

Challenges of Homestays in Meghalaya: A Case Study

Dr. Shimti Kharmawphlang,

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya

Abstract—Meghalaya, often referred to as the "Scotland of the East," is a renowned tourist destination in Northeast India, celebrated for its unique culture, traditions, and breathtaking landscapes. Sohra (Cherrapunjee), located in the East Khasi Hills district, is famous for its high rainfall and scenic beauty. Within this region, Tyrna and Nongriat Elaka are two adjoining areas that attract tourists with their trekking trails, living root bridges, caves, and waterfalls. This study investigates the challenges faced by homestay owners in these areas, employing a case study methodology and semi-structured interviews with 12 homestay owners. The key challenges identified include financial constraints, infrastructure issues like power and internet connectivity, lack of skilled personnel, and limited government support. Despite these hurdles, homestays in the region demonstrate financial sustainability and contribute to local economies by offering authentic cultural experiences. The findings provide valuable insights for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and tourism authorities to address these challenges and unlock the potential for growth in the homestay sector. This study highlights the need for improved infrastructure, marketing strategies, and government support to ensure the sustainability and success of homestays in Tyrna and Nongriat Elaka.

Index Terms—Homestay, Meghalaya, Sohra, Tourism, Leisure, Living Root Bridge.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years homestays have gained popularity and have been one of the important elements of the hospitality sector. Homestay serve as an alternative to traditional hotels, resorts, inns, and lodges. Homestay offer a more submerging cultural experience and a chance for the visitors to establish a genuine connection with the local communities. Hence, it has become a preferred choice for many tourists who seek to deep understanding of the places they visit. According to Cognitive Market Research, a global homestay market report in 2024, the homestay market stood at \$19581.2 million in 2024. However, the rise

of experiential travel and online transformation is expected to boost sales to \$31856.8 million by 2031 with a Compound Annual Growth Rate of 7.20% from 2024-2031. The same market report highlights Asia Pacific countries share 23% of total global revenue and are the fastest growing regions in the homestay market for numerous reasons.

A homestay program is a type of hospitality accommodation whereby a guest or visitor rents a room and stays with the host family. In this way, the guests involve themselves with the day-to-day activities of the locals and get to experience the cultures and lifestyles of the natives. In return, this activity helps the host family to generate extra income and interact with new people. Homestays are particularly popular in rural areas where other types of accommodations, such as hotels, are unavailable. This presents an advantage to the locals to provide their homes for homestay purposes. While homestays have gained popularity for their authenticity and cultural immersion, however, from another point of view, the operators of these face a lot of challenges in operating and managing their accommodation. From financial challenges when starting the business to operational challenges when the business is operating, homestay operators must overcome these hurdles to sustain their businesses. This study explores the various key segments of challenges faced by homestay operators and the implications for the success and sustainability of this sector.

Researchers have addressed various key challenges encountered by different types of hospitality accommodations in their respective studies (Wijesundara et al., 2016; Bhutio et al., 2022). The challenges addressed by these authors are mainly regarding the lack of knowledge in understanding the true meaning of homestay, the lack of personnel in homestay operation, the lack of interest of the local community to exploit this opportunity, and the lack of government support. However, these investigations tend to narrow their focus to specific challenges, such

as financial constraints, human resource issues, sales and marketing problems, or combinations thereof. A significant gap exists in exploring broader challenges faced by homestays. Issues like financial factors, human resource management, sales, and marketing segments, and so on need to be addressed. Furthermore, research has been conducted in specific geographical regions, hence the need for examination and analysis of the challenges encountered by homestays in the present selected area arises.

Meghalaya is one of the preferred tourism destinations in India. Its breathtaking landscapes, vibrant culture, and unique biodiversity attract visitors. With its great potential in the tourism industry due to its landscape, it will attract lots of tourists not only from India but even from other countries of the world. Hence, there is a great scope for taking the initiative to develop the hospitality industry in the region and to develop the region to its potential. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for entrepreneurs on coping with the challenges and difficulties that arise in the industry. This will help the youths, especially the locals, make use of the opportunity already available to them by knowing beforehand what challenges they must encounter and the strategies to solve them. This will apply not only to the people of the region but also to others who are interested in entering the tourism and hospitality industry. There is a lot of scope for tourism and hospitality in the selected region but there is less progression and development in the area, this study will help to find out what hinders such kind of progression or what comes in the way and acts as challenges and difficulties in the development of such activities. This will not only apply to the people of the region but also to others who have an interest in entering the tourism and hospitality industry.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of homestays in India began to formalise in the early 2000s as a part of efforts to promote eco-tourism and cultural tourism, particularly in states like Kerala and Himachal Pradesh (Morrison & Buhalis, 2023). In an international scenario, the Malaysian Homestay program has been studied for its impact on community development and the challenges faced by the stakeholders. The Malaysian homestay program boosts local incomes and operator numbers but relies too much on homestay income alone. Challenges

include demographic imbalances, community passivity, leadership issues, and misconceptions. Key weaknesses are poor administration, incomplete infrastructure, insufficient investment, and limited networking. Threats involve competition from alternative accommodations and fraud. Overall, the program has benefits but faces challenges affecting its sustainability (Kamisan Pusiran & Xiao, 2013).

Churyen et al., (2015) examined the effects of homestay tourism in Mae Kampong, rural Thailand. Interviews with 30 residents revealed that tourism provides economic benefits, but it also leads to challenges. Increased reliance on tourism often results in a loss of authenticity and worsens social inequalities, favouring wealthier residents. Outside competition from private businesses adds to the pressure. However, younger generations, with different aspirations, are uncertain about continuing traditional tourism. Despite these issues, communities adapt to meet tourist demand for authentic rural experiences.

