

Major Research Project (UGC)

THE ROLE OF HOMESTAYS IN COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN KERALA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Tourism in Kerala is really non-seasonal in nature and it is a constantly growing industry. The DoT, KTDC, BRDC, TRKL, DTPC, KITTS, KIHMS, Thenmala Eco-Tourism Development Agency, and a host of other government departments such as Forest and Wildlife, Irrigation, KSEB, Fisheries and Agriculture, Culture, Museum, Zoo and Archaeology play a key role in the tourism development of Kerala. More than 250 tourist spots of varying degrees of importance and potential across the State have been identified. Moreover, the State has innumerable project possibilities which have to be identified and implemented from time to time based on emerging trends. Among various components of tourism accommodation sector is very important. The study focused on the innovations in the accommodation sector – homestay, its scope, need and relevance, growth and potential in the state of Kerala as a form of community based tourism initiative.

Objectives of the Study

The study was carried out with the following specific objectives.

1. To identify Community Based Tourism resources in Kerala.
2. To examine the potential of Community Based Tourism in Kerala.
3. To study the satisfaction level of tourists from the Community Based Tourism in Kerala.
4. To study the impact of Community Based Tourism in Kerala.
5. To identify and evaluate the Homestay tourism in Kerala.

Methodology

The study uses both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from tourists and homestay operators. For the intensive study, 51 homestay providers and 327 domestic tourists and 323 foreign tourists were selected conveniently. The secondary data were collected from the official reports of Ministry of Tourism, government of India; Department of Tourism, government of Kerala; State Planning Board as well as from the published and unpublished research reports on tourism of various tourism promotional agencies, research articles, market research agencies, books and the Internet. For data analysis, SPSS has been used. Percentages, mean, standard deviation, chi-square tests, multi-variate tests, F-test, Post – Hoc Test, Tukey HSD test, Factor analysis, rotated component matrix, cronbach's alpha, confidence interval etc., were used for the data analysis

Need and Significance of the Study

There are various studies on tourism which emphasize the contribution of tourism in general. But no methodological study has been undertaken either by individual or institution to find out the role played by homestay as a form of accommodation in community based tourism development in Kerala. The study is confined to homestays functioning in the State of Kerala. The study concentrates on identifying agencies responsible for controlling, co-ordinating and facilitating the growth and development of homestays in Kerala, strategies followed by these homestays in attracting tourists towards the state – both domestic and foreign and also assessing the effectiveness of the working of these form of accommodation to the host community in particular and the society in general.

Through the study, the tourism promotional and regulating agencies like department of tourism, DTPC, local authority etc., can realize which of the strategies adopted by them are very effective, moderately effective and least effective in attracting tourists towards the state. The study throw light into the minds of officials and policy makers in framing strategies to attract more and more tourists towards the state of Kerala and also frame standards for the operation of homestay. On account of this study the tourism promotional agencies can change their strategies according to the requirement of tourists, service providers and host community and thereby the community get innovative and quality accommodation together with other tourism products at reasonable prices. The study also suggests some recommendations to the government, homestay providers and in general for the growth and development of homestays in Kerala. The major contribution of this study is that a model homestay standards were framed applicable to the state of Kerala based on the findings of the study.

For the study a structured interview schedule is framed and used for primary data collection. Primary data collection is a best experience for the principal investigator as well as the project fellow. The views of both homestay operators (service provider) and tourists (beneficiaries) – both domestic and foreign were collected and analyzed for the study. From the study it is very clear that different homestay operators are actively participated in providing homestay facilities to the tourists. It is beneficial to three categories of people – service provider (homestay operator), tourists (beneficiary) and the local community (host). Moreover it is beneficial to the society as a whole in the form of taxes etc., to the government at various levels.

Community Based Tourism Initiative

Hosting a tourist facilitates the exchange of cultures, information, and experience. However, studying abroad is often the student's first experience of being away from his or her parents and home country, to which they may have difficulty adjusting. The host must be able to help with separation issues, anxiety, and other difficulties. According to research, hosts and home stay students may exhibit mild symptoms of culture shock and must adjust accordingly. Despite the potential difficulties, host families, including children, are able to learn about other cultures. Many host families stay in touch with their students long after they return to their home countries. Occasionally, a host family or individual may be looking only to capitalize on the financial opportunity of a home stay arrangement and may have little or no concern for the interests of the other party.

