

Relational Capital as the Institutional Stabiliser of Tourism Governance: A Policy-to-Perception Evaluation of Uttar Pradesh's Homestay Sector

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ABSTRACT

Tourism policy evaluation increasingly requires evidence on whether formal governance mandates translate into experienced outcomes rather than merely into registration counts. This study examines how India's Incredible India Bed & Breakfast/Homestay Scheme is enacted across Uttar Pradesh's heterogeneous regional governance landscapes. Using a mixed-methods design, the study combines institutional analysis of 1,254 guest reviews from 23 registered homestays in five cities with a quantitative Policy-to-Perception Index (P2PI) — a novel, policy-anchored sentiment and thematic-analysis framework — applied to 517 reviews from 31 registered properties across nine cities. Findings show that uniform state policy is translated into three distinct regional institutional ecologies (Varanasi's high-friction fiduciary hubs, the standardised market hubs of Agra and Lucknow, and the corporate peri-urban nodes of Noida and Greater Noida), producing five typologies of adaptive governance configuration. The P2PI scorecard shows that guest satisfaction is significantly associated with policy-mandated safety provisions ($r = .48$, $p = .017$) and official branding ($r = .59$, $p = .002$), while the scheme's community-development mandate returns a 0.0% guest-facing mention rate — a stark asymmetric institutional fit gap. The study advances the Institutional Stabiliser Thesis: relational capital — the informal trust, fiduciary responsibility and affective labour embedded in host communities — functions as the structural glue that sustains policy functionality where formal state capacity and market mechanisms alone are insufficient. Implications for enforcement targeting, disclosure design and administrative data infrastructure are discussed.

Keywords: Adaptive Governance; Institutional Fit; Policy-to-Perception Index (P2PI); Relational Capital; Homestay Tourism; Sentiment Analysis

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background: India's Tourism Strategy and the Limits of Uniform Policy Design

Since 2015, India's national development strategy has undergone a structural reorientation, articulated through flagship missions — Make in India, Digital India, Skill India and the Swachh Bharat Mission — that seek to align economic growth with social inclusion and infrastructure upgrading (Arora, 2023; Chalavadi, 2024; Kumar, 2025). Within this narrative, tourism has been elevated from a peripheral service industry to a strategic economic multiplier and instrument of soft power, tasked with mobilising regional cultural capital and projecting India as a globally networked destination (Khan, 2022; Sharma, 2022). The Incredible India 2.0 campaign, launched by the Ministry of Tourism in 2017, epitomises this ambition, but rests on an operational assumption that policy intent diffuses linearly from central ministries to state departments and ultimate service providers. When uniform national instruments encounter India's heterogeneous state-level governance landscapes, this assumption of linear implementation collapses: standardised guidelines meet uneven state capacity, market information asymmetries, and localised social networks, such that national policy is not passively diffused but actively translated and reassembled through local institutional interfaces (Colebatch & Castles, 2023; Laeni et al., 2021).

1.2 The Homestay Scheme as a Test of Institutional Fit

The Incredible India Bed & Breakfast/Homestay Scheme, formally institutionalised by the Ministry of Tourism in 2019 on earlier 2008 templates, is a quintessential test case of this translation dynamic. Its rationale is to expand lodging capacity without capital-intensive state building, by incentivising private homeowners to convert residential space into regulated accommodation offering guests the promise of staying with an Indian family and experiencing local culture and cuisine in a clean, safe and affordable setting (Government of India, Ministry of Tourism, 2019). The scheme's formal objectives are threefold: augmenting lodging supply in high-demand and rural locations; fostering micro-entrepreneurship and inclusive household-scale development; and enhancing destination attractiveness through authentic hospitality. Yet the scheme asks the state to regulate something intimate, dispersed and non-standardised — a private home — through procedures (classification, tariff

concessions, safety inspection) that assume administrative regularity and predictable compliance, while execution in practice depends on street-level discretion, digital platform intermediaries, and informal host-guest trust. This tension makes the homestay scheme a productive site for examining institutional fit: the degree to which formal governance instruments correspond to the socio-spatial realities of the entities they regulate.

The stakes of this question are concrete rather than academic: Uttar Pradesh has attached real financial incentives — capital subsidies, stamp-duty exemptions, and domestic utility tariff eligibility — to formal compliance (Government of Uttar Pradesh, 2022). Establishing whether compliance is actually associated with the guest outcomes the policy claims to produce is a precondition for judging whether that public expenditure is well targeted.

