

Research Article 04

Homestay Tourism as a Tool for Rural Community Development: Factors Affecting Tourists' Choice in Nilaveli, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This study investigates the determinants influencing tourists' selection of homestays in Nilaveli, Trincomalee, addressing a significant gap in Sri Lankan tourism literature, which has largely examined host perspectives rather than traveller decision factors. The research specifically aims to assess how perceived security, facilities, tariffs, and location affect tourists' choice of homestays. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was conducted with 200 tourists who had stayed in Nilaveli homestays, using a structured, self-administered questionnaire rated on a five-point Likert scale. A purposive sampling method was adopted, and data reliability and validity were confirmed through Cronbach's alpha (≥ 0.7), KMO/Bartlett's tests ($KMO \geq 0.7$; $p < 0.01$), Average Variance Extracted (> 0.50), and discriminant validity checks. Hypotheses were tested using Pearson correlations and multiple regression analyses in SPSS. Results revealed that all determinants significantly correlated with homestay choice – homestay security ($r = 0.729$), homestay facilities ($r = 0.694$), homestay tariffs ($r = 0.663$), and homestay location ($r = 0.722$), all at $p < 0.001$. Regression results confirmed that homestay security, homestay location, and homestay facilities were significant predictors ($p < 0.01$), while homestay tariffs were not significant ($p = 0.066$). The findings demonstrate that prioritising safety, facility quality, and locational convenience can enhance homestay competitiveness, providing actionable insights for sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Accommodation choice, community-based tourism, homestay tourism, location attributes, perceived safety, service quality

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Introduction

Homestay tourism has recently gained a surge in popularity among tourists worldwide as it allows tourists to experience the local culture, hospitality, traditions & lifestyle of the destination (Bhuiyan et al., 2012; Sbai & Hassouni, 2024). Unlike traditional accommodation options such as hotels and villas, the homestay phenomenon allows tourists to stay in private houses and interact with the host or the family living in the same house (Cassidy & Guilding, 2020; Dash, 2022). With the rapid surge in demand for homestays, homestay facilities worldwide have multiplied during the last few years (Yasoda et al., 2020). Homestay has been recognised as a cost-effective accommodation option, but the concept is mainly centred on the intention to share culture, as the tourists have the opportunity to interact with the host or the family very closely and engage in day-to-day activities (Kimaiga & Kihima, 2018). Thereby, the tourists can gain thorough knowledge about and experience the cuisine, hospitality, and customs of the host community (Bjork & Janson, 2018).

Homestay accommodation, featured by allowing tourists to stay with local individuals or families, extends various benefits not only to the tourists but also to the hosts (Kimaiga & Kihima, 2018). Those who arrange their houses to accommodate guests as homestays gain the opportunity to earn substantial income for the family (Khatkar et al., 2024). Moreover, of the financial benefits, they may reap various financial benefits, such as personal and family enrichment, cultural exchange, and supporting community development (Joshi, 2018)

It's relatively easy to start a homestay compared to other forms of accommodation, such as hotels, Villas & etc, due to numerous factors (Wijesundara & Gnanapala, 2015). Mainly, the initial investment is minimal as the host has the opportunity to use the existing residential property, available furniture and consumer electronics to start the homestay (Rabu et al., 2020). Furthermore, regulatory requirements are also minimal, and the approval process is not as complicated as in hotels or resorts (Kanel et al., 2024). Flexibility in operation is another factor that makes it easier to start a homestay (Rumpapak, 2024). Hosts can decide to rent out a portion of their houses (ex: rent out the extra bedroom) while keeping the remaining house space for the host's use (Pusiran, 2013). Such flexibility enables hosts to manage their offerings, considering the guests' requirements and preferences (Rumpapak, 2024). Low operational costs, support by the community, low marketing costs and simple marketing methods are some of the other factors that make it easier to commence a homestay (Hussin & Kunjuran, 2019)

According to Jamal (2017), homestay accommodations are very popular among tourists who visit countries in the global south context, such as India, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Nepal & Kenya. Unique cultural heritage, community-based tourism activities, economic considerations, community connection and social impact, and authenticity of the global south are certain factors that elevate the popularity of homestays among tourists (Dai, 2025). Similar to the world trend, Homestays have gained certain momentum in the tourism landscape of Sri Lanka (Miththapla, 2024). Furthermore, Sri Lanka owns all the features that homestay tourists prefer, such as unique cultural heritage, economic considerations, community connection & etc (Ranasinghe, 2015).

Sri Lanka's tourism industry encountered numerous challenges and ups and downs in the last two decades (De Silva et al., 2021). However, it gained substantial growth after the terrorist war, but the Easter attack in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020-2021, Aragalaya, and the economic crisis in the year 2022-2023 period posed a massive setback in the industry (De Silva et al., 2021). Denoting Strong resilience, the tourism industry has begun to perform

notably during the last year, while the government has extended its fullest support to reinforce tourism in the country (Shazuli, 2023).

Table 1: Tourist Arrivals to Sri Lanka in 2025

Month	2018 Number of Tourists	2024 Number of Tourists	2025 Number of Tourists	% Change (25/24)	% Change (25/18)
January	238,924	208,253	252,761	21.4	5.8
February	235,618	218,350	240,217	10.0	1.9
March	233,382	209,181	229,298	9.62	(1.7)
April	180,429	148,867	174,608	17.3	(3.2)
May	129,466	112,128	59,755		
June	146,828	113,470			
July	217,829	187,810			
August	200,359	164,609			
September	149,087	122,140			
October	153,123	135,907			
November	195,582	184,158			
December	253,169	248,592			
TOTAL	2,333,796	2,053,465	956,639		

Source: SLTDA (2025)

The coastal area of the country has the highest potential to attract more tourists with its stunning beaches, pristine waters, and the wealth of marine biodiversity of the coastal areas in Sri Lanka (Galdolage & Ekanayake, 2024). Furthermore, cultural and culinary experiences in coastal communities and community engagement are some other factors that offer a wealth of opportunities to elevate tourism in the country (Sugathapala, 2023). Some of the coastal areas where tourist attractions are notable are Galle, Matara, Kaluthara, Colombo, Negombo, Batticaloa & Trincomalee. Although the tourism industry showcases rapid growth in these areas, homestay accommodations haven't gained sufficient momentum as the majority of tourists still prefer hotels, resorts and villas. (Yasoda et al., 2020).

