

Homestay Tourism in India: Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

Home stay tourism is an emerging tourism concept evolved lately in the tourism world. India can be a model homestay for its multi-faceted potentialities. Natural gifts, man-made heritages ethno-cultural richness, innocent social settings, pleasant hospitality and many more unexplored treasures that are dreams for experts of tourism. Homestay tourism cannot prosper *sans* the convergence of needs of the affluent and the needy based on the premise of demand driven mechanism because it is a need base concept. India can harness the boon of tourist potentiality rampant at the rural areas where government has pro-poor programs. This form of tourism is based on three aspects namely service, facility and attraction. India has a strong position only in attraction whereas it is lacking in facility and services. Sustainable tourism takes place if home grown resources and natural settings are effectively served to the tourism as well as also preserved. Promotion of tourism thus is highly dependent upon the active participation of the private sector and communities where the role of government becomes that of a facilitator.

Keywords: Home-stay, ethno-cultural, prosperity, convergence, sustainability, facilitation.

INTRODUCTION

A Home-Stay, by its combined words (home stay) is staying in some one's home as a paying guest for short time period. But such guests are provided accommodation and services by individual family and community too. Therefore, the Home- Stay Regulation has accepted it as run (managed) by an individual or community (Timlasana, 2012). The 'Home Stay' seeks to draw tourists away from posh and crowded urban areas to the rural locality full

of splendid natural surroundings, by providing them with clean, comfortable and budget-friendly accommodation and food. Thus, homestay offers the traveler a unique local experience and possibilities of interaction with the host family. It offers the chance to experience new and untapped places which has enabled the government to popularize new tourist destinations, and provide alternative source of income to the rural folks (Gangotia, 2013). In home stay tourism visitors get a chance to spend time with the family observing their customs,

values and culture, which gives them the opportunity to feel the taste of rural life (Devkota, 2010). Cultural-heritage and its geographical structure makes India one of the famous destinations for homestay tourism.

In homestay tourism, both the environment and culture are commoditized; market value is created with the demand of visitors. This provides financial reward to the local indigenous community for conservation of the environment and their culture (Laurie et al, 2005). Under this approach tourism is considered to be a component of development, giving emphasis to explore ways of expanding positive impacts and reducing negative impacts (Ashley, 2000). Home stay tourism is a major player when it comes to the reduction of rural poverty. It integrates all activities of tourism such as trekking, cultural tourism, agro-tourism, health tourism, and ecotourism (Devkota, 2010). It is a good source of earning foreign currency. It reduces the gap in the balance of payment, provides increased tax revenue, gives rise to economic development of the nation, increases the employment opportunities. It may also provide new markets for local people to sell their products, such as agricultural products, livestock and others (Budhathoki, 2013). Growth in tourism motivates people to pursue higher education and to obtain new jobs, and it thus also increases the literacy rate. It provides opportunities for new generations to redefine and reclaim their cultural and ethnic identity. The villagers and other concerns were given trainings in hospitality and basic guiding skills to the local residents to provide them the opportunity to learn about hygiene, tourism and conservation techniques.

The development of tourism at a particular place has positively influenced the

livelihood of people of that place but on the other hand it has also had some negative impacts on the lifestyle of the local people, making them lose their own traditional culture and heritage (Pandey et al., 1995). Tourism is blamed for deforestation and degradation of the environment. This results in loss of benefits to the local community and loss of healthy environment, the loss incurred from such activities is high compared to the economic gains made from the tourism (Banskota & Sharma-1995). The increased flow of tourists may also heighten the problem of traffic and parking in city areas, increases urbanization in places where there is more flow of tourism increasing noise and environmental pollution (Gurung et.al 1996). There are also other negative impacts of tourism in society such as increase in crime, increase in the sex trade among women, increase in consumption of alcohol, negative impacts on the lifestyles of local people, exploitation of local resources, impacts on religion and practices of local people. All these provide grounds for a negative attitude towards tourism.