A study by Wijesundara et al., (2016), identifies key obstacles, including misconceptions about homestays, low youth participation, weak community engagement, poor leadership, lack of management systems, limited marketing, and communication barriers. Government-related challenges include shifting community attitudes, political influences, and slow implementation in Sri Lanka. Despite these issues, the study emphasized homestay tourism's potential, calling for strategic planning, effective management, and active government involvement for success. Similarly, Lichauco (2022), presents a focused examination of sustainable resort-related tourism growth in the Philippines, aiming to identify both challenges and opportunities. Employing thematic analysis of data collected from resort managers, operators, and employees, the study applies systems theory to understand the interconnected economic, social, and environmental dynamics of resort development. Findings reveal that while resorts demonstrate commercial viability, they face significant sustainability issues exacerbated by historical practices and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sheresheva & Kopiski, (2016) analyzed the Russian hospitality and tourism market, highlighting key trends, challenges, and growth opportunities. They identified major obstacles, such as poor infrastructure,

inadequate accommodation, and underdeveloped attractions and transportation. The study pointed to potential growth areas like excursion, educational, event, and entertainment tourism. Success factors included improving natural and cultural environments, offering diverse tourist activities, and enhancing visitor experiences with customized services.

Jayara, (2017) examined the opportunities and challenges of homestay tourism in Uttarakhand revealing key benefits like economic growth for local youth, cultural exchange, skill development, poverty reduction, and regional development. However, key challenges include poor infrastructure, a lack of skilled workers, limited awareness of government policies, weak marketing, poor coordination among stakeholders, and insufficient conservation of natural and cultural resources.

Mohammad & Ebrahim, (2022) in their study on micro-entrepreneurship in the hospitality industry, focusing on its motivations, challenges, and success factors highlight obstacles like limited finances, skill shortages, and lack of technological support. Despite these challenges, benefits such as income generation were identified. Success was tied to innovation and strong entrepreneurial skills.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the status of homestays in Tyrna and Nongriat Elaka of Meghalaya.
2. To find out the challenges faced by Homestays in Tyrna and Nongriat Elaka Meghalaya.

IV. DESCRIPTION OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

Meghalaya is a beautiful state in Northeast India with a total geographical area of 22429 sq. km, a population of approximately 2.97 million, known for its natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. The cleanest village Mawlynnong, and the wettest place on earth, Mawsynram is in the state of Meghalaya. Meghalaya is home to three main tribes: Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo, each with its language, customs, and traditions. The Khasi and Jaintia people follow a matrilineal system, where lineage and inheritance are traced through women. Meghalaya has a temperate climate, with pleasant summers and heavy monsoons. The state is a growing tourism hub, offering eco-tourism experiences, adventure sports like trekking, and rich immersion for domestic and foreign visitors.

The steady growth in tourist arrivals in Meghalaya from 2012 to 2019, peaking at over 1.27 million visitors in 2019, highlights a growing demand for accommodation in the region. With both domestic and foreign tourists showing increasing interest, the availability of suitable lodging options such as hotels, homestays, and resorts is crucial to cater to their diverse preferences. The significant rise in tourist numbers suggests that infrastructure development needs to keep pace, particularly in the hospitality sector. Even though tourism took a sharp downturn in 2020 due to the pandemic, the gradual recovery in 2021 and sharp growth in 2022 and 2023, signals that the demand for accommodation is rebound. Investing in various lodging options, such as homestays for more personalised experiences will ensure that the region can adequately meet the needs of its growing number of visitors in the years ahead.

Table 1: Growth of Tourist inflow in Meghalaya

Year	No. of Tourists		Total
	Domestic	Foreign	
2012	680254	5313	685567
2013	691269	6773	698042
2014	716469	8664	725133
2015	751165	8027	759192
2016	830887	8476	839363
2017	990856	12051	1002907
2018	1198340	18114	1216454
2019	1245633	25813	1271446
2020	24734	2311	27045

2021	154409	411	154820
2022	1017055	7809	1024864
2023	1402624	20023	1422647

Source: NEDfi Databank and Directorate of Tourism Meghalaya

V. METHODOLOGY

V.(i) Research Instruments

This study adopted a qualitative approach known as a case study to gather rich, detailed information to achieve its objectives. Semi-structured interviews were used as a tool for collecting primary data. Primary sources of information were collected from homestay owners. The interview consisted of nine main parts. The first section aimed to collect participants' personal information such as name of homestay, name of homestay owner, age, gender, educational background, location, and year of homestay establishment. The second section includes motivational factors for starting a homestay venture. The third section examined the financial details, like capital investment, source of finance, and total income generated. The fourth section aimed to understand the supporters of homestay ventures, present employees, and further training needs for employees. The fifth section examined the infrastructure and facilities of the homestay, the size of rooms, the number of rooms, and food choices. The sixth section explored the tourist arrival details, peak season, duration of stay, and tourist details of national or international places. The seventh section investigated guest satisfaction and their feedback. The eighth section consists of the marketing efforts of homestay owners to get tourists. And, the last section consists of regulatory and compliance issues homestay owners face.

V. (ii) Participants and Procedures

The study population includes all the homestays of Tryna and Nongriat Elaka of Sohra, Meghalaya famous for its breathtaking landscapes. These two Elakas are adjoining to each other. The Tyna and Nongriat Elaka are known for trekking and adventures. The longest living root, caves, natural swimming pools, rainbow fall, bird watching, and the famous double-decker living root bridge which is unique and popular worldwide are some of the main spots in the area attracting a lot of tourists and adventurers. The study undertook a census survey as the researcher covered all the homestays available near these two Elakas leaving no homestay behind. There are 12 homestays located near these spots. Thus, this study explored all 12 homestays to understand the present scenario of homestays. Apart from primary data, this study used secondary data collected from different sources like books, journals, magazines, etc. The main respondents of this were the owners of 12 homestays. So, the whole population is taken as a sample which means that the sample size is 100%.