It is sometimes used by people who wish to improve their language skills and become familiar with the local lifestyle. Some countries encourage home stay as a means of developing their tourism industry in the world. Hosting a home stay participant allows the host family to earn an income. Students tend to arrange a home stay with their school or educational institution, but they can informally arrange one through social connect students with hosts families, usually for a nominal fee. Home stay opportunities range from a complete family experience to basic room rental. The goal of a home stay is for the tourist to be immersed in their host's culture. The tourist may participate in family activities, including dining out, going to amusement parks, camping, and travelling. The visiting student may be expected to pay a portion of the activity-related costs, such as tickets, parking, and gas and travel expenses.

Problems Associated with Homestay

However, there are also problems from the operation of homestay. At present all homestays are not registered with department of tourism or with DTTC or with other local

agencies. Moreover there is no standards for the operation of Homestay. Thus the demands of the society for the time being is ascertained and it helps the policy makers and officials in evolving new tourism promotion strategies in order to attract more and more tourists towards the State and also encourage the homestay providers.

Review of Literature

CBT started as an off shoot of different alternate tourism approaches and soon grew on its own and even became the central point of sustainability of tourism. Most of the studies have been conducted in the settings of communities and derive generic principles from sustainable tourism and then build its own principles through Meta studies. The field is still in its infancy and will see many developments. For the purpose of review the studies have been divided thematically around their central themes though the boundary of such classification is hazy as almost every study touches many dimensions. The review of literature is based on the following broad classifications

1. Community Based Tourism Settings
2. Evaluation of Community Based Tourism
3. Community Based Tourism Models
4. Centrality of Community Participation
5. Sustainability through Community Based Tourism
6. Barriers to Community Based Tourism
7. Threat and Opportunities of Community Based Tourism
8. Homestay in global, national and Kerala

Review of Literature brings to the fore importance of community engagement for sustainable tourism. As community based tourism is experienced in community settings, its implementation becomes highly contextual on account of differences among communities. Communities lack the right skills sets to begin with and active participation of other stakeholders in tourism such as Non-Government Organizations, Governments acts as catalyst. Once the initial barrier is overcome, communities can take and run the tourism on their own. The sensitization and trainings play a critical role in it. The review suggests that there exist many barriers, threats and challenges in the success of community based tourism but these can be taken care of and CBT opens a world of opportunities to local communities. While the community based tourism is practiced in India at different levels for different types of tourism but these initiatives have not attracted academic research. There is vacuum in the literature on CBT in India or any of its states including Sikkim. It requires exploratory works to find what

makes it effective at one place and not at other place. How much is the role of settings, participants and processes in the success of CBT? How the measures of success shall differ from other forms of tourism and what shall be the lead time before it is mature enough to be evaluated? The life cycle and forma of CBT, willingness of community, the transfer of traditional skill sets to tourism and the mental predisposition of agrarian communities towards service industry throw different challenges for every project.

Homestays in Other Countries

All over the countries, the homestay programme is a form of alternative tourism in which tourists are given the opportunity to experience the way of life in a typical village with local community. The experiential nature of this form of tourism is becoming increasingly popular with foreign tourists. In contrast to mass tourism, the homestay programme should preferably be low scale, low density, flexible and spontaneous. More importantly it should be owned and operated by the local communities so that the economic benefits go directly to them. As a form of Community Based Tourism, the homestay concept is currently well accepted as a rural development tool in many Asean countries. The homestay programme can enhance local quality of life through generation of income, support local culture, arts and crafts business, encourages restoration of local and historic sites, and foster nature conservation efforts through community education.