1.3 Uttar Pradesh as a Site of Institutional Friction

Uttar Pradesh — India's most populous state and a premier tourism destination — offers an unmatched vantage point on these institutional dynamics. Home to globally significant religious circuits (Varanasi, Ayodhya, Mathura, Vrindavan), iconic heritage hubs (Agra, Lucknow) and rapidly growing peri-urban corridors (Noida, Greater Noida), the state combines substantial tourism potential with structural governance contradictions, and has explicitly framed tourism as central to its strategic goal of building a \$1 trillion regional economy (Kumar, 2024; Jacob & Bhalla, 2024). Successive legislative instruments — the 2008 Bed & Breakfast Scheme Guidelines, the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Policy 2018, the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Policy 2022, and the highly prescriptive Uttar Pradesh Homestay and Bed & Breakfast Policy 2025 — have accumulated financial incentives (capital subsidies, stamp-duty exemptions, domestic utility tariffs) around three guiding principles: *Suvidha* (amenity), *Swachhta* (cleanliness) and *Suraksha* (safety), and the 2025 Policy introduced hard safety prerequisites, including a minimum of three CCTV cameras with 90-day recording retention and fire department-approved safety equipment (Government of Uttar Pradesh, 2008, 2018, 2022; Government of Uttar Pradesh Department of Tourism, 2025; Invest UP, 2025).

Despite this accumulation of mandates, spatial and institutional frictions persist. In the western corporate corridor (Noida-Greater Noida), operations show high procedural formalisation and digital-platform integration but limited cultural intimacy. In standardised heritage hubs (Agra, Lucknow), hosts internalise classification checklists primarily to enhance digital visibility on online travel agencies. In the ancient religious core of Varanasi, narrow lanes, dense pilgrim flows and municipal infrastructure deficits render formal checklists largely unworkable, so operational stability instead relies on informal trust and moral economies of hospitality. These regional contrasts constitute a live institutional friction between central bureaucratic standardisation, algorithmic market visibility, and localised relational networks.

1.4 Theoretical Framework: Adaptive Governance and Policy Translation

Tourism policy implementation in the Global South unfolds within institutional fields marked by uneven administrative capacity, market information asymmetries and embedded social structures, such that implementation is better understood as non-linear institutional negotiation than as linear diffusion of central statutes (Jessop, 2021; Jordan & Huitema, 2023; May, 2022; Siddiki, 2022). This study conceptualises this negotiation through an Adaptive Governance Triad of three institutional configurations. State-Led Governance corresponds to classical developmental-state concerns with bureaucratic rationality and legal enforcement, codified through registration portals, District Tourism Promotion Councils, classification checklists and safety inspections, though state capacity in Southern contexts tends to operate relationally rather than hierarchically, supplying regulatory grammar more readily than operational syntax (Besley et al., 2022; Marques, 2023; Suryanarayan, 2024). Market-Integrated Governance reflects the role of online travel agencies and search platforms as quasi-regulatory infrastructures that convert guest reviews and ratings into market discipline, representing a shift from state capacity-building to capacity-borrowing, albeit one that introduces its own risks of platform rent extraction (Caliandro et al., 2024; McGregor & Coe, 2023; Saito et al., 2025; Sheppard, 2025). Community-Based Governance embodies the informal architecture of fiduciary relations, trust and moral reciprocity that compensates for bureaucratic and market gaps — relational capital generated through host warmth, cultural immersion and affective labour, understood here not as a residual but as a functional institutional layer in its own right (Minbaeva et al., 2023; Portes, 2024; Truelove & Cornea, 2021).