Homestay tourism is widely recognised as a form of community-based tourism that directly contributes to rural development, local livelihoods, and community empowerment (Bhuiyan et al., 2012; Sbai & Hassouni, 2024). Unlike conventional hotels, homestays allow income to remain within the local community, creating opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurs, women, and youth to participate in tourism value chains. This decentralised model not only diversifies household income but also encourages the preservation of traditional lifestyles, cultural heritage, and environmental stewardship (UNWTO, 2023; Salazar, 2012). In the Sri Lankan context, particularly in rural and coastal areas such as Nilaveli, homestays can serve as an inclusive mechanism for post-crisis recovery and sustainable community development. By strengthening linkages between tourists and host families, homestays help integrate marginalised communities into mainstream tourism while enhancing social cohesion and local ownership of tourism benefits. Therefore, studying the determinants that influence tourists to choose homestays in Nilaveli is essential for designing policies and business practices that not only enhance tourist satisfaction but also maximise the socio-economic contributions of tourism to local communities.

Sri Lanka has emerged as a famous tourist destination due to various reasons (Atul Ramgade, 2016). The natural beauty of the country, which is blessed with pristine beaches, rainforests, scenic mountains, waterfalls & rich cultural heritage nurtured with Buddhism and other religions, wildlife and biodiversity, tea and spices, adventure and outdoor activities, and warm hospitality, are the factors that captivate tourists are captivated (Lasika et al., Sri Lankan Travel & Tourism Industry: Recent Trends and Future Outlook towards Real Estate Development, 2018).

The tourism industry plays a pivotal role in the economic, social, and cultural development of Sri Lanka, and makes a massive contribution to the overall growth and prosperity of the country (Atul Ramgade, 2016). Sri Lanka has been struggling due to the shortage of foreign currency (Samarakoon, 2024). The tourism industry is one of the key industries that brings foreign currency to the country (Saratha & Balagobei, 2020). Further, the industry creates a lot of business and employment opportunities. In addition, its contribution to infrastructure development, Cultural exchange and heritage preservation, regional development, and social inclusion is immense (Lasika et al., 2018).

According to Statista.com, the Sri Lankan tourism industry intends to earn US\$348.19M in 2024. The expected industry growth rate is 5.16% and the expected market volume by 2028 is US\$425.7M. The biggest volume contributor is the hotel sector, which is responsible for US\$175M in 2024. The prediction of hotel users by 2028 is 182M users, and the average revenue from a user is US\$148. Further, the Sri Lankan tourism market expects a surge in eco-tourism, sustainable practices and conservation efforts (<https://tradingeconomics.com>, 2024).

Research Problem

Although the homestay concept has gained momentum among tourists, there is a significant gap in the existing literature regarding the key factors that affect tourists' choice of homestays (Mapjabil, 2018). Especially, very few research studies have been carried out about homestay accommodations. (smail et al., 2018). Further, the available research studies also tend to homestay owners' perspective and do not emphasise on tourists' perspective (Mapjabil, 2018).

There are only a few research studies carried out about homestay accommodation in the Sri Lankan context, and lack of empirical understanding of how homestays contribute to rural development, local livelihoods, and community empowerment. These studies also mainly focus on the factors that encourage investors to commence homestays, not on tourists' expectations (Lasika et al., 2018), not actors that influence tourists to choose homestays, and how these choices can strengthen community-based tourism initiatives that support economic diversification and cultural preservation in rural areas.

There are a lot of hotel construction projects that have been commenced across Sri Lanka. Especially in the Nilaveli area, there are 34 large-scale hotel projects that have commenced in 2023. But the homestays haven't gained such momentum among the investors, though the initial capital is very low and the business approval process is not complicated (Ranasinghe, 2015).

Nilaveli is one of the popular coastal areas in Sri Lanka, where tourism engagement is very high. However, there are only 202 homestay providers available in the area. Lack of knowledge about the homestay operation, lack of knowledge about the intentions and preferences of homestay users are key reasons for failing to gain the real potential of the homestay option. This imbalance suggests a missed opportunity to harness tourism for grassroots economic benefits and empowerment of local households. A deeper understanding

of what motivates tourists to select homestays could provide critical insights for promoting rural entrepreneurship, gender-inclusive employment, and community participation in sustainable tourism.

Homestays have become popular among tourists due to many financial and nonfinancial reasons (Bhuiyan et al., 2012; Kanel et al., 2024). Not only do the homestay users but hosts also have numerous benefits of converting the house into a homestay (Hussin & Kunjuraman, 2019). However, the available literature is very low about homestay accommodations, especially relevant to the Sri Lankan context. Accordingly, considering the above research problem identification and justification, the researcher intends to conduct this study to find the key factors that affect tourists to choose homestays in Nilaveli, Sri Lanka.

Research Objectives

- To identify how Homestay Security affects the choice of a homestay by tourists
- To explore the relationship between Homestay facilities and the choice of homestay by tourists
- To assess how the Homestay tariff affects the choice of homestays by tourists.
- To explore the relationship between the Homestay location and the choice of homestay by tourists

Significance of the Study

There is various research studies have been carried out about the antecedents of choosing a luxury hotel, Villas, and boutique hotels in Sri Lanka (Lasika, et al., 2023; Munasinghe, et al., 2022; Munasinghe, et al., 2020). There are very few studies conducted about the homestay phenomenon in Sri Lanka (Lasika et al., 2018). As this study intends to study the key factors that affect tourists' choice of homestays in Nilaveli, Sri Lanka, this study enriches the existing research literature on homestay phenomena by adding new knowledge about the notion. Further, the conducted research studies also mainly have emphasised the investor's perspective (Sthapit et al., 2019). This study focuses on homestay users' perspectives; thereby, this study addresses a pivotal research gap attached to homestay accommodation in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka has immense potential to attract tourists who seek an authentic and immersive experience, as the country is rich with diverse cultural heritage, stunning landscapes, and warm hospitality (Lasika et al., 2018). Nilaveli is one of the popular tourist destinations in the Trincomalee District- Sri Lanka, where one of the most beautiful sea beaches is located, and can be developed to greater heights (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, Zones identified as suitable for tourism development, 2018).