With many of the world's international tourists looking to ASEAN countries for rural tourism, a more systematic development of homestay will be crucial in creating a 'new brand' of tourist experience, showcasing the rural way of life, offering an affordable form of holiday that contains a high degree of cultural and educational elements. The selling point of the homestay programme is not the physical entity of the village but more towards the total village experience, where the community and communal activities are strong influential factors. The success of the homestay programme in the ASEAN region is highly dependent on a strong understanding of the basic requirements of a quality visitor experience from a homestay perspective. Therefore the establishment of ASEAN Homestay standard is necessary, providing an opportunity to standardize a base level understanding of what a homestay is and to establish a minimum standard across all ASEAN member states.

Home stay is a form of tourism or study abroad that allows visitors to rent rooms from local families. It is sometimes used by people who wish to improve their language skills and become familiar with the local lifestyle. Some countries encourage home stay as a means of developing their tourism industry in the world. Hosting a home stay participant allows the host

family to earn an income. Students tend to arrange a home stay with their school or educational institution, but they can informally arrange one through social connect students with hosts families, usually for a nominal fee. Home stay opportunities range from a complete family experience to basic room rental. The goal of a home stay is for the tourist to be immersed in their host's culture. The tourist may participate in family activities, including dining out, going to amusement parks, camping, and travelling. The visiting student may be expected to pay a portion of the activity-related costs, such as tickets, parking, and gas and travel expenses.

Pros and Cons of Homestay

Typically, hosting a tourist facilitates the exchange of cultures, information, and experience. However, studying abroad is often the student's first experience of being away from his or her parents and home country, to which they may have difficulty adjusting. The host must be able to help with separation issues, anxiety, and other difficulties. According to research, hosts and home stay students may exhibit mild symptoms of culture shock and must adjust accordingly. Despite the potential difficulties, host families, including children, are able to learn about other cultures. Many host families stay in touch with their students long after they return to their home countries. Occasionally, a host family or individual may be looking only to capitalize on the financial opportunity of a home stay arrangement and may have little or no concern for the interests of the other party.

To minimize difficulties, most home stay arrangements involve a contract or written agreement between the host community and the visitor. Verbal agreements may change contractual clauses depending upon developments after a stay has begun. A contract typically outlines what is expected of the host visitor and may include items such as chores to perform (e.g., cleaning, laundering), curfews, use of the internet, television or telephone, and smoking, drinking, and drug rules. Agreements may also lay out what is being provided by the host, such as accommodations, furniture, amenities, meal provisions, transportation, communications, and entertainment. Generally, a host must provide a private room with a lock for sleep and study and a washroom for the visitor to use. Most other items are negotiable in terms of availability and price.

Home stay in Kerala

Hospitality becomes more homely when the visitors stay at home and the belief was utilized to the full by the Keralites as Kerala was one of the first states in India to initiate and develop the concept of home stays. In a home stay, the tourist resides with the family for some

parts of his or her journey and enjoys the culture and tradition of the country. Hospitality has always been one of the most appreciated traditions of Indian culture in general and Kerala, in particular. There are many exclusive home stays in Kerala and most of them are located in the midst of coconut palms and natural beauty, also quite away from the crowded cities and heavy traffic. Couples and families looking for private holidays in the stages of nature are invited to experience and share the unique hospitality of Kerala Home stays. Here the importance of home stays, which blossomed in Kerala around seven years ago. The popularity of home stays increases day by day as it helps tourists experience the real and multifarious cultural traditions of the state. Tourists from all over the world home stay in home stays with their family to live in the lifestyle of Keralites. Traditional home cooked Kerala dishes are the main attraction of Kerala home stays. The guests can also take part in various household activities of the family. Home stay can be described as a safe, secure and caring home away from home, for the guests.