The mechanism through which these three configurations combine is policy translation: public policies are not delivered intact but are enacted, contested and reassembled as street-level bureaucrats, digital intermediaries and host households selectively reappropriate national mandates to fit local socio-spatial and market realities (Colebatch & Castles, 2023; Laeni et al., 2021). In Uttar Pradesh this manifests as institutional bricolage, in which actors combine elements of formal regulation, platform requirements and informal norms into viable hybrid routines (Cleland et al., 2021; Hanseth & Modol, 2021; Kelsall et al., 2022), with digital guest reviews providing a living record of how these hybrid routines are constructed. This positions institutional effectiveness in emerging

economies as a product not of convergence toward idealised administrative templates, but of negotiated hybridity and mutual accommodation between state, market and community actors (Kelsall et al., 2022; Wu, 2025) — for instance, where state officials tolerate minor physical non-compliance provided guest safety is maintained, while hosts absorb infrastructure failures through personal hospitality (*jugaad*), monetising private space while remaining anchored in the moral economy of *Atithi Devo Bhavah* (Qian, Ma, & Tang, 2024; Suryanarayan, 2024; Williams, 2021).

1.5 Research Gap, Objectives and Questions

The prevailing weakness in Indian tourism policy evaluation is that state success is measured through input metrics — registered-property counts, subsidy disbursement, promotional spend — rather than through empirical evaluation of whether mandated inputs translate into perceived guest outcomes. Official registries suggest administrative expansion, yet field verification reveals substantial attrition: of 74 properties in Uttar Pradesh's original 2019 Bed & Breakfast approval registry, digital search verified only 54 as operational, and only 31 retained a traceable, active review footprint on major consumer platforms — meaning roughly 27% of officially listed units are untraceable, with a further substantial share digitally invisible.

This study addresses that gap by arguing that uniform central mandates encounter geographically differentiated governance ecologies that compel non-linear institutional adaptation, and by advancing the Institutional Stabiliser Thesis: in contexts marked by state administrative gaps and digital market volatility, relational capital functions as the primary structural mechanism stabilising tourism governance and generating public value. Three research questions guide the analysis: (1) how do state-led regulatory mandates, market-integrated digital platforms and community-based social networks interact across Uttar Pradesh's distinct regional ecologies to enact the national Homestay Scheme in practice; (2) what hybrid governance configurations emerge from these interactions, and how can guest-facing user-generated content be operationalised into a policy-anchored Policy-to-Perception Index (P2PI) to measure institutional fit; and (3) how does relational capital function as a substitute, complement and translator for state capacity across volatile spiritual hubs, standardised market hubs and corporate peri-urban nodes?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The study employs an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Amadi, 2023; Ikram & Kenayathulla, 2022), proceeding in three integrated phases. Phase 1 conducts a deductive document analysis of state policy instruments to establish the P2PI input framework (Section 2.2). Phase 2 executes quantitative NLP sentiment scoring, thematic coding and statistical analysis on a multi-platform digital review corpus. Phase 3 integrates the resulting quantitative scorecard with qualitative institutional analysis across regional ecologies to explain the mechanisms underlying observed patterns of policy translation (Campbell et al., 2021; Locke et al., 2022).

2.2 The Policy-to-Perception Index (P2PI): Conceptual Framework and Measurement Logic

To evaluate policy efficacy rigorously, evaluation must move beyond registration counts to test whether formal legal mandates translate into observable, guest-perceived outcomes. This study develops the Policy-to-Perception Index (P2PI), a transparent and replicable diagnostic instrument that operationalises formal Institutional Inputs (codified policy mandates) into testable hypotheses and evaluates them against Experiential Outputs (unsolicited guest perceptions harvested from user-generated content). The framework rests on the premise that every substantive clause in a tourism policy document implies a guest-facing claim: a clause mandating minimum room area or Gold/Silver classification implies a claim about comfort; a clause requiring CCTV and fire-safety equipment implies a claim about perceived security; a clause defining 'Rural Homestays' outside municipal limits implies a claim about authentic cultural immersion (GOHome_Stay Policy 2025; UP Tourism Policy 2022). Mapping these statutory clauses to thematic keyword lexicons establishes a direct bridge between policy text and review-based analytics.

Through deductive content analysis of Uttar Pradesh's core policy instruments — the 2008 Bed & Breakfast Scheme, the 2019 Incredible India Guidelines, the UP Tourism Policy 2022, and the 2025 Homestay Policy — the P2PI operationalises seven Institutional Input dimensions, summarised in Table 1 together with their statutory sources, illustrative mandates and corresponding experiential outputs.