VI. RESULTS

VI.(i) PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

This section presents the profile of the homestay owners involved in this study. As shown in Table 2, males (n=11) have more dominance in homestay ventures than females (n=1) in the study area.

Table:2 Profile of the study participants(n=12)

Sl. No	Name of Homestay	Owner's Name	Gender	Age	YOE	Destinations Nearby Homestay
1	Three Brothers Homestay	Leonard Syiemlieh	M	34	2023	Double Decker Living Root Bridge, Maswamai Cave
2	Arnes Wooden Hut Homestay	Jerelius Malngiang	M	34	2018	Double Decker Living Root Bridge, Maswamai Cave
3	Santina Homestay	Santina Wahlang	F	49	2017	Double Decker Living Root Bridge, Maswamai Cave
4	Serene Homestay	Biron Nongbri	M	50	2010	Double Decker Living Root Bridge, Maswamai Cave

5	Shipara Homestay	Constantine Ryngnga	M	56	2016	Double Decker Living Root Bridge, Maswamai Cave
6	Mei Pa Homestay	Wanplielad Thabah	M	-	-	Double Decker Living Root Bridge, Maswamai Cave
7	Greenland Homestay	Lumlang Syiemlieh	M	-	2016	Double Decker Living Root Bridge, Maswamai Cave
8	Riverside Homestay	Lumlang Syiemlieh	M	34	2023	Double Decker Living Root Bridge
9	Delight Homestay	Arnold Sohkhet	M	-	2017	Double Decker Living Root Bridge, Maswamai Cave
10	Rympei ling Homestay	Linis Nongbri	M	47	2018	Double Decker Living Root Bridge, Maswamai Cave
11	Scenic Homestay	Wanplielad Thabah	M	30	2024	Nongriat Trekking
12	WRBM Tyrno Homestay	Wesly Majaw	M	36	-	Nongriat Trekking

M: Male, F: Female, YOE: Year of Establishment

VI. (ii) Case Study Description and Findings

Case Study 1: Three Brothers Homestay

Three Brothers Homestay is in the Nongthymmai Village of Tyrna Elaka, near a popular tourist destination, the double-decker living root bridge. Established in the year 2023 with a motive to offer a blend of comfort, cultural immersion, and serene surroundings to travellers. The homestay is owned by Mr. Leonard Syiemlieh, a 34-year-old.

Leonard invested an amount of over ₹10 lakhs from his savings to establish and maintain the current setup of the homestay. On being asked about meeting financial expectations, considering the seasonal fluctuation in tourism Leonard stated,

“There are ups and downs. In the off-season, I make between ₹5000 to ₹10,000 a month, but during peak season, the income jumps to about ₹20,000 to ₹50,000. It is not easy, but it is rewarding.”

This financial commitment highlights Leonard's dedication to providing quality service and memorable experiences for his guests. The homestay possesses comfortable accommodations designed to provide a home away from home. It has only two double bedrooms with an affordable price range of ₹1500 per room for one night. The rooms are spacious and are approximately 120 square feet each. On being asked how he ensures guest satisfaction with such a limited setup. He replied,

“I focus on quality over quantity. Each room is spacious and offers essential amenities like western

toilets, wash basins, and comfortable bedding. I also personally engage with guests, serving food based on preferences, and constantly seek their feedback to improve the experience.”

While guests typically appreciate the ambience of the homestay and hospitality service, feedback regarding internet connectivity stands out as an area for improvement. However, the homestay enjoys repeat visits from satisfied guests, reflecting its positive reputation and long-lasting appeal.

In terms of marketing, Leonard relies on his websites to attract guests interested in ecotourism and cultural experiences. Word-of-mouth is also another effort made to attract visitors. However, he also faces challenges typical of rural accommodations, such as competition from nearby establishments like other homestays and resorts available within the area. Despite these challenges, Leonard remains focused on enhancing his service offerings and maintaining high standards to stand out in the local tourism landscape. He recognizes the importance of ongoing training and support from tourism authorities to continue improving service quality and guest experiences.

Case Study 2: Arnes Wooden Hut Homestay

Arnes Wooden Hut Homestay is in Nongriat village, near the double-decker living root bridge. It is owned by Mr Jerelius Malngiang, a 34-year-old who is a resident of the area. It was established in 2018 to offer a serene retreat for tourists seeking a blend of nature and cultural enrichment. Love for socialising and

sharing the local culture is the main motivation which made Mr. Malngiang start his homestay business. Despite his educational background being limited to high school, his entrepreneurial enthusiasm and passion for hospitality drove him to create a welcoming environment for guests. Mr Malngiang invested between over 5 lakhs in the current setup of the homestay. On being asked what challenges he faced by making these investments. He stated, *“My biggest challenge was ensuring that the rooms had all the necessities despite the limited budget. I wanted to make sure that guest feels comfortable while staying here.”*

His homestay has 3 double bedrooms and 1 family room. These rooms come at an affordable price of ₹800 per night for doubles and ₹3600 per night for a family room. Overall, it helps him generate a monthly income ranging from ₹50000 to ₹80000 during the peak season, while during off seasons it yields a monthly income ranging from ₹10000 to ₹20000. Mr. Malngiang also serves tradition local food.

