guests.
- **Marketing and Product Development:** Given the motivations identified, tourism marketers and product

developers should tailor their offerings to highlight the unique, authentic experiences available through homestays. This includes creating targeted marketing campaigns that appeal to the desire for cultural immersion and personalised experiences.

- **Sustainability and Community Engagement:** The preference for homestays also signals a shift towards more sustainable and responsible travel behaviours. Tourism developers should consider how to support sustainable practices within homestays and engage local communities in tourism development, ensuring that they benefit economically and socially.
- **Policy Implications:** Policymakers should recognise the growing interest in homestay tourism and consider regulations and policies that support its development. These could include financial incentives for homestay operators, investments in infrastructure to support rural tourism, and initiatives to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could explore the long-term impacts of homestay tourism on local communities, considering both economic benefits and potential cultural and environmental challenges. Additionally, studying the role of digital platforms in influencing tourists' decision-making processes could offer insights into how technology is shaping the future of homestay tourism.

5.4 Limitations

The research's shortcomings include a narrow geographic emphasis on the Kashmir Valley, which might make the results less applicable to areas with distinct cultural and environmental contexts, while it is still an interesting study overall. There is a risk of response bias when people use self-reports to gauge their level of motivation and happiness. To overcome these constraints, future studies might use a more comprehensive geographic scope and combine qualitative and quantitative methodologies to strengthen the results.

6 Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the motivations and satisfaction levels of tourists opting for homestays in the

culturally and ecologically sensitive region of Kashmir Valley. The study utilised Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and factor analysis to analyse primary data collected through surveys and interviews. Key findings include:

Motivations: Cultural immersion, personalised experiences, and the desire for authentic local interactions emerged as primary motivations for tourists choosing homestays. This aligns with existing literature emphasising the growing trend towards immersive and authentic travel experiences.

Satisfaction: Tourist satisfaction with homestays was significantly influenced by the quality of interaction with hosts, the comfort of the accommodation, and the ability to experience the local way of life. These findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of tourist behaviour in the context of homestays, highlighting the importance of host-guest interaction and the authenticity of the experience.

Demographic Influences: Demographic variables such as age, gender, nationality, previous visits, and first-time homestay experiences were found to have varying effects on motivations and satisfaction, suggesting nuanced marketing and operational strategies for different tourist segments.

6.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations for stakeholders are proposed. For Homestay Owners, it emphasised cultural immersion and personalised experiences in marketing strategies. Invest in training for hosts to enhance guest interactions and focus on maintaining high standards of comfort and cleanliness. Policymakers and Tourism Developers can improve and promote policies that support the sustainability of homestays, including infrastructure improvements and environmental conservation efforts. Encourage local community engagement in tourism development to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage. Marketing Professionals can tailor marketing campaigns to highlight the unique experiences offered by homestays in Kashmir Valley, targeting specific demographic segments based on their motivations and preferences.

6.2 Future Research

While the findings of this study are encouraging, further investigation into the environmental and social effects of homestay tourism in the long run is needed. Additionally,

investigating the role of digital marketing and online reviews in influencing tourist decisions could further enrich the understanding of homestay tourism dynamics. Expanding the geographical scope of the study could also offer comparative insights into homestay tourism in different cultural and ecological contexts.

Bionotes

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