

Homestay as a reliable promotional tool for Cultural Tourism and Security in Indian context

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Abstract

Cultural tourism is a specialized cognitive form of tourism that focuses on culture and heritage of the particular destination. Cultural tourism gives political stability and security for the prosperity of tourism and local economies. It reveals about tangible and intangible products and their sustainable development. In this form of tourism, tourist immerses with locals and their cultural related activities such as rituals- festivities and authentic life. Homestay could be a potential component when cultural tourism is concerned. It adds authentic sociocultural richness to the tourist's experience. A prerequisite for tourism is development of cultural resources which are in abundance in India. Homestays are an attractive alternative tourism product to portray the cultural richness in India. It appeals more often searching for local lifestyle experience, novelty, personalized service and authentic social interactions. This research aims to pen down the significant impacts of homestay in promoting and enriching the cultural tourism business. It will explore and discuss the potential role of homestay in uplifting the cultural tourism of a destination.

Keywords: Cultural tourism, Homestay, Sustainability, Community based tourism, Promotion, Tourism Development

Introduction

As in recent times, few of the experiences which motivates the traveller most are heritage, natural environment, art and crafts, history of the land, culture-rituals, language, customs and cultures of people in other lands. The opportunities to observe and experience with others how they live, think and participate with ambience exerts an interesting and vital attraction. Tourist do seek to experience the flavor of a locale people's arts, architecture, cuisine, costume, music, painting, sculpture, celebrations and festivals and their rituals or the authentic cultural attraction may be cuisine, food habit, drink, entertainment or some other form of hospitality (Edgell et al., 2008).

Travelling has always been to exploring new experiences. The upgraded technologies and urbanisation have changed the lifestyle and living standard of people tremendously. A large number of population from the rural and remote areas is moving towards metropolitans and urban areas to look up for better job opportunities and also for good living standards. But the urban lifestyle does not able to provide the opportunity of relaxing in serene environments without the urban hustle bustle. This urges the people to take holidays and move to quiet clam areas to feel the other side of the life. The discretionary income, holiday time, status and prestige, reducing family sizes are some of the motivation factors which have added to the growth of tourism. (Lama &

Management, 2018) New forms of tourism like cultural tourism, nature based tourism, eco tourism, rural tourism, homestay tourism, agri tourism, volunteer tourism suggest the increasing demand of tourism