Mr. Malngiang experiences peak tourist seasons from November-December and continues till the new season of January-March. The average duration of guests during the season are mostly less than 3 days. Guest feedback and suggestions are welcomed frankly by Mr. Malngiang which helps him improve the service. However, the most common feedback from guests is frequent electricity failures in the area. Despite the challenges and complaints, Arnes Wooden Hut Homestay enjoys repeat visitors with some guests returning thrice, showing its appeal and hospitality. Malngiang's marketing efforts primarily rely on his websites and word-of-mouth from people. He also addresses certain challenges in marketing and advertisement complaining about the high amount they must pay for websites as well as for advertisement. Mr Malngiang also shows his disappointment regarding the behaviour of the government and the tourism department towards tourism in the region. Lack of schemes to improve their service and business and lack of support are other challenges for the owner.

Case Study 3: Santina Homestay

Santina Homestay is in Nongriat Village situated near the double-decker living root bridge. It was established in the year 2017 and owned and operated by a local woman entrepreneur, Mrs. Santina Wahlang. Mrs Wahlang is a 49-year-old woman having just a middle

school education, started her homestay business out of her love for socialising and sharing her cultural heritage with visitors. Her journey as an entrepreneur began with her limited investment sourced from her savings, totalling less than ₹2 lakhs. On being asked about how things go in the early stage of establishment and the challenges she faces right now, she replied;

“It was not easy in the beginning. But within 1 to 2 years, I reached the break-even point. Financially, it was a struggle, but my guest kept returning, which helped me a lot. Now, my monthly income ranges between ₹20,000 and ₹50,000, both in peak and off-seasons. I also faced issues with the limited facilities, like not having a western toilet, but the basic amenities were there. However, the feedback given by the tourists is mostly regarding electric failures, which I would love to improve, but without the government’s support, it is difficult.”

Santina Homestay features 2 rooms, a single and a double bedroom having an area of approximately 70 square feet each. Mrs Wahlang clarified that most guests, predominantly domestic tourists, visit during the peak season from January-March, staying for less than 3 days. Despite all the hurdles Santina Homestay enjoys repeat visits from guests, demonstrating satisfactory service delivery.

On being asked about government support in her business. Mrs Wahlang replied,

“The tourism department has helped me a little. Once, they provided me with a solar refrigerator at no cost, not even for transportation. I appreciate that small effort, but overall, I feel there’s a lot more they could do, like offering grants for better infrastructure. It would make a big difference to the people here.”

“I think more schemes and grants would be very helpful, not just for me but for the whole region. Tourism here has so much potential, but we need better facilities and more support to grow. If we improve our services, we can attract more visitors” she added.

However, Mrs Wahlang primarily relies on word-of-mouth, indicating a dependency on positive guest experiences to attract new visitors.

Case Study 4: Serene Homestay

Serene Homestay is nestled in a remote area near a popular tourist spot, the double-decker living root bridge. It is owned and operated by Biron Nongbri, a 50-year-old entrepreneur. Mr Biron started his homestay business in 2010. Serene Homestay is one of

the oldest homestays in the area. Biron's decision to start Serene Homestay was driven by social commitment, aiming to offer tourists an authentic experience in a serene environment. The homestay caters primarily to cultural and eco-tourists, with guests often seeking immersion in local traditions and nature. Mr. Biron started his homestay with 5 to 10 lakh rupees. This start-up capital was sourced from his savings. On being asked about his monthly income from the homestay. He replied,

“Serene Homestay is doing quite well during peak seasons, bringing in ₹80,000 to ₹1,00,000 each month. But during the off-season, we earn around ₹5,000 to ₹10,000. It took me four years to recover that initial investment.”

Payment methods at Serene Homestay are flexible, accommodating both cash and online transfers for guests' convenience. The business receives significant support from tour operators and employs staff beyond immediate family members to manage day-to-day operations. However, the staff employed by Mr. Biron are not well trained and therefore he seeks that additional training from the concerned authorities could enhance and improve their way of delivering service and business operations. Moreover, Mr Biron identifies marketing as an area where additional training could help him enhance his business.

Serene Homestay offers various room categories including single, double, and family rooms. The rooms are of different sizes. There are two single bedrooms with an area of approximately 56 square feet each and a price of ₹600 per night, four double bedrooms with an area of roughly 120 square feet and a price of ₹1200 per night. Two family rooms also are available in the homestay with an area of 180 square feet each, one room consisting of 4 beds each that comes with a price of ₹2500 per night. The busiest seasons with the most tourists visiting the homestay are typically from November to December. Most of the tourists visited are domestic tourists and the average duration of stay of guests is less than 3 days. He was asked to address the challenges he faced and the strategies used to solve them.

“The main challenges we face are electric failures, especially during monsoon, and the high cost of sustainable solutions like solar power. Staff training is also difficult due to limited resources in the area. We do have growing competition from newer homestays, but we focus on offering unique, nature-connected

experiences. Marketing is another area we need to improve, particularly online, and maintaining the property in a remote location can be challenging. Despite these issues, we adapt and keep improving each year” Biron replied.