Homestays play a major role in the sustainable development of the tourism industry as well as the economic landscape of the country. It enables tourists to be accommodated at a cheaper rate while experiencing the country's traditions, culture, cuisine & etc (Mapjabil, 2018). Exploring the preferences and antecedents of tourists to choose homestays, stakeholders in Sri Lanka's tourism sector can tailor their offerings to align with such considerations. Further, this study supports tourists in seeking a homestay with a better understanding of the homestay concept and the area. Therefore, this study denotes a strong practical significance related to the homestay accommodations in Nilaveli, Sri Lanka.

Literature Review

Identification of Key Terms

Homestay Accommodation

There are various definitions available on the concept of homestay accommodation. Hall & Lew (2021) defined homestay accommodation as the lodging arrangements where guests stay in the home of local residents rather than traditional hotels or rental properties. This type of accommodation allows tourists to live and interact with host families. Another definition for homestay accommodation was provided by Timothy (2018) as a mechanism of renting a room or part of a residence from a local homeowner, offering a more personalised and authentic lodging experience, where guests have access to shared facilities such as the kitchen and living area. According to Jamal (2017), homestay accommodation is a type of hospitality where guests rent a room or living space within a private residence, often facilitated by online platforms or local agencies.

Homestay Security

According to Smith (2022), homestay security is defined as the measures and protocols put in place to ensure the safety and well-being of guests staying in private residences. A similar definition is provided by Lee (2022), as homestay accommodation covers various aspects, emphasising safeguarding the physical, emotional, and financial well-being of the guests. According to Johnson & Michael (2021), homestay security involves the assurance of a safe and secure environment for guests staying in private residences.

Homestay Facilities

Homestay facilities can be defined as the amenities and services provided to guests staying in private residences. These may encompass access to private or shared bedrooms, bathrooms, and common areas such as living rooms common areas (Selvans, 2021). Another definition by Johnson (2022), homestay facilities refer to the physical infrastructure and resources offered to guests within a homestay setting. According to Livan (2021), Homestay facilities include conveniences and services accessible to guests during their stay in a private residence. These may encompass gardens or outdoor seating, entertainment options & etc.

Homestay Tariffs

Homestay tariffs represent the structured pricing system established by hosts for the provision of accommodation and services to guests staying in private residences. These may include rates, fees, and associated costs for various room types, duration of stay, and additional amenities (Smith, 2022). A similar definition is provided by Johnsons (2022). According to him, homestay tariffs are attached to the predetermined pricing schemes implemented by hosts to regulate the cost of lodging and other related services within a homestay environment.

Homestay Location

Homestay location refers to the geographical position or setting of a private residence offered for temporary lodging to guests. This includes factors such as the neighbourhood, proximity to key attractions, accessibility to public transportation and surrounding amenities (Smith, 2022). According to Johnson (2022), homestay location denotes the physical environment and

surroundings of a host property available for short-term stay by guests. This includes the safety of the location, proximity to points of interest, and local amenities.

Theories and Models

There are four theories taken into consideration for conducting this research study. They are the Consumer decision-making model, Destination image theory and service quality model.

Consumer Decision-Making Model

The consumer decision-making model provides a framework for understanding how tourists evaluate alternatives and make choices when selecting homestay accommodation. This model typically involves five stages as problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase evaluation (Brown, 2015).

Destination Image Theory

Destination image refers to tourists' perceptions and mental representations of a destination. This theory explores how designated image influences tourists' decision-making processes, including their choice of accommodation. This theory suggests that a destination's image is shaped by various factors, including personal experiences, information sources, marketing efforts and social influences (Williams, 2012).

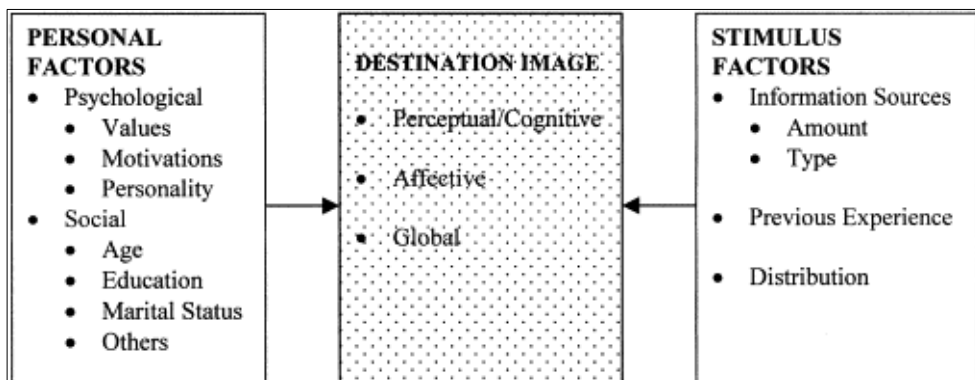


Figure 2: Model of Destination Image Formation
Source: Baloglu and McCleary (1999)

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

This theory posits that behavioural intention is determined by three factors: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the context of homestay selection, TPB can support understanding how tourists' attitudes, social influences, and perceived control influence their intention to choose a homestay (Smith, 2022).