Institutional Input	Policy Mandate Source(s)	Specific Mandate (Input)	Corresponding Experiential Output
1. Core Quality & Amenities	UP Tourism Policy 2022; 2019 Guidelines; 2008 Policy	Gold/Silver grading; minimum room size (120/60 sq. ft.); Suvidha & Swachhta principles	Sentiment/keywords on cleanliness, hygiene, bed quality, spaciousness, linen, bathroom
2. Safety & Security Protocols	GOHome_Stay Policy 2025; UP Tourism Policy 2022	Minimum 3 CCTV cameras (90-day recording); fire safety equipment; Suraksha principle	Sentiment/keywords on safe, secure, CCTV, fire safety, parking, trust, family friendly
3. Rural/Experiential Authenticity	UP Tourism Policy 2022 (Sec. 4.26); GOHome_Stay 2025	Rural Homestay defined outside Nagar Nigam limits; cultural immersion; Atithi Devo Bhavah	Sentiment/keywords on local food, village life, host family, tradition, warm welcome
4. Institutional Support & Training	UP Tourism Policy 2022; 2019 Guidelines; BB-SOP 2025	DTPC mobilisation; hospitality training (MKITM Lucknow); owner SOP duties	Sentiment/keywords on host warmth, helpfulness, professional service, smooth check-in
5. Community Engagement	UP Tourism Policies 2016, 2018, 2022	Local employment generation; women- and youth-led community participation	Sentiment/keywords on local employment, community involvement, female hosts, youth
6. Infrastructure & Amenities	UP Tourism Policies 2016, 2018; 2008 Guidelines	Road connectivity, power/water infrastructure, domestic utility rate eligibility	Sentiment/keywords on facilities, accessibility, power backup, AC, Wi-Fi, utilities
7. Branding & Marketing	UP Tourism Policy 2022; UP Tourism Portal	State-led promotion, official portal listing, regional tourism circuit branding	Sentiment/keywords on recommendation, uniqueness, reputation, visibility, search

Table 1. The seven-dimension P2PI Institutional Input framework and policy mapping. Source: derived from Uttar Pradesh Tourism Policies (2008, 2018, 2022, 2025).

For each Institutional Input dimension i , the framework constructs three linked, empirically testable metrics. The Mention Rate (MR_i) is the proportion of text reviews containing at least one keyword matching dimension i , proxying the guest-facing visibility of the mandate. The Conditional Sentiment Score (CS_i) is the mean VADER compound sentiment score across reviews that mention dimension i , proxying perceived quality where the mandate is noticed. The Rating Correlation (RC_i) is the property-level Pearson correlation between a property's mention rate for dimension i and its mean star rating, proxying the dimension's contribution to overall satisfaction. A dimension combining a high mention rate, high conditional sentiment and a significant positive rating correlation is diagnosed as a visibly effective policy input; a dimension with a zero or near-zero mention rate, regardless of its statutory strength, is diagnosed as institutionally present but experientially invisible — the P2PI's core diagnostic of an institutional-fit failure.

Methodologically, the P2PI is a policy-anchored variant of aspect-based sentiment analysis (ABSA), a technique widely used in hospitality analytics (Wen, Liang, & Zhu, 2023; Zhang, Lu, & Liu, 2021). Whereas conventional ABSA derives aspect taxonomies inductively from generic review corpora, the P2PI deduces its taxonomy deductively from citable statutory clauses, ensuring that every empirical finding maps back onto a specific legislative mandate and creating an actionable feedback loop for policy evaluators.

2.3 Data Corpus and Sampling

Data collection used a dual-corpus strategy to combine analytical depth with geographic breadth. Corpus A (institutional analysis) comprises 1,254 publicly available guest reviews from 23 operational, officially registered homestays across five core cities — Varanasi, Agra, Lucknow, Noida and Greater Noida — representing three distinct urban morphologies and institutional ecologies. Corpus B (quantitative P2PI scorecard) was constructed

by auditing the Government of Uttar Pradesh's official 2019 list of 74 approved Bed & Breakfast units; search verification established 54 units as operational, from which a multi-platform review corpus of 517 reviews (508 with full text) across 31 registered properties in nine cities was assembled.

Reviews were harvested from major online travel agencies (Booking.com, Airbnb, TripAdvisor) and domestic platforms (MakeMyTrip, Goibibo, Justdial, Google Maps). Filtering protocols removed duplicates, platform-generated non-evaluative tags and spam. Star ratings in the P2PI dataset range from 1 to 5 with a corpus mean of 4.21 (SD = 1.32) and a median of 5.0, consistent with the right-skewed positivity bias typical of unsolicited online hospitality feedback.