Tourism must always preserve culture and promote it so as to use local resources and manpower to promote the economy of a place. Hence, there is need to focus on sustainable development of tourism. Homestay tourism will serve as a momentous tool to the development of rural areas in every sphere including the economic, cultural, social and environmental spheres.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study has been conducted on

India's homestay tourism industry. The intrinsic features of India fit in very well considering the development of homestay as a strong tourism option. The study is based primarily on secondary data sources such as previous studies, journals, books, reports, magazines, and several online data sources. The study aimed to determine opportunities and challenges of homestay tourism in India.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study homestay tourism in India.
- To emphasize the major opportunities available for homestay tourism in India.
- To identify the challenges faced in the development of homestay tourism in India.
- To offer valuable recommendations so as to make the homestay tourism more viable.

HOMESTAY TOURISM IN INDIA

There are several examples from around the world where homestays have been successfully developed. India has both cultural and natural resources and can provide more applicable insight into this structure (Homestay).

India is one of those destinations found on every traveler's list. This is mostly because of its vast sprawling natural beauty, seasonal diversities, cultural richness and ethnicity & hospitality of its communities. Staying in some simply

delightful homestays, lodges, resorts and bungalows provides a delicate mix of experiences. In the northern part of country Himalyan homestay in Ladakh, Spiti (Jammu & Kashmir) are avenues for homestay tourists. Similarly in the state of Himachal Pradesh there are number of homestay registered under the tourism departments such as Kullu, Shimla, Chamba, Solan and so on (Gangotia, 2013). In the state of Uttarkhand the major homestays were in the Nanda Devi Valley and Valley of Flower housed famous homestay sites (Macek, 2012). The NCR are of Delhi also spotted with beautiful homestay spots. Tikli Bottom situated in Gurgaon in Arravalli hills is one of them

In the north-east Sikkim, Nagaland, Assam registered exotic homestay with great natural, biological diversity for tourists. In the extreme east West Bengal with its Glenburg Tea Estate homestay in Darjeeling (West Bengal) marked its presence. In the western part of the country the colorful state Rajasthan has Dera Rawatsar and General's Retreat homestay in Jaipur are also attracting large numbers of tourists. The Ahilya Fort homestay in Maheshwar (Madhya Pradesh) is well known and a very unique experience for tourists visiting there. In the south India Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamilnadu share the homestay destinations. Honey Pot homestay of Karnataka is delightful homestay nestled in the sprawling 225 acre coffee and spice plantation in southern Karnataka. The Cardamom House homestay in Tamilnadu is a completely informal house and is tailored to accommodate guests where they can enjoy the stunning location on the edge of the monsoon season, depending on Kamarjar Lake in the western ghats of India. Kerala is the

adobe for homestay in south India with its numerous spots such as Casa Del Fauno. There are also homestay opportunities in Allappuzha, Phillipkutty's Farm in Kumarakom, Fringe Ford in Mananthavadi and Tranquil Plantation Hideaway in Kolagapara and so on.

Tourists can experience a calm and quiet vacation within an environment of exquisite ecological beauty if they opt for Kerala's homestay experiences. India is considered by many locals to be a perfect land for homestay. To tap into its vast potential it is necessary to give proper attention to this concept of tourism by assessing its opportunities and challenges as they exist in India.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOMESTAYS

Economic Opportunities of Homestay

- Transforming economic and employment opportunities to rural areas and thus alleviating poverty.
- Encouraging local and foreign investment in tourism
- Encouraging micro entrepreneurship in tourism and its many other related sectors.
- Direct economic benefits- consumption of food, accommodation and purchase of souvenirs.
- Conservation of indigenous skills such as handicrafts and artisan works.

Social Opportunities of Homestay

- An ideal platform for cross-cultural exchanges (guest-host interactions).
- Reducing conflicts among different races and nationalities.
- Retention of youth by involving them in local opportunities.
- Learning new languages, skills and builds confidence among locals.
- Make locals tech savvy and 'smart' and independent as modernization gradually creeps through.