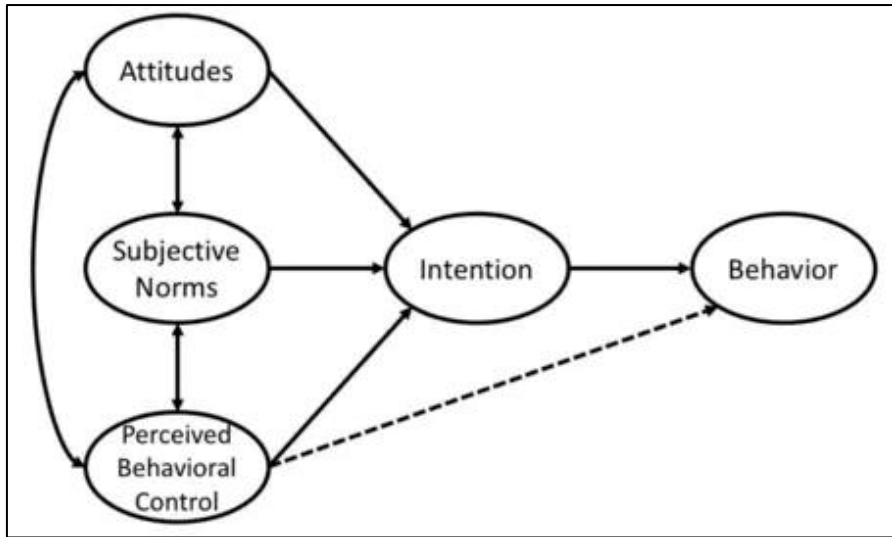


Figure 3: The TPB Model
Source: Fumiyo (2014)

Social Exchange Theory

This theory suggests that individuals engage in relationships or transactions based on the principles of reciprocity and mutual benefits. This theory is relevant to the context of homestay accommodation, as tourist may undertake their stay as an exchange of cultural knowledge, hospitality, and companionship with their hosts.

Empirical Research Findings

Homestay Security

Homestay security plays a pivotal role in influencing tourists' decisions when selecting homestay accommodations (Goswami Giri & Kumar, 2024). Security measures implemented within homestay environments contribute to tourists' sense of safety and well-being, thereby enhancing their overall satisfaction and experience (Smith, 2022). Tourists highly emphasise security when choosing accommodation options, and homestays that offer visible security features such as locks on doors and windows, emergency procedures and etc. (Lee, 2022).

Homestay Facilities

Homestay facilities play a crucial role in shaping tourists' perception and preferences for selecting accommodation options (Chen et al., 2024). Homestay facilities encompass a wide range of amenities and services provided to guests, such as bedroom arrangements, bathroom facilities, common areas & etc (Johnsons, 2021). Homestay facilities positively influence tourists' perception and decision-making processes. Thus, hosts who invest in maintaining and upgrading homestay facilities may attract more tourists by delivering a higher level of customer satisfaction (Livan, 2021).

Homestay Tariffs

Homestay tariffs play a significant role in influencing tourists’ decisions when choosing accommodation options (Singh et al., 2021). Homestay tariffs refer to the pricing structure and fee system established by hosts to regulate the cost of lodging and related services within homestay accommodation (Johnsons, 2021). Tourists are attracted to homestays with transparent and competitive pricing, where the tariffs align with the quality and range of facilities and services provided (Livan, 2021).

Homestay Location

Homestay location is a critical factor influencing tourists’ decisions when selecting accommodation options (Singh et al., 2021). Homestay location refers to the geographical position and seeing of a private residence offered for temporary lodging to guests (Smith, 2022). Tourists value homestay locations that offer convenience and accessibility to popular tourist destinations, cultural landmarks, and transportation hubs. (Johnsons, 2021).

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework visually presents the relationship between independent and dependent variables taken into considered in a particular study (Jabareen, 2009).

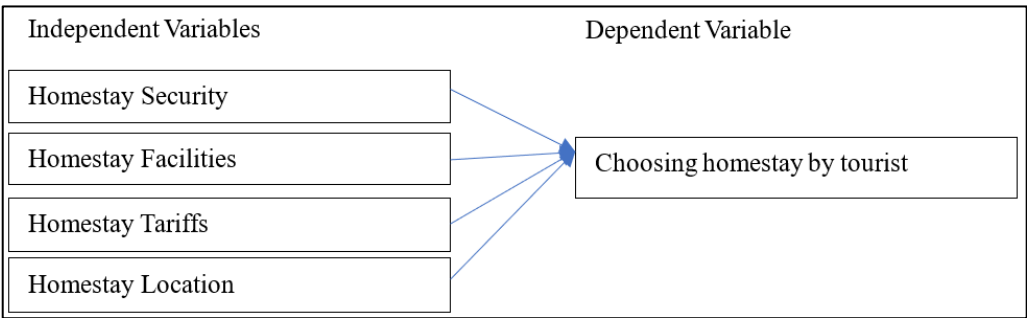


Figure 4: Conceptual Framework
Source: Developed by the author (2024)

Research Hypothesis

A research hypothesis is a specific, testable prediction about the expected outcome of a study. It is formulated based on existing theories or observations and serves as the foundation for conducting empirical research (Creswell, 2014). Table 1 states the hypotheses used to achieve the objective of this study, and Table 2 summarises the theories and the variables used in this study.

Table 1: Hypothesis of the Study

Variable	Hypothesis
Homestay Security	H ₁₁ - There is an impact of Homestay security on choosing a homestay by tourists
	H ₁₀ - There is no impact of homestay security on choosing homestay by tourists
Homestay Facilities	H ₂₁ - There is an impact of Homestay facilities on choosing homestay by tourists
	H ₂₀ - There is no impact of homestay facilities on choosing homestay by tourists
Homestay Tariffs	H ₃₁ - There is an impact of homestay tariffs on choosing homestay by tourists
	H ₃₀ - There is no impact of homestay tariffs on choosing homestay by tourists
Homestay Location	H ₄₁ - There is an impact of homestay location on choosing homestay by tourists
	H ₄₀ - There is no impact of homestay location on choosing homestay by tourists

Source: Developed by the author (2024)

Table 2: Summary of the Theories & Variables

Variable	Consumer Decision Making Model	Destination Image Theory	Theory of Planned Behaviour	Social Exchange Theory
Homestay Security	Yes	Yes		
Homestay Facilities	Yes	Yes		Yes
Homestay Tariffs	Yes	Yes		
Homestay Location	Yes	Yes		
Choosing a Homestay Location	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Variable	Empirical Research			
Homestay security	Brown, 2015; Hussin & Kunjuraman, 2019; Lee, 2022; Smith, 2022			
Homestay Facilities	Johnson, 2021; Johnson & Michael, 2021; Livan, 2021			
Homestay Tariffs	Johnson & Michael, 2021; Livan, 2021; Selvans, 2021; Lasika et al., 2023;			
Homestay Location	Mapjabil, 2018; Timothy, 2018; Sthapit et al., 2019; Smith 2022			

Source: Developed by the author based on the literature (2024)

Research Methodology

The research onion framework was developed by Saunders et al. (2012) and provides a pictorial explanation of the different components of the research that need to be planned and analysed to develop a successful research design (Saunders et al., 2019). Stated differently, the research onion serves as a roadmap for the researcher, guiding them through every stage of creating a research methodology (Naarm, 2020).