2.4 Natural Language Processing and Thematic Coding Protocol

Computational text processing, anonymisation, sentiment analysis and thematic coding were executed in Python 3.12. Preprocessing involved lowercasing, HTML-tag stripping, stop-word removal and lemmatisation using spaCy and NLTK. Sentiment scoring used two validated models: TextBlob (polarity from -1.0 to +1.0; subjectivity from 0.0 to 1.0) and VADER, or Valence Aware Dictionary and sEntiment Reasoner (compound scores from -1.0 to +1.0; Hutto & Gilbert, 2014). VADER was selected for P2PI scoring for its rule-based accuracy on short, informal, review-style text, including its handling of negation and intensifiers.

Thematic coding applied a custom keyword-matching function that scanned review text against regular-expression word clusters representing eight core hospitality themes — host warmth, infrastructure, food, location, cleanliness, safety, value and spiritual/cultural experience — and, for the P2PI scorecard, the seven policy-derived dimensions in Table 1. The function assigned a binary indicator (present/absent) per theme per review, subsequently aggregated by property and city into percentage-based thematic profiles.

2.5 Analytical Strategy

The theoretical P2PI model specifies a multiple linear regression: $P2PI_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot Quality_i + \beta_2 \cdot Safety_i + \beta_3 \cdot Authenticity_i + \beta_4 \cdot Support_i + \beta_5 \cdot Community_i + \beta_6 \cdot Infrastructure_i + \beta_7 \cdot Branding_i + \varepsilon_i$, where $P2PI_i$ is the policy efficacy score for homestay unit i , the β terms are coefficients on policy-compliance indicators, and ε_i is the error term. In the absence of a public, unit-level government register of verified compliance dates (for example, exact CCTV audit dates), the empirical analysis instead computes property-level Pearson correlations between mention rates and guest ratings, together with a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) testing rating differences across destination typology. This substitution is treated as a substantive finding about administrative data infrastructure rather than as a mere technical limitation, and is returned to in Section 4.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Reviewer identities were anonymised by truncating names to initials, and host or staff names appearing verbatim in review text were systematically redacted (Borgerud, 2025; Buck & Ralston, 2021; Wiltshire & Alvanides, 2022). Property names are retained because they correspond to a published, public government registry rather than to private individuals.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Regional Institutional Ecologies

The findings show that Uttar Pradesh's homestay economy does not function as a uniform administrative terrain. Policy translation is instead mediated by three distinct regional institutional ecologies, each exhibiting a different balance of state capacity, market density and social capital. High-Friction Fiduciary Hubs, exemplified by Varanasi, are characterised by low formal state capacity and extreme infrastructural and spatial friction; in the congested ghat corridors, official requirements such as dedicated parking are physically unenforceable, and hosts operate as fiduciary gatekeepers whose personal reliability and affective care substitute for state capacity. Review text in this ecology typically pairs infrastructural complaint with strong emotional praise — for example, hosts described as treating guests 'like their own' while helping them navigate difficult surroundings despite amenity shortfalls.

Standardised Market Hubs, exemplified by Agra and Lucknow, are environments where formal state classification and digital OTA market mechanisms closely converge: hosts internalise quality checklists primarily to boost review ratings and platform visibility, and reviews mirror commercial hotel benchmarks (service 'comparable to 4-star hotels'). Corporate Peri-Urban Nodes, exemplified by Noida and Greater Noida, combine high formalisation with minimal relational embeddedness, serving business travellers through automated check-ins and contractual predictability; guests report efficient but socially thin experiences, with relational capital playing only a residual, defensive role.

3.2 Typologies of Adaptive Governance Configurations

Cross-case synthesis of guest review narratives and operational practice yields five recurring typologies of adaptive governance configuration, summarised in Table 2 with illustrative evidence and the theoretical mechanism each typology instantiates.