Case Study 5: Shipara Homestay

Shipara Homestay is situated in Nongriat Village. It is located near the tourist spot like other homestays in the area. It was established in the year 2016 and owned and operated by Constantine Ryngnga, a 56-year-old self-employed individual who is also a resident of the area. Mr. Ryngnga did not get any proper education but only managed to get middle school education. However, this does not stop him from taking initiative to start his own business. His passion and love for socializing was the main factor that drove him to homestay business with an aim to provide guests with an authentic local experience. Mr. Ryngnga started his business with an initial investment exceeding ₹10 lakhs funded entirely from his own personal savings. His expenses were recovered within few years as the business achieved its break even within 3 to 4 years of operation. Shipara Homestay can generate a monthly income ranging from ₹20000 to ₹50000 during the peak season while during peak season it can generate revenue ranging from ₹5000 to ₹10000 only. The homestay offers different of different categories. Two single bedrooms are available with an area of 80 square feet each which comes with a price of ₹500 per night. Two double bedrooms are also available with a space of 80 square feet per room for ₹1000 per night. There is also one dormitory room in the homestay consisting of 4 bedrooms with an area of approximately 250 square feet at a price of ₹500 per bed for one night. All these rooms are equipped with basic facilities like bathrooms, western toilets, showers, mirrors, etc. Traditional meals are served to the guests catering to the preferences of guests seeking an authentic culinary experience. The busiest season according to the owner is generally from November to December and continues till January to March. The guests visiting the homestay are mostly domestic tourists, staying for durations ranging from 3 to 10 days. Feedback from visitors indicates a high satisfaction level, with repeat guests visiting the homestay up to twice and even three times. When it comes to support, Mr. Ryngnga stated that there has been some support from the tourism department. On

being asked about what kind of support. Mr. Ryngnga replied,

“There hasn’t been much direct support for improving the business itself. However, my wife did receive free training from the tourism department of Meghalaya. Where she learned about housekeeping and preparing local dishes for guests. Unfortunately, we haven’t received any grants or schemes that could help us improve our facilities or promote our homestay more widely.”

Speaking about facilities from the concerned authorities Mr. Ryngnga stated bad roads as the problem as well as the lack of streetlights in the area. Shipara Homestay primarily relies on word-of-mouth marketing, leveraging positive guest experiences to attract new visitors. When asked about other marketing techniques Mr. Ryngnga stated that he had tried earlier marketing his homestay on websites but then the amount to be invested initially and periodically was a bit expensive. Hence, he decides to stick to Word-of-Mouth publicity. He also acknowledges the importance of further training in marketing to expand the homestay's reach and sustain growth.

Case Study 6: Mei Pa Homestay

Mei Pa Homestay is nestled in the serene hills near a popular tourist spot. This cosy retreat was lovingly owned and run by Mr. Wanplielad Thabah, who by day worked as an assistant teacher. However, his true passion lay in hospitality and meeting new people. Mei Pa homestay is in the hilly area on the trekking path leading to Nongriat. The trekking path to Nongriat, a village where the double-decker living root bridge lies, is approximately 3 kilometres from the parking where the trek starts. So, Mei Pa Homestay stood on the way to the destination around 1 kilometre from the starting point. It is situated in a secluded area surrounded by nature’s greenery and valley. The ambience around the homestay is beautiful full of different types of plants and flowers. On being asked about how he began this venture and the challenges he faced initially. He replied,

“I started Mei Pa Homestay out of my savings, which was quite challenging at first. The main hurdle was capital because I did not have any external funding. I have spent around ₹5 to ₹10 lakhs of my savings. It was a big risk, but I had faith that hospitality, especially in a place as beautiful as ours, would work out.”

The homestay business can generate a monthly income ranging from ₹20000 to ₹50000 during the peak season and an amount ranging from ₹5000 to ₹10000 during off-seasons, stated Mr Tabah. Mei Pa Homestay has four charming rooms – two single bedrooms and two double bedrooms. The single bedrooms have an area of approximately 50 square feet each priced at 1000 per night. The double bedrooms have the same area as the single bedrooms but are priced differently at ₹2000 per night. The rooms are equipped with basic facilities like bathrooms, toilets, wash basins, mirrors, etc. The homestay also provides food services to the guests. However, the food offered is only a traditional type of food. The Homestay experiences the peak season when tourists mostly visit the place are typically from January to March. Most of the tourists are domestic tourists and their average duration of stay is less than three days. Running Mei Pa Homestay was not without its challenges. On being asked about the marketing challenges of his homestay, Tabah replied,

“Yes, marketing is a big challenge. In the beginning, we tried advertising on travel websites, but it became too costly, so we had to stop. Now, we mostly rely on word-of-mouth from satisfied guests. It is effective, but not as fast as online marketing could be. Another challenge we face is the electric failures, which can affect the guest experience.”

Additionally, he also stated that there is a lack of government support. He eagerly awaited periodic training sessions from the Department of Tourism to enhance service quality and ensure guest satisfaction. However, despite all the challenges faced there had not been any initiative from the concerned authorities to investigate the matter and assist the homestays in the region. Lack of schemes as well as training on the subject are the main challenges of the homestays in the region. Mr. Thabah believed that more robust government support, particularly in infrastructure development and training for homestay operators, would greatly benefit small businesses like his in the competitive hospitality industry.

Case Study 7 & 8: Greenland Homestay and Riverside Homestay

Greenland Homestay is nestled amidst the serene hill station at the starting point of one of the most popular trekking spots for tourists. Riverside Homestay is situated in Nongthymmai Village on the way to the double-decker living root bridge. It lies beside the

river known as Simtung River. That is why it was named as Riverside Homestay.

It is owned and operated by Lumlang Syiemlieh, a resident of the region. He is a graduate and decided to discontinue his further studies as he saw the opportunity of lacking homestay in the area. Mr Syiemlieh started his Greenland homestay business in 2016 and Riverside homestay in 2023 as an extension of the previous homestay with a passion for meeting people. His dream is to create a place where travellers can experience the beauty of nature and the warmth of local hospitality. With graduation in hand fuelled by personal savings ranging between ₹5 to ₹10 Lakhs, he invested in his business.

Greenland Homestay started small, with a modest setup featuring various room categories tailored to accommodate different guest preferences. The homestay features three single-bed rooms, each measuring 10 x 12 ft and priced at ₹1000, three double-bedrooms sized 12 x 16 ft with a tariff of ₹1500, and a spacious family room spanning 16 x 16 ft available at ₹2000 per night. On the other hand, Riverside Homestay offers only two rooms- One single bedroom and one double bedroom, 50 square feet and comes at a price of ₹1000, and approximately 100 square feet priced at ₹2000 per night respectively.