There are two main types of research philosophy, namely positivism and interpretivism. Positivism is useful in quantitative deductive studies, while interpretivism is mostly used in qualitative inductive studies (Jabareen, 2009). This study adopted a quantitative, positivist, and deductive research design to empirically test the relationships between key factors influencing tourists' choice of homestays in Nilaveli. The study aimed to validate theory-driven hypotheses derived from the literature review and conceptual model. There are two main types of research approaches as inductive and deductive approaches (Trochim, 2006). As this study intends to develop hypotheses and test them to obtain the results, the researcher applies a deductive approach and a survey strategy was used because it allows for systematic data collection, quantitative analysis, and generalisation of findings. The researcher chose a quantitative method and intended to gather and interpret numerical data and which can be used to identify trends and averages, formulate hypotheses, examine correlation, and extrapolate findings to larger groups.

The researcher applied a cross-sectional time horizon because it enabled the researcher to concentrate on gathering data from various people at a particular moment in time. The target population consisted of tourists who had stayed in homestays within the Nilaveli area. A judgmental (purposive) sampling technique was adopted to ensure that only respondents with direct experience of homestays were included. A structured, self-administered questionnaire was distributed to 200 tourists, forming the final sample size. The questionnaire utilised a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) to measure perceptions of each construct.

Results and Interpretations

Demographic Information Analysis

The demographic analysis indicates that the bulk of the respondents who were surveyed composed data that belongs to the male category. In this regard, 116 male respondents and 84 females correspond to the total sample size considered in the study. This is respectively 58.0% male and 42.0% female if put into percentages. Furthermore, the demographic analysis of the collected data on age distribution shows that out of the total respondents, 17.0% are aged 18-24, 16.0% fall within the age category of 25-30, 27.0% represent the 31-35-year-olds, 25.0% are in the age group of 36-40, and 15.0% are 41 and above. This would also help to be aware of the most comprehensive view about the preferences and factors impacting tourists in different age brackets while choosing their homestays in Nilaveli. Employment Status-wise, the distribution of the respondents indicates the majority at work, with 82.0%. Next come the students at 8.5%, followed by the unemployed at 5.0% and 4.5% in other Employment Status. Thus, this distribution indicates that the largest segment that could be seen among tourists who opted for homestays in Nilaveli is the employed, followed by students—hence, a wide spectrum in terms of the economic background of the respondents.

The educational qualifications of the respondents are distributed as follows: A/L qualifications, 19.0%; those with a Diploma or Higher National Diploma, 30.5%; Degree holders, rated at 25.5%; and PhD/Masters, 25.0%. All in all, the distribution cuts across a wide spectrum, from secondary school to sophisticated academic qualifications like postgraduate degrees.

Validity and Reliability

According to Hall (2022), this technique allows the researcher to identify an essential construct that might be too complex to be effectively measured with one variable only. The tests used in establishing the validity of the dataset include the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test, Bartlett's test of sphericity, Average Variance Extracted, and the discriminant validity test. These tests ensure that this dataset produces an appropriate representation of theoretical constructs under investigation.

Cronbach's Alpha Test

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Test

Variable	Dimensions	Cronbach Alpha (>0.7)
Independent Variable	Homestay security	0.705
	Homestay Facilities	0.733
	Homestay Tariffs	0.732
	Homestay Location	0.767
Dependent Variable	Choosing homestay by tourist	0.754

Source: Data output (2024)

According to Scribbr (2019), the acceptable value for the Cronbach's Alpha test is set at 0.7 to show satisfactory internal consistency among variables, as earlier explained. In this study, both independent and dependent variables obtained Cronbach's Alpha values higher than the threshold. The results obtained therein show a strong level of internal consistency among the variables under scrutiny in this dataset. In this count, the responses collected thereby stand good enough to be used for further statistical analyses and interpretations, ensuring the resultant robustness of the research findings.

Convergent Validity Test

Table 3: KMO Bartlett's Test

Variable	Dimensions	KMO	Bartlett's Test for Sphericity
Independent Variable	Homestay security	0.730	Approx. Chi-Square 194.099 Sig - <0.01
	Homestay Facilities	0.750	Approx. Chi-Square 168.879 Sig - <0.01
	Homestay Tariffs	0.748	Approx. Chi-Square 165.391 Sig - <0.01
	Homestay Location	0.714	Approx. Chi-Square 218.825 Sig - <0.01
Dependent Variable	Choosing homestay by tourist	0.717	Approx. Chi-Square 215.042 Sig - <0.01

Source: Data output (2024)

Both the KMO values for dependent and independent variables are more than 0.7, indicating that the sampling adequacy has been satisfactory, and therefore, all the variables used in this study comply with the convergent validity criterion.

The result of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, with Sig. < 0.01 for all variables, which satisfies the requirement that the correlations between variables are large enough for factor analysis to be appropriate. This further supports the validity of the variables used in this study.

The current research, therefore, confirms the reliability and validity of dataset information with a view to laying a very strong base for further statistical analyses and meaningful conclusions in the current research study.