Typology Configuration	Illustrative Empirical Evidence (UGC)	Thematic Mechanism (Theoretical Link)
I. Affective Relational Governance	Host praised as 'exceptionally welcoming'; guests describe a 'warm family atmosphere' and 'feeling completely safe in an unfamiliar city.'	Affective labour as a stable institutional anchor; community trust compensates for regulatory absence (Truelove & Cornea, 2021).
II. Professionalised Relational Governance	Serviced at levels similar to luxury hotel suites, but hosts remain 'attentive, humble, and deeply personal.'	Strategic relational gifting; host converts social warmth into symbolic capital, blending commercial standards with reciprocity.
III. Corporate-Formal Governance	Timely, professional service for business visitors; smooth check-in, pristine cleanliness, minimal host interaction.	Process customisation; adaptation of corporate hotel routines achieves legitimacy via procedural reliability.
IV. Asset-Driven Compensatory Governance	Described as a 'stunning heritage property on the Ganges,' but reviews note 'cobwebs and unmaintained facilities.'	Niche value compensation; unique aesthetic or locational assets offset chronic maintenance non-compliance (Marques, 2023).
V. Volatile Fiduciary Governance	Host 'personally couriered my forgotten wallet safely to my home,' yet rooms are noted as 'unhygienic or lacking hot water.'	Owner-centric fiduciary role; host acts as a relational firewall against systemic infrastructural failure (Williams, 2021).

Table 2. Five typologies of adaptive governance configuration in Uttar Pradesh tourism, synthesised from the study's qualitative review corpus.

3.3 The Empirical P2PI Scorecard

Applying the P2PI diagnostic protocol to the multi-platform dataset (517 reviews across 31 registered properties in nine cities) yields the empirical Policy Efficacy Scorecard in Table 3. The correlation between numeric star rating and independently derived VADER text sentiment is exceptionally strong (Pearson $r = 0.82$, $p < .001$), supporting the internal validity of the NLP protocol.

Institutional Input Dimension	Mention Rate (%)	Conditional Sentiment	Conditional Rating	Property Rating Correlation (r)
1. Core Quality & Amenities	41.3%	0.66	4.40	$r = 0.30$ (n.s.)
2. Safety & Security Protocols	10.8%	0.74	4.56	$r = 0.48$ ($p = .017$)*
3. Rural/Experiential Authenticity	7.7%	0.76	4.51	$r = 0.17$ (n.s.)
4. Institutional Support & Training	14.8%	0.69	4.45	$r = 0.26$ (n.s.)
5. Community Engagement	0.0%	N/A	N/A	Not estimable (0 matches)
6. Infrastructure & Amenities	6.1%	0.46	3.82	$r = -0.04$ (n.s.)
7. Branding & Marketing	10.6%	0.86	4.87	$r = 0.59$ ($p = .002$)**

Table 3. The empirical P2PI policy efficacy scorecard. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; n.s. = not significant ($n = 25$ properties with five or more reviews).

A one-way ANOVA examining guest ratings across destination typology reveals a highly significant effect ($F(4, 503) = 19.17, p < .0001$). Rural/Boutique properties (mean rating 4.78, sentiment 0.73) and Spiritual/Pilgrimage units in Varanasi (mean rating 4.46, sentiment 0.65) outperform Metro/Urban nodes (mean rating 3.78) and Historical/Pilgrimage hubs in Agra and Lucknow (mean rating 2.41, sentiment -0.01), the latter apparently suffering from elevated guest expectations and intense commercial friction around major landmarks.

3.4 Diagnostic Findings: Asymmetric Institutional Fit

The scorecard surfaces three principal diagnostic findings. First, mandatory safety provisions (CCTV, fire safety under the 2025 Policy), though mentioned in only 10.8% of reviews, display a statistically significant positive correlation with property ratings ($r = 0.48, p = .017$); safety appears to function as a necessary baseline whose presence reassures while its absence triggers markedly negative ratings. Second, official branding and digital portal visibility display the strongest positive rating correlation ($r = 0.59, p = .002$) and the highest conditional sentiment (0.86), indicating that registered units leveraging official branding achieve superior guest trust. Third, and most consequential for policy, the mandate requiring homestays to foster local community employment, female host empowerment and youth participation returned exactly 0.0% keyword matches across all 508 text reviews: no guest, anywhere in the corpus, spontaneously reported or noticed community-development outcomes. Community-engagement provisions therefore exist on paper but are structurally invisible from the tourist's vantage point — a clear instance of asymmetric institutional fit failure, in which household-observable mandates (quality, safety) achieve guest-facing traction while institution-level mandates that operate through district and state machinery do not.