Environmental Opportunities of Homestay

- Would be very helpful in reducing common sanitation related diseases since training would be conducted
- Persuading the locals to keep the premises, kitchens and toilets etc. neat & clean
- Increasing awareness on environmental conservation among host areas.
- Assembling funds for conservation of physical environment.

Tourism related Opportunities

- Tourists get a chance to witness natural & cultural diversity.
- Increase in accommodation supply capability of the destination.
- Removing the problem of

seasonality by promoting the destination all year round.

- Increase tourism awareness amongst local and foreign tourists by the constant intervention by key role players.

Infrastructural Opportunities

- Increasing accessibility to villages by linking them with easily accessible roads.
- Increasing the number of education & training centers for capacity building.
- Increasing safety & security of locals as well tourists at the destinations in question.
- Improving healthcare & public utilities at the remote destinations.

CHALLENGES OF HOMESTAY

- Poor infrastructural facilities such as good roads, transpirations, electricity, healthcare, communication and other residential facilities and without these facilities it is difficult to establish and promote better service to existing as well as potential homestay visitors.
- Lack of skilled human resources such as guides, entrepreneurs, hospitality professionals and this is due to lack of availability of education and training institutes.
- There is lack of proper legal regulations for example registration of homestay,

booking of homestay and other relevant policies.

- Marketing and promotion of homestay tourism is also lacking in the country. There is no proper arrangement for extension of marketing and network in the nation.
- There is poor coordination among different tourism participants such as government, tourism players, tourism intermediaries and other non-government bodies associated with homestay tourism.
- Less awareness regarding conservation of natural as well as cultural resources among locals. Lack of ecotourism practices is also a major challenge in successful development of homestay in India.
- Improper management of resources at the destination is also a big challenge in extension of homestay viability.
- Poor maintenance of peace, security and chaos situations which demotivate foreign tourists to visit India.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After diving deep into the homestay tourism in India there must be some recommendations and by applying these homestay achieve a greater height. In a nutshell, the following recommendations were made:

- There is a need of preparation of homestay

planning and development for the local people. Hence, the local people of the proposed homestay tourism destination should be technically assisted to prepare homestay planning and development.

- The locals of the homestay tourism destination should be given training on leadership, hospitality along with food and beverage (by using local menu) so that the tourists can get quality service.
- Loan subsidy and other fiscal incentives should be provided to the local people for upgrading their existing facilities i.e. bed, rooms, bathrooms, tap, cleanliness etc.
- Home stay tourism destination should be connected with other tourism stakeholders of country, and promotion should also be done by tourism entrepreneurs.
- Government should provide 'Leave Travel Concession' for public servants and promote them to go on homestay tourism.
- In most of the homestay tourism destinations, there is a problem of benefit sharing among all the community members. Therefore while planning for homestay tourism development of the area, every member of the community should be taken care of for the benefit

sharing mechanism.

- Establish community tourism fund in the homestay tourism destinations so as to invest in capacity building and infrastructure.
- Homestay tourism operation practice in both community and privately, should be differentiated and treated accordingly by the government during providing assistance and other facilities.
- There is a need of development of homestay tourism database so that tourists can easily explore, choose, and book their stay.

CONCLUSION

The Indian tourism market is huge and it has limitless offerings and products. The concerned stakeholders have to exploit and reap the benefits. However, most of the products have yet to be explored. Home-Stay is a micro tourism entrepreneurship. It is a new concept adopted in India. However, lot of enthusiastic groups (communities) and individuals are eager to run this business sans much idea and knowledge. Government lacks a concerted vision, plan, policy, strategy and program and this is a crucial aspect that must be addressed. It has to do a lot of homework because it can be an instrument of poverty mitigation a very valuable strategy.

Diverting international tourists to the rural destinations of India can and

should be one of the tourism policies of the Indian government. It is advantageous to create a rural tourism environment and facilitate both the communities as well as private sectors to carry out the business to the benefit of all stakeholders in a win-win scenario. There are nonetheless innumerable temporary challenges which can be resolved with appropriate strategies and careful planning.

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