Discriminant Validity Test

Table 4: Discriminant Test

Dimensions		Homestay security	Homestay Facilities	Homestay Tariffs	Homestay Location
Homestay security		AVE = 0.55			
Homestay Facilities	Pearson Correlation Squared	0.681	AVE = 0.521		
Homestay Tariffs	Pearson Correlation Squared	0.697	0.651	AVE = 0.561	
Homestay Location	Pearson Correlation Squared	0.695	0.711	0.690	AVE = 0.54
	Correlation	0.483	0.506	0.476	

Source: Data output (2024)

The discriminant validity of the dataset was carefully checked by comparing the squared correlations with the AVE values of each variable. From the above table, it is clear that all the squared correlation values are well below their respective AVE values, thus establishing the discriminant validity among the variables used in this study. Specifically, in terms of Homestay security, Homestay facilities, Homestay tariff, and Homestay location dimensions, their respective squared correlation values are 0.464, 0.486, 0.424, 0.506, and 0.476, all less than their respective AVE values. This, therefore, gives confidence that each variable is measuring different constructs and, therefore, there is discriminant validity in the data collected.

Inferential Analysis

Correlation Coefficient Test – Hypothesis Testing

Table 6: Results of the Correlation Coefficient of Hypothesis 1- Homestay Security

		Homestay Security	Choosing a Homestay
Homestay Security	Pearson Correlation	1	0.729**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	200	200
Choosing a homestay	Pearson Correlation	0.729**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	200	200

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Data output (2024)

The coefficient of correlation, which is 0.729**, indicates a strong correlation and, therefore, a high impact of homestay security on tourists' preferences while choosing homestay accommodations. Here, sig is very low, at 0.000, far below the conventional threshold of 0.05. This would provide very strong evidence for the researchers to reject the null hypothesis (H_{10}). In light of this fact, these results very strongly support the alternative hypothesis (H_{11}) that a significant impact actually exists of homestay security on tourists' choices of homestay accommodations. Thus, from the analysis of the correlation data, it can be said that perceptions of homestay security are significant in influencing tourist decisions in choosing homestay accommodations within the research area.

Table 7: Results of the Correlation Coefficient of hypothesis 2- Homestay Facilities

		Homestay Security	Homestay Facilities
Homestay Security	Pearson Correlation	1	0.694**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	200	200
Homestay Facilities	Pearson Correlation	0.694**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	200	200

Source: Data output (2024)

A correlation coefficient of 0.694** represents a strong positive relationship, thus suggesting that homestay facilities are important factors in influencing tourists' choices of homestay accommodations. The value for the significance (sig) is 0.000, much below the conventional threshold of 0.05; it is a strong point to reject H_{20} . With that, the alternative hypothesis, H_{21} , which states there is a significant influence of homestay facilities on tourists when choosing a homestay accommodation, is strongly supported. Hence, from the correlation section analysis of the data, it can be seen that tourists really consider the availability and quality of the homestay facilities in terms of their choice for their stay at respective homestays within the research area.

Table 8: Results of the Correlation Coefficient of Hypothesis 3- Homestay Tariffs

		Homestay Security	Homestay Tariffs
Homestay Security	Pearson Correlation	1	0.663**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	200	200
Homestay Tariffs	Pearson Correlation	0.663**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	200	200

Source: Data output (2024)

The correlation coefficient, 0.663**, shows that the relationship is strong and that home stay tariffs are significantly related to determining the choice of tourists in home stay accommodation. The significance value, sig, is way below the conventional threshold of 0.05, standing at 0.000, thus showing overwhelming evidence to support the rejection of the null hypothesis, H_{30} . Therefore, the results support with high significance the alternative hypothesis, H_{31} , that there is a significant influence of homestay tariffs on tourists' choices of homestay accommodations. From the analysis of the correlation data, it emerged that homestay tariffs highly influence the decisions of tourists who seek to choose homestay accommodation within the study area.

Table 9: Results of the Correlation Coefficient of Hypothesis 4 - Homestay Location

		Homestay Security	Homestay Location
Homestay Security	Pearson Correlation	1	0.722**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	200	200
Homestay Location	Pearson Correlation	0.722**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	200	200

Source: Data output (2024)

It has a correlation coefficient of 0.722**, which indicates a strong correlation; thus, homestay location significantly influences the tourists' preference in choosing the homestay accommodation. The corresponding significance value, sig, is also 0.000, far below the conventional threshold value of 0.05, thus giving very strong evidence to reject H_{40} . Thus, it strongly supports the alternative hypothesis, H_{41} , that there will be significant influences of homestay location on tourists' choices of homestay accommodations. Using the data obtained for correlation analysis, it can be inferred that homestay location has a significant influence on tourists when choosing homestay accommodations for their stay in the research area.

Multiple Regression Test

Based on the tables below, the regression analysis can be interpreted as such:

Table 11: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.806**	0.650	0.643	0.31986
a. Predictors: (Constant), Homestay Location, Homestay Tariffs, Homestay Facilities, Homestay Security				

Source: Data output (2024)

The model summary in the table shows the goodness of fit in the regression model with regard to predicting tourists' preferences about choosing homestay accommodations or otherwise. The model expresses an R-squared of 0.650 and an adjusted R-squared of 0.643; thus, approximately 64.3 percent of the variance in choosing a homestay is explained by the model. This adjusted R-squared value is above the threshold (0.5 or 50%) for a good explanatory model; this means that the included independent variables all make a good fit to predict tourists' preferences. For instance, homestay security, facilities, tariffs, and location.

Table 12: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sigma
1	Regression	37.105	4	9.276	90.668	<.001 ^b
	Residual	19.951	195	0.102		
	Total	57.056	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Choosing a Homestay

b. Predictors: (Constant), Homestay Location, Homestay Tariffs, Homestay Facilities, Homestay Security

Source: Data output (2024)

The significance of the fitted regression model as a whole is tested using ANOVA analysis. It follows from Table 12 that the fitted regression model is significant, given the F-value of 90.668 with a corresponding significant value 0.000 less than 0.05. This shows that the regression model in this study has high significance.

Table 13: Coefficients

	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardised Coefficients Beta	t	Sigma
Constant	0.213	0.209		1.016	0.311
Homestay Security	0.346	0.074	0.314	4.665	<.001
Homestay Facilities	0.198	0.062	0.209	3.166	0.002
Homestay Tariff	0.114	0.062	0.121	1.850	0.066
Homestay Location	0.279	0.071	0.271	3.924	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Choosing a Homestay

Source: Data output (2024)

Coefficients of a Multiple Regression Model including relationships between all independent variables against the dependent variable: Choosing a homestay.