3.5 Relational Capital as Institutional Stabiliser

These findings support a reframing of institutional adaptation in the Global South. Conventional public administration models assume developmental success requires linear bureaucratic expansion and the elimination of informal practice (Besley et al., 2022). In Uttar Pradesh's homestay sector, however, governance coherence emerges not despite informality but through the structured integration of relational practice. Relational capital — fiduciary host care, moral commitment and affective hospitality — functions as the principal structural stabiliser across divergent regional ecologies: where state regulatory reach is thin (Varanasi) or market competition intense (Agra), relational capital absorbs operational shocks, fills infrastructure voids, and converts fragile statutory rules into viable public value (Moore, 2013).

Across these regional landscapes, relational capital performs three distinct institutional functions. As a functional substitute for state capacity, community trust and host moral obligation directly replace missing municipal infrastructure and absent state enforcement in high-friction fiduciary hubs such as Varanasi, with personal host reliability underwriting guest safety and navigation. As a complement to market rationality, hosts in standardised market hubs such as Agra and Lucknow strategically deploy authentic warmth and personalised care to differentiate their properties on competitive digital platforms, converting social warmth into positive review scores. As a translator of bureaucratic norms, small relational gestures in corporate peri-urban nodes such as Noida humanise impersonal automated booking systems, bridging the gap between state paperwork and lived guest expectation.

These findings jointly establish the Institutional Stabiliser Thesis: in Global South development governance, relational capital is the primary resource through which fragmented systems achieve adaptive stability. Rather than pursuing improbable top-down administrative enforcement across millions of dispersed households, effective statecraft instead requires capacity-weaving — the deliberate interlacing of formal bureaucratic baselines, algorithmic market mechanisms and endogenous community trust (Kelsall et al., 2022; Marques, 2023).

3.6 Policy Implications and Recommendations

Three priorities follow directly from the evidence. First, on enforcement, because safety mandates demonstrate high empirical efficacy ($r = 0.48$) wherever they register with guests, the Department of Tourism should prioritise expanding physical audit coverage among the untraceable and digitally invisible periphery of the scheme rather than introducing further rulemaking on units that are already visible and already performing well on this dimension. Second, on disclosure, to make the community-engagement mandate visible rather than merely codified, state policy should incentivise hosts to feature local sourcing, female staff employment and regional artisan partnerships explicitly within property listing descriptions, converting a real but currently invisible mandate into a guest-observable one. Third, on data infrastructure, the Department should extend the UP Tourism Portal into a live, unit-level digital compliance register recording verified inspection dates and safety certifications, which would allow future research to move from the correlational P2PI scorecard reported here to the fully specified multivariate model set out in Section 2.5.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that national tourism policy implementation in Uttar Pradesh operates through geographically mediated governance rather than linear central diffusion: central policy templates are reassembled within localised regional ecologies, producing three distinct institutional environments and five typologies of adaptive governance configuration. The empirical Policy-to-Perception Index scorecard indicates that the homestay scheme's household-observable mandates — quality and, in particular, safety — achieve meaningful guest-facing traction and are significantly associated with satisfaction outcomes, while its institution-level community-development mandate remains entirely invisible in guest-generated content, an asymmetric institutional fit gap with direct implications for how the scheme's public value is measured and demonstrated.

Institutional resilience in this setting depends on recognising relational capital — the informal trust, fiduciary responsibility and affective labour embedded in host communities — as an endogenous developmental asset rather than a pre-modern residual. The Institutional Stabiliser Thesis advanced here offers state policymakers, development agencies and tourism researchers working across comparable Global South and BRICS governance contexts a clear implication: sustainable policy implementation in dispersed, household-scale sectors requires moving from rigid administrative control toward relational capacity-weaving, supported by diagnostic instruments such as the P2PI that make the gap between statutory design and lived guest experience empirically visible rather than merely presumed.

Future research should extend the P2PI to other Indian states operating comparable homestay policies, and to a subsequent wave of Uttar Pradesh data once a verified, unit-level compliance register exists, so that the correlational scorecard developed here can be tested against, and potentially superseded by, the fully specified causal institutional-input model the framework was originally designed to estimate. Comparative application across the Global South would further test whether the Institutional Stabiliser Thesis generalises beyond the Indian homestay context to other dispersed, household-scale public service domains.....

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