Governments Intervention on Homestays

The government has stepped in to monitor 800 home stay units across the state and classify them based on the facilities and quality of accommodation provided to the visitors or tourists. The guidelines were notified to standardize the facilities and to overcome the difficulties faced by the home stay operators. Along with the residence-cum-certificate from the local body, location and possession certificate from village office and other documents, police clearance from the Station House Officer and registration from the Food Safety Commissioner have been made mandatory for submitting the application. Home stay units fulfilling all the essential criteria prescribed by Kerala Tourism in the 90- point checklist will be given Diamond House status for Class A, Gold House status for Class B, and silver House status for Class C category. Guidelines notified by the government, made available to *The Hindu*, say that the classification will be done only for operational home stays. Individuals or families can spare one room to six rooms for tourist accommodation. The classification of Kerala Tourism will be given only if the owner along with his or her family physically resides in the unit and at least one of them is able to communicate in English. The classified units will have to submit Form C with passport details so that the police and the Tourism Department can keep a tab on foreigners. The certificate of classification to be issued by the Director, Kerala Tourism will be for three years. The certification will have to be properly displayed in the unit. A state-level five-member committee headed by Secretary, Tourism and a seven-member district- level committee headed by Regional Joint Director, Deputy Director, Tourism, has been set up for classification or reclassification.

Home stay is an accommodation system and economic activity in the tourism industry and it is familiar with the tourists who want to interact with local culture, lifestyle, social system and people. The most important elements or components of home stay program are entertainment, education, food, enrichment, accommodation, and hospitality. Home stay refers to living place and it is one type of tourism product based on accommodation oriented. The developing, enhancing, and promoting of home stay depends on host community or local communities. The home stay accommodation is ensuring their economic, social and cultural aspects with sustainable well beings. The main constituent of home stay is the cultural diversity of the local communities which can attract the visitors. The home stay program should be given emphasize on the emotional feelings of the local people. It must be respectful of the social organizations, local tradition and sense of place. Communal returns of home stay accommodation are important for its success. Home stay accommodation is helpful for the development of tourism industry in the country or a region. Home stay tourism, participants are given the opportunity to experience the difference in the way of living and customs of the local community as well as given accommodation package throughout their stay in the chosen village. Since then, the home stay tourism has attracted tourists, particularly international tourists.

Benefits to Homestay

- (a) Earning additional income other than his/her regular income and sustained employment.
- (b) Use of Kerala tourism brand for marketing
- (c) Support from the government in capacity building
- (d) Facilitating by the government in getting loans from financial institutions for the improvement of the existing houses for its conversion into homestays.

Classification of Home stays in Kerala

The classification scheme will be implemented through the District Tourism Promotion Councils (DTPCs). It is based on the amenities and quality of the accommodation provided; Home stay units will be classified into three categories by bringing out clear guidelines on the requirements. The criteria for classification include:

- (a) Location of the house.
- (b) Quality, surroundings, amenities and hygiene of the house.
- (c) Access to the property.

- (d) Educational and professional background of the applicant and the family members.
- (e) Tourist attraction of the area.

After evaluating all these things they score the house out 100. Based on the score there are three types of houses.

- (a) Class A – score 75 and above – Diamond House.
- (b) Class B – score 60 – 74 – Gold House.
- (c) Class C – score 50 – 59 – Silver House.

The committee for classification of homestay units constituted by the government for the purpose will visit the units and if found satisfactory with the facilities, recommend the department of tourism for the classification of the unit. The order on classification will be issued by the government of tourism, government of Kerala.

The committee for the classification of homestays is constituted district-wise with the following members:

- (a) District panchayat president – Chairman
- (b) Additional director / joint director, department of tourism – Member
- (c) Secretary, District Tourism Promotion Council – Convener
- (d) District officer, department of tourism – Member
- (e) Representative of food craft institute – Member
- (f) Representative of KHRA – Member
- (g) Representative of IATO – Member
- (h) Representative of the local body in which the units is located – Member

There is a State Level Committee comprising the following members to oversee the implementation of the scheme, to monitor the progress and to intervene in issues, if any.

- (a) Secretary, tourism – Chairman
- (b) Director, tourism – Member
- (c) Director, KITTS – Member
- (d) Representative of KHRA – Member
- (e) Representative of IATO – Member

Procedure for Registration of Homestay in Kerala

- (a) Collect application form for Homestay Registration from District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC) office or can apply online.
- (b) If submitting a hard copy, then sent it to the concerned DTPC office.
- (c) Pay certain amount as registration fees depending on the type of Homestay.