Despite its modest size, Greenland and Riverside Homestay ensures comfort with basic amenities such as daily linen change, and western-style toilets with showers, basins, and mirrors. To enrich the cultural experience, traditional local cuisine is served, offering guests a taste of original flavours. On being asked about challenges in homestay operations. Mr Syiemlieh replied,

“Yes, there have been challenges. Power failures are a recurring issue, which is frustrating for both guests and us. There is also limited government support in terms of infrastructure and marketing. We need better roads and street lighting. I have been hoping for more support from tourism department, especially in marketing and training.”

Financially, the journey was challenging yet rewarding. Greenland Homestay achieved its Break Even Point (BEP) within 3-4 years and from thereon it demonstrated steady revenue growth. During peak seasons, typically from April to June, the homestay sees monthly earnings ranging from ₹20,000 to ₹50,000, while off-peak months yield between ₹5,000 to ₹10,000. The guest profile predominantly consists

of domestic tourists seeking short-term accommodations for leisure trips. Feedback from visitors is actively sought, reflecting a commitment to continuous improvement. In conclusion, Greenland Homestay embodies the success of a venture driven by personal passion and dedication to hospitality. Syiemlieh's journey is a testament to perseverance and a deep-rooted desire to create memorable experiences for guests. Moving forward, formal business planning workshops and intensified marketing efforts are recommended to further solidify the homestay's position as a preferred accommodation choice in the region. With continued dedication and support, Greenland Homestay will undoubtedly thrive, offering guests not just a place to stay, but a gateway to the beauty and warmth of the hills and the heartfelt hospitality of its owner.

Case Study 9: Delight Homestay

Delight Homestay is situated in the hilly station of Lumsophic village. It lies on the midway of the path leading to one of the popular trekking destinations in the area, the double-decker living root bridge. It is owned and operated by Mr. Arnold Sohkhet, a 34-year-old spirited entrepreneur who is also a resident of the area. Delight Homestay business was established in 2017. Before starting Delight Homestay, there are a lot of obstacles faced by the owner. The first and foremost challenge when starting any business is finance and the same happens with Mr. Arnold. Moreover, he stated, *“I did not want to take any loans. I used my savings- around ₹10 lakhs to set things up. Another major challenge was staffing. Most of my employees are locals, which is good, but sometimes there are communication issues with guests, and we have also had frequent staff turnover.”*

Marketing is another challenge faced by the homestay Mr. Sohkhet stated. Like other homestays in the area, the homestay purely depends on Word-of-Mouth publicity. Technological issues like poor network and internet connection in the area lack of some facilities like telephone, WIFI connection are some of the complaints from the visitors. The tourist arrival in the homestay is dominated by domestic tourists although few foreign tourists visited the homestay. The busiest season that most tourists visit the homestay is usually from January and continues till January. Despite the challenges and hurdles in running a business, he can cover his expenses and achieve his break-even point (BEP) just within 4 years of operation. The homestay

business can generate a monthly income that ranges from ₹20,000 to ₹50,000 during the peak seasons and during the off seasons, it can generate an income ranging from ₹5,000 to ₹10,000 per month. Delight Homestay offers a variety of accommodations tailored to different needs: two single bedrooms for those seeking simplicity, two cosy double bedrooms for comfort enthusiasts, and a spacious family room ideal for larger groups. However, these rooms come at different prices ranging from ₹1000 for a single bedroom and ₹2000 for a double bedroom. The family room is charged at ₹500 rupees per head. Delight Homestay exemplify a personal journey fuelled by Mr. Sohkhlet's fervour for hospitality and entrepreneurial zeal. His narrative underscores the significance of customer-centric service, continual enhancement, and the imperative role of supportive governmental policies in nurturing local tourism enterprises.

Case Study 10: Rympei Ling Homestay

Nestled near a popular tourist spot, Rympei Ling Homestay embodies the essence of warm hospitality and entrepreneurial spirit. Established in 2018 by Linis Nongbri, this quaint retreat offers travellers a glimpse into traditional Meghalaya culture amidst the serene backdrop of natural beauty. Despite facing several challenges typical of the hospitality industry, Rympei Ling Homestay has carved a niche for itself, becoming a favoured destination for domestic tourists seeking an authentic and immersive experience. Rympei Ling Homestay is situated at Nongriat Village near the popular tourist destination in the area, the Double Decker Living Root Bridge. Mr. Nongbri is a 47-year-old individual who has passed just middle school education and started this very own homestay business. He has four dependent children. He lives with his wife in the village and his wife is the one who helps him in operating and managing the homestay. Mr. Nongbri embarked on the journey of establishing his homestay business out of his passion for socialising and sharing his local culture with visitors. His decision was driven by a desire to create a welcoming space where guests could not only relax but also engage meaningfully with the local community. Since he started his business in 2018, Mr. Nongbri faced a lot of challenges. Even now when managing it he is still facing some of the challenges. The first challenge is finance. He had to wait after some years to start his business although he had some intentions long years back. This is because he did not want to borrow from

anyone or any institution but decided to start his business through self-finance.

"Another big challenge is marketing. We rely entirely on word-of-mouth. It is not as effective as modern marketing. Still, we do not have the resources to invest in online or social media, especially with the poor network and internet connection here." Nongbri stated.