Constant: The point on the vertical axis that the line crosses (Constant) is 0.213, so this would be the expected value of choosing a homestay when all the independent variables are zero.

Homestay Security: This has yielded an unstandardized coefficient of 0.346, with a significance value of 0.000, which presented this factor as being strongly positively related to choosing a homestay.

Homestay Facilities: This yields a reading of an unstandardized coefficient of 0.198; the significance value is 0.002. This variable presents a positive relationship with choosing a homestay.

Homestay Tariffs: This obtained an unstandardized coefficient of 0.114, wherein is not significant because Sig. = 0.066.

Homestay Location: This has an unstandardized coefficient of 0.279, with the significance level being 0.000, indicating a positive relation to choosing a homestay.

The standardised coefficients, Beta, will tell the relative importance of every independent variable in predicting choosing a homestay. Homestay Security, Homestay Facilities, and Homestay Location have remarkable influences as depicted by their standardised coefficients and significant levels, while Homestay Tariffs is relatively very weak in this context.

The multiple regression analysis indicates that the dimensions Homestay Security, Homestay Facilities, and Homestay Location have significant influences on tourist choices with regard to homestay accommodation. Thus, these findings offer some useful insights into the factors which impact tourists' preferences within a context where this research is conducted, further supporting the model's validity and utility in understanding consumer behaviour about homestay selection.

This research into the factors influencing the choices tourists make in selecting homestays at Nilaveli, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, was preceded by a very robust methodology that incorporates various statistical analyses in arriving at important insights.

Discussion

Findings related to the literature are summarised in the table below.

Table 14: Findings of the Study

Findings	Literature aligned with findings
Homestay security is a very prime factor that tourists consider while choosing an accommodation for Nilaveli, Sri Lanka. In this study, it has been found that tourists mostly prefer very safe homestays with facilities like secure locks, surveillance systems, and emergency procedures. All	According to Smith (2022), enhanced security at the homestay settings has contributed much to improving satisfaction and enjoyment among tourists. Lee (2022) also supports the findings that the apparent security features, such as having reliable locks on doors and clear emergency

these variables contribute to the confidence of tourists in relation to safety and play a major role in overall satisfaction. In our descriptive analysis, the great majority agreed strongly that security is an important factor when selecting any accommodation.	procedure features, influence tourists' decisions in selecting a particular type of accommodation. Hence, these findings support the importance of security in making tourists' decisions and being comfortable during their stay in the homestays.
Bed arrangements, bathroom facilities, and common areas have a significant impact on tourists' perception and their decision-making process. A lot of respondents prefer those homestays with fully equipped facilities, as it is really comfortable and convenient to stay at Nilaveli. Our Likert scale analysis shows that the respondents strongly agree that good facilities are very important to be satisfied with the homestay.	Johnson & Michael (2021) describe how facilities provided within homestays drive the quality and diversity that greatly influence tourist preferences and satisfaction levels. It is suggested by Livan (2021) that the investments in maintaining and upgrading homestay facilities not only enhance the satisfaction of the guests but also increase the inflow of tourists who desire a greater comfort and convenience level (Gupta, 2021). These findings indicate that good maintenance of facilities is a significant factor in raising the general attractiveness of the homestay accommodation product to tourists
Homestay tariffs are thus the pricing structures set by the hosts and become very critical in the decision-making processes for tourists. According to the study, tourists prefer homestays with transparent and competitive pricing structures. Therefore, in such a scenario, homestay tariffs, as decided by the hosts, act as a decrypted code in tourists' choice. As is observable from our research, transparent pricing depending upon the provided facilities and services is always preferred by the tourists. Through the descriptive analysis, the respondents acknowledged the importance of pricing; through the statistical tests, it did not significantly affect their final choice of accommodation.	According to Johnson & Michael (2021), tourists prefer to visit those homestays that have transparent and competitive pricing policies. Livan (2021) points out that tariffs that actually show what is offered at a price influence tourists' choice and thus satisfaction levels. The findings bring to light the importance of clarity and perceived value regarding pricing in attracting tourists and guaranteeing satisfaction with homestay facilities.
The factors in a homestay location, which are proximity to attractions, safety, and accessibility to public transport, can decrease or increase tourists' intentions toward accommodation choices. Tourists, according to our findings, favour the convenience that a homestay offers in relation to access to Nilaveli beaches and other cultural landmarks. During our descriptive analysis, the response strongly	According to Smith (2022), the homestay location is of prime importance in tourists' decision-making processes, mainly with regard to convenience and accessibility to some key attractions. In connection to this factor, Mapjabli (2018) and Timothy (2018) try to argue how the physical environment or surroundings that a homestay is in contributes immensely to the perceptions and preferences by tourists for a particular place. The insights brought out clearly

indicated that location was the key to choosing homestay accommodations.

indicate the role of location in enhancing the homestay accommodations' attractiveness to tourists who target not only convenient but also memorable experiences (Banasree et al., 2020).

Source: Compiled by the researcher (2024)

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study set out to identify and analyse the key factors influencing tourists' choice of homestays in Nilaveli, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, thereby addressing an important research gap in the intersection between tourist decision-making and community-based tourism. While previous studies have mainly focused on the supply-side or managerial aspects of homestays, this research provides a traveller-centred understanding of the determinants of security, facilities, tariffs, and location that shape accommodation choices.

The findings revealed that security, facilities, and location are significant predictors of tourists' preference for homestays, whereas tariffs, though positively related, were not statistically significant when other factors were controlled. This suggests that tourists are willing to pay a fair price if their expectations for safety, comfort, and accessibility are met. The regression model (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.643$) demonstrates that these variables collectively explain a substantial portion of the variance in homestay selection. Beyond tourist behaviour, these findings have important implications for rural development and community empowerment. Homestay enterprises are often owned and managed by local families; thus, strengthening factors that attract tourists directly enhances local income generation, employment opportunities, and women's economic participation. Investments in security infrastructure, improved facilities, and better connectivity not only elevate visitor satisfaction but also create multiplier effects within rural economies by increasing demand for local goods, services, and cultural experiences. The study therefore contributes to both academic and policy discourses on inclusive and sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka. By linking tourists' accommodation preferences to the broader goals of community well-being and livelihood enhancement, this research underscores that homestays are more than an alternative lodging option; they are a viable pathway for grassroots economic empowerment and social resilience in post-crisis rural destinations like Nilaveli.