- (d) The fee for Class A – Diamond House is Rs 3000, for Class B – Gold House is Rs 2000, and for Class C – Silver House is Rs 1000.
- (e) The Demand Draft may be payable to the Director, Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala, payable at Thiruvananthapuram. The fee is not refundable in case of rejection of classification or considering for classification in lower classes.
- (f) The classification for Homestay units will be given only in those cases where the owner/promoter of the unit along with his/her family is physically residing in the same unit.
- (g) In case of dissatisfaction with the decision of the categorization on classification, the unit may appeal to the Secretary (Tourism), Government of Kerala within 30 days of receiving the communication regarding classification/reclassification.
- (h) The application should be accompanied by;
 1. A clearance certificate from the Panchayat/ Municipality/Corporation.
 2. A Police Clearance Certificate from the Local Station House Officer.
 3. Document regarding the ownership of the building,
 4. The important road stretches from the building,
 5. The building plan,
 6. A checklist of the facilities and services providing,
 7. The checklist should be duly filled in and signed on all pages, &
 8. The pictures which depicts the interior and exterior of the house.

Documents to be Filed for Getting Registration

- (a) Prescribed application form duly filled in.
- (b) Proof of ownership/lease of the building.
- (c) Location plan showing access to the building from the major roads (need not be scale).
- (d) Plan and elevation of the existing building.
- (e) Plan and elevation of the building incorporating the proposed alteration, if required, certified by a qualified engineer.
- (f) Photographs of the building, including interiors.
- (g) Police clearance certificate from the Local Station House Officer.
- (h) The department has prescribed regulatory conditions to be abided by promoters of classified projects. The promoters should furnish the acceptance of these regulatory conditions in the prescribed form. The regulatory conditions and proforma of acceptance is appended along with the application proforma.

Who all can apply for Homestay Registration

1. A house having minimum of one room or a maximum of 6 rooms.
2. The house owner or his family members should stay with the guests staying there.
3. At least one family member should have the ability to speak in English.
4. The houses in tourist areas will get more priority to start homestays.

Types of Buildings which are Eligible for Getting a Government License

1. The building should be in good location with respect to tourism.
2. Maintaining good hygiene.
3. The guest room of the homestay should be;
 - (a) Bath attached,
 - (b) The bed room should be 120 sq.ft.,
 - (c) The bathroom should be 30 sq.ft.,
 - (d) The room should have telephone facility, &
 - (e) The facility for pure drinking water.

Inspection Procedure

After submission of the application, the local tourism department will conduct an inspection of the property.

1. The presence of facilities and services will be evaluated against the checklist and score sheet by the Committee.
2. The homestays should maintain required standards at all times. The Classification Committee could inspect the unit at any time without prior notice. Any serious faults will be reported to the Department of Tourism and the Department is free to take any action including cancellation of the classification.
3. Any rectification pointed out by the Committee will have to be complied within the set out time. Failure to do so will result in rejection of the application.
4. The Committee may recommend a category either higher or lower than the one which you are applied for. In case of category higher than the one you are applied, you will have to deposit the required fee for the recommended category. However, in case of lower category, there will be no refund of the extra fee.
5. Any changes in the facilities of the unit should be reported to the Secretary, District Tourism Promotion Council within 30 days.

Tax applicable

Every homestay where the daily charges of accommodation including other amenities provided is Rs 1000 or more should pay luxury tax.

- (a) Individuals or families who own a house of good quality in the State and can spare at least 1 room and up to maximum 6 rooms for tourist accommodation.
- (b) The classification will be given only in those cases where the owner/promoter of the unit along with his/her family is physically residing in the same unit.
- (c) At least one of the family members should be able to communicate in English.
- (d) The houses in areas of tourism importance will get priority.
 - a) Classification will be only for operational Homestays.
 - b) Once the unit applies for classification, it has to be ready for inspection by the Committee.
 - c) Classification will be valid for 2 years from the date of issue of order or in case of reclassification, from the date of expiry of the last classification, provided that the application has been received at least 3 months before the expiry of the last classification.
 - d) The classification for Homestay units will be given only in those cases where the owner/promoter of the unit along with his/her family is physically residing in the same unit.
 - e) A certificate from the Local Authority should be submitted along with the application.
 - f) A Police Clearance certificate from the Local Station House Officer should be submitted along with the application.
 - g) All applications for the classification or reclassification must be complete in all respects including application form, application fee, prescribed clearances, NOCs, certificates, checklist etc. The incomplete application is liable to be rejected.