Human resource problem is also another problem. He had to rely on his family members mainly his wife to do the service. He does not employ any employees other than his family members. Poor network and internet connectivity in the area is another challenge for the operators as the guests mostly complain about the connections. One of the notable aspects of Rympei Ling Homestay is its resilience in the face of financial challenges. Despite seasonal fluctuations in tourist arrivals, particularly bustling during the peak season from January to March, the homestay manages to generate a commendable income, ranging from ₹20,000 to ₹50,000 per month during peak times. The homestay offers modest yet comfortable accommodations as other homestays in the area. The rooms are spacious and come in different sizes and prices. Two single bedrooms have a space of approximately 60 square feet each and one double bed has 29 rooms with a space of approximately 140 square feet. Traditional Meghalaya cuisine adds a flavourful touch to guests' experiences, providing a culinary journey that complements their stay. Feedback from guests plays a pivotal role in shaping the homestay's service offerings. Linis Nongbri diligently collects and reviews visitor feedback, addressing common concerns such as occasional electric failures promptly. In conclusion, Rympei Ling Homestay stands as a beacon of hospitality in Meghalaya, offering travellers not just a place to stay but a cultural experience enriched with warmth and authenticity. As tourism evolves, homestays like Rympei Ling play a crucial role in showcasing the unique charm and hospitality of India's diverse regions, contributing to both local economies and cultural exchange.

Case Study 11: Scenic Homestay

Scenic Homestay is situated in Tyrna Village. It lies in the serene hilly station a few meters from the main road leading to the starting point of the Nongriat Trekking destination. It is owned and operated by Mr. Wanpliad Thabah. Mr. Thabah is a young

entrepreneur, 30 years of age who also works as an assistant teacher in one of the schools in the region. His educational background, marked by graduation, provided him with foundational skills that he leverages in managing the homestay. Scenic Homestay was established recently in the year 2024. Mr Thabah's decision to start this homestay was fuelled by his love for social interaction and his desire to contribute to the tourism sector of the region. However, starting a business is not an easy task, instead, one must go through and tackle a lot of challenges. Similarly, Mr Thabah also had to tackle a lot of hurdles on his journey. On being asked further, he stated,

"My biggest challenge was gathering enough capital. I did not want to take loans or borrow money, so I waited until I had enough savings to begin. Then there is the issue of finding skilled employees. It is difficult in a small village, so I rely on local people, though they lack formal hospitality training."

He further stated that the marketing of homestay is another challenge for the owner as advertisement and marketing involve high costs. Hence, he stuck with the word-of-mouth as other homestay owners.

Internet and Network connectivity problems are other challenges faced by the owner as he got a lot of complaints in these areas. Scenic homestay can generate an income ranging from ₹50,000 to ₹80,000 monthly during peak season. However, during tourist season, the business earns an income averaging between ₹5,000 to ₹10,000 monthly. Mr Thabah achieved his break-even point within 3 years of starting the business, indicating steady growth. Scenic Homestay offers a tranquil environment for guests seeking a retreat into nature. The homestay currently features two types of rooms: two single-bed rooms and one double-bed 30 room ranging from ₹1000 and ₹2000 per room per night. Basic facilities are made available to the guests. Modern payment methods are accepted to ensure convenience to the guests. This marked a step forward in the improvement and modernisation of the homestay business in the region. Most guests at Scenic Homestay are domestic tourists, with the busiest season typically spanning from January to March. The average duration of stay varies between 3-10 days, reflecting a mix of short vacations and longer escapes.

In conclusion, Scenic Homestay exemplifies a budding venture driven by an entrepreneurial spirit and a passion for hospitality. Mr Thabah's journey

from a teacher to a homestay operator underscores the potential of local tourism to create economic opportunities in rural areas. While facing challenges, including regulatory hurdles and seasonal fluctuations, Mr Thabah remains optimistic about the future of his homestay, fuelled by guest satisfaction and a commitment to providing memorable experiences amidst picturesque surroundings.

Case Study 12: WRBM Tyrno Homestay

WRBM Tyrno is situated in Tyrna Village beside the main road leading to the starting point of the Nongriat trekking destination. This homestay is owned and operated by Mr. Wesly Majaw, a 36-year-old resident of Tyrna Village. He is married and has two children. Mr Majaw is a spirited entrepreneur driven by his love for socialising and works as a tour guide for tourists in Meghalaya. Not only did Mr. Majaw guide tourists in his area but he also guided them to other places in the state of Meghalaya. In this way, he can make a living and earn something for his family. He had cleared high school education and had a good foundation in the English language to communicate with the guests. As a tour guide himself, he had seen how homestays and other hospitality accommodations are earning especially those places located near the tourist destinations. Therefore, as his home is situated on the way to the double-decker living root bridge which is a popular tourist destination in the area, he took the initiative to start his very own homestay business, the WRBM Tyrno Homestay. On being asked about the challenges he faced. Majaw replied,

"There were plenty of challenges! The biggest challenge, of course, was financial. I saved my earnings as a tour guide to start my homestay. It took time, but I was determined to start with my own money. Human resource challenges are another problem. There is a lack of skilled and trained employees in the area."

Network and internet connectivity are other technical challenges resulting in a lot of complaints from customers, Majaw further stated. Initially, Mr Majaw invested an amount ranging between 5 to 10 Lakhs sourced fully from his savings. This investment is fruitful as the homestay business can generate a monthly income averaging between 50,000 to 80,000 during peak seasons and bring in around ₹5000 to ₹10000 during the off-tourist season. Nevertheless, Mr Majaw's careful financial planning ensured that the homestay reached break-even within just a few years,

marking sustainable growth. Mr Majaw's vision was clear—to offer travellers an authentic experience away from the hustle and bustle of city life. The homestay boasted modest accommodations: one single bedroom, two double bedrooms and one spacious family room ranging from ₹700, ₹1400, and ₹2800 respectively per night.