Based on the quantitative study findings on tourists' preferences on homestay facilities at Nilaveli, Sri Lanka, a number of important recommendations can be proposed to improve visibility and desirability in homestay offerings:

Security of Homestay

Secure homestays through stringent security measures by the homestay operators to provide assured safety and security to the guests (Ranasinghe, 2015). This comprises locks on doors and windows, video surveillance in common areas, and emergency protocols. It is a fact that these measures protect the guests and also give an impact of enhancing peace in their minds, such that the level of satisfaction also increases.

Upgrade Homestay Facilities

Facilities in a homestay operation, when developed and enhanced, could increase its capacity to draw in and maintain its customers. This includes such things as checking that the bedroom and bedding/furnishings arrangements are comfortable and of a good quality, equipped

bathrooms, and the development of physical common areas for rest and social interaction. Investments in maintaining these facilities result in a comfortable clientele and are positively reflected in the reputation of such quality and service excellence, time and again.

Apply Transparent Pricing Principles

Even though the homestay tariffs are not a motivator for tourists, transparent pricing and billing policies in their rate plan are extremely necessary. Transparent pricing means specifically stating what the prices include and what services are offered for the said price to customers. Clarity in pricing is appreciated by customers because an informed decision can be taken about the travel budget.

Highlighting Advantageous Homestay Location

Very crucial in the accommodation decisions of a tourist is the location of a homestay; therefore, it should be considered convenient, accessible, and ridden with attractions right in front of or in the familiar vicinity of a property owner. Being close to Nilaveli's beaches, cultural landmarks, food outlets, and transport stations could mean hassle-free movement for leisure activities and exploration around the local culture. Online promotional materials and clear signposting are supposed to point this out to potential guests, emphasising how such a homestay place brings added value to their travel schedule and augments the enjoyment of their holiday.

Continuous Guest Engagement and Feedback

The channels of communication have to be kept open with the guests before, during, and after their vacation to understand their desires and needs so they can continually improve the service. Guest homemakers have a responsibility to seek feedback from their respective guests through questionnaires on satisfaction, reviews on the internet, and other open direct communication platforms. An analysis of guest feedback will enable the hosts to pinpoint areas where there are problems, act quickly, and make adjustments that may actually improve the visitors' experience. Interacting with customers also drives customer loyalty and repeat business, which helps gain, sustain and assure long-term success in the homestay business.

Community Integration and Partnerships within Localities

Building relationships with the local community could enrich the visitors' experience and make the homestay distinguishable from large chain accommodations. Local tour operators, restaurants, or cultural sights can, for example, offer guests unique experiences and their own perspective on Nilaveli. Homestay operators can continue to aid the local businesses as they allow their products and services to be presented to the tourists that they allow into the homestay, thereby adding aesthetic value to the place as a destination for tourists.

Sustainability Initiatives and Eco-Friendly Practices

With the increasing role of the global outlook attached to matters of sustainability, undertaking work in homestays will ensure the adoption of "green practices," hence aiding "green tourism.". This would mean using appliances and practices that are efficient enough to conserve both energy and water, reducing waste generation, and supporting local conservation. Sharing these with guests would show a commitment to environmental stewardship and would attract eco-minded visitors interested not only in the local environment but also in sustainable lodging. Making sustainability part of the homestay's brand could also

help differentiate the business in the increasingly competitive tourism market and appeal to socially responsible travellers.

This study was initially restricted to tourists visiting only Nilaveli, and the sample size of 200 respondents was chosen with respect to the population of tourists visiting Nilaveli during the study period. Although the answers were obtained from a sample of very different kinds of tourists, demographically and for different purposes of travel, the research itself utilised a great deal of self-reported data, which is prone to biases, such as response or social desirability bias, that affect the accuracy and reliability of results. Such risks could be reduced in future studies using mixed-methods approaches or longitudinal studies to elicit subtler insights into the decisional processes of tourists. Although these limitations are recognised, the study that used methodology provided valuable insights into understanding factors influencing the tourists' decisions in choosing to stay at a homestay accommodation in Nilaveli, Sri Lanka. Second, addressing these limitations in future research enterprises could further enhance the depth and applicability of research outcomes in such aspects as tourism and hospitality.

Future research could expand this work through comparative analyses across multiple rural regions and explore how digital visibility, cultural authenticity, and sustainability practices further influence both tourist choice and the socio-economic outcomes of homestay tourism. Strengthening these dimensions will be vital for transforming homestay development into a sustainable model of community-led rural advancement in Sri Lanka. The impact of cultural and demographic factors on tourist preferences, which would be quite rewarding, as it is going to a long way in clarifying different categories of travellers' perception and liking of homestay accommodations. Understanding these details could give meaning to how offerings are tailored to better suit diverse needs and preferences. An in-depth analysis of the influence digital platforms and online reviews exert on tourists in selecting homestay accommodations. While technology is fast taking over sectors of the travel industry, delving into how digital information gives people's minds perceptions of issues about security, facilities, tariff, and location can help devise strategies for the online presence and reputation management of homestay operators. Comparative studies at various tourist destinations within Sri Lanka or across different countries would therefore offer relative insights into regional variations of the homestay preference and what drives them. Such a comparative approach could identify best practices and lessons learned that could be applied to enhance homestay offerings and tourism strategies globally. Attention can finally move to the exploration of sustainable tourism practices within homestay accommodations in Nilaveli. On a more positive note, the analysis of the impact of eco-friendly, community, and cultural heritage conservation initiatives in the perceptions and choices of tourists would increase the idea of sustainable tourism development and result in having a greater proportion of economic benefits at the local level and less draining of cultural authenticity

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