The application fee payable for classification or reclassification will be as follows. The Demand Draft may be payable to the Director, Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala, payable at Thiruvananthapuram. The fee is not refundable in case of rejection of classification or considering for classification in lower classes.

Category Of Classification	Classification/Reclassification Fee (In Rs.)
Class A (Diamond House)	3000
Class B (Gold House)	2000
Class C (Silver House)	1000

Major Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study, based on the analysis of the data, are summarized below.

- a) Collaborations: Home stay in the same region need to collaborate to accommodate larger groups like study trips etc.
- b) Each home stay should offer a walking tour of the surrounding area that covers aspects like ecology, medicinal jungle plants, local customs and traditions in relation to nature and the way of rural life. Home stays should offer an introduction to local activities like pattu weaving, apple picking /pruning and basic farm work
- c) Home stays should be the centre for exhibiting local art such as traditional Kerala music and dance, painting and folk arts.
- d) There should be a dedicated effort to create a the homestay experience as a "Brand"
- e) Home stays must match the basic amenities of budget /midrange hotels (such as cleanliness and tidiness) they should promise the same amount of privacy to visitors.
- f) Home stays should publicize ethnic food. Home stays should dig deeper in to the regional culinary heritage to find out local food which is yet unknown outside the region. Homestays should make an effort to serve the food in the traditional manner rather than the modem/standard manner followed by commercial restaurants.
- g) Marketing Strategy for homestay is a plan of how to market the home stay and ensure that a maximum number of visitors are attracted to the idea of staying at a home stay. The marketing strategy will suggest ways to promote home stays and do's and don'ts of home stay operations. A marketing strategy is based on the following:
- h) Understanding the prospective customer/visitor Information provided by the surveyed tourists yield following factors that could be leveraged in deciding a marketing strategy.
- i) A homestay should give an opportunity to the tourist to know about local traditions and lifestyle, ethnic architecture and local products. The homestay operators should value their heritage and try to preserve and promote it through their homestay. This would always make the experience of tourists more fulfilling and enriching.

- j) Need of Institutional Mechanism to support the homestay tourism: Local NGOs and local institutions, like Village Development Committees, could be leveraged to form a supporting institutional mechanism for homestay tourism.
- k) Successful Homestay initiatives in different parts of Kerala had been initiated and executed by NGOs with the help of villagers.
- l) Transparency and credibility: It is important for operators to imbibe a habit of transparency with respect to cost of services, publically committed deliverables and remain true to the promise of homestay tourism.
- m) Safety at a tourist destination: Communities will greatly benefit if and only when the perception that Kerala is a very safe place for tourists is promoted and encouraged. At the ground level tourists should be acquiesced about the dos and don'ts of a safe stay and should have assurance of immediate assistance in case of a need.
- n) Openness and hospitality: In the spirit of the motto of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' all guests irrespective of caste, creed, nationality and sex should be treated with openness, courtesy and impartial hospitality.

Conclusion

Kerala is bestowed with various attractive features for tourism development. It is also blessed with golden beaches, beautiful lakes, splendid waterfalls, calm backwaters, cascading rivers, well-kept wildlife sanctuaries, tempting hill resorts, graceful valleys, exotic spices, numerous historical areas, pilgrim centres, cosmopolitan outlook of the people, colourful fairs and festivals in which tourists are especially interested in. Moreover, the tourism promotion agencies actively involved in the promotion of tourism by framing appropriate strategy. The Kerala 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. Homestay is a micro tourism entrepreneurship. It is a new concept adopted in Kerala. 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.