The homestay also provides local traditional food for the guests. Guest satisfaction was paramount to Mr. Majaw. He eagerly listened to feedback from visitors, addressing recurring issues promptly. Despite some challenges like intermittent electric failures, guests appreciated the homestay's serene location and Wesley's warm hospitality. However, Wesley noted that returning guests were not as frequent as he hoped, indicating areas where consistency in service could be improved. Wesley's marketing strategy relied heavily on word-of-mouth and presence on travel websites. While effective, Wesley realized the need to diversify marketing efforts to attract a broader audience. He believed that showcasing the homestay's tranquil ambience and personalized service could appeal to more travellers seeking an authentic rural experience. In conclusion, Scenic Homestay under Wesley Majaw's stewardship exemplifies the essence of grassroots entrepreneurship in rural tourism. It is a testament to Wesley's entrepreneurial spirit and his commitment to creating a welcoming environment for nature-loving travellers. Moving forward, Wesley aims to enhance sustainability and guest retention by diversifying marketing efforts, promptly addressing service issues, and seeking government support for infrastructure and promotional initiatives.

VII. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The homestay industry in Tyrna and Nongriat Elaka with eleven male owners (91.67%) and one female owner (8.33%) is a male-dominated business. The majority of homestays were established between 2016 and 2020, indicating a growth phase in the homestay industry during this period and most probably it may due to the increase inflow of tourists after the discovery of the famous and well known 'living root bridge' and 'Rainbow Falls' in the destination. The domestic tourists dominate the market, of short stays with an average duration of less than 3 days across all homestays.

Most homestay owners (with average investment ₹6.5 lakhs) relied heavily on personal savings for initial investments, with no external funding. In most cases, the homestay owners failed to raise finance from the formal financial institutions due to absence of proper records of books of account and also due to lack of collateral. The paucity of funds has resulted into the slow growth in modernisation to improve the services. Moreover, the seasonal income fluctuations are significant, with peak season earnings being 5-10 times higher than off-season earnings. Income fluctuation with average peak season income of ₹50,000 and average off season income of ₹7500 highlights the seasonal nature of tourism in the region. Price is also the factor that some of the homestay in this region are running at a break even or loss-making entities since they are catering to budget-conscious tourists visiting the destination. On gauging at the infrastructure challenges, electric failures (66.67%), as reported by eight homestays and poor internet connectivity (58.33%) as reported by seven homestays are widespread. The region is also lacking in skilled human resources to run the service with 41.67% homestays reported with the unavailability of well qualified and trained personnel. Moreover, with the seasonal income fluctuations, adopting proper promotional strategies maybe a challenge due to high cost, hence marketing efforts are limited only to word-of-mouth communication (100%). With the present scenario of highly competitive market there is a need for modern methods and strategies for operations and to also take advantage of the social media platform and online presence for promotion of the services.

In most cases, entrepreneurs of different sectors have full faith on government support and incentives to assist them in both financial and non-financial assistance but as per the cases and interviews that has been conducted, around 41.67% of the homestay owners reported to have failed to avail assistance from the government. The result could be due to lack of awareness or cumbersome paperwork that makes it difficult to obtain the benefits offered.

Despite these challenges, homestays achieve financial sustainability within three years on average, showcasing their potential for growth. Hence, with proper training and support along with adequate awareness on Government schemes and assistance that homestay owners can avail, the problem of finance,

marketing, human resources and others can be overcome.

VIII. LIMITATION AND DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study examined the homestay industry in Tyna and Nongriat Elaka, focusing on both the opportunities and challenges it presents. There is a significant opportunity for further detailed research in this region's homestay business.

A thorough analysis of the Tyna and Nongriat Elaka homestay market could explore its potential for growth by evaluating various factors that influence the industry, such as tourism trends, local economic conditions, and government regulations. This research could offer valuable insights for shaping policies.

Furthermore, investigating the pricing strategies of homestays in this area and their impact on competitiveness would help gauge the sustainability of homestays there. Additionally, studying the marketing strategies employed by homestay businesses in Tyna and Nongriat Elaka, including their use of digital marketing and customer reviews, could provide further insights into their effectiveness.

In summary, there is ample opportunity for detailed research to deepen our understanding of the homestay business in this region and its potential for future development.

IX. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the Tyna and Nongriat Elaka homestay business reveals its potential as a lucrative opportunity that benefits hosts and tourists by providing immersive cultural experiences. Homestays offer a financially rewarding option for hosts while making travel more affordable and enriching for guests, allowing them to explore new cultures and lifestyles. Entrepreneurs and investors in the region have found homestay businesses profitable ventures that provide lodging and amenities and foster a sense of community among residents as revealed during interviews. These businesses contribute to local economies by generating revenue and promoting cultural exchange. Successful homestay operations demonstrate how they can create thriving communities and offer unique travel experiences through effective marketing and management strategies. By

understanding regulations, researching various homestay models, and implementing best practices, hosts can ensure enjoyable experiences for themselves and their guests. In conclusion, the homestay business in Tyna and Nongriat Elaka holds promising prospects for growth and continued success. Despite facing challenges such as skilled labour shortages, inconsistent network connectivity, power failure, and fluctuating guest retention, the potential for expansion remains strong. The natural beauty of the region, coupled with increasing demand for eco-tourism and authentic cultural experiences, provides a fertile ground for attracting more visitors.

To capitalise on this potential, improving infrastructure, enhancing service quality, and leveraging marketing strategies beyond word-of-mouth will be essential. Collaboration with tour operators and travel influencers, better connectivity, and implementation of sustainable practices can further boost the appeal of homestays in the area. With these steps, the homestay business in Tyna and Nongriat Elaka can overcome its challenges and experience substantial growth in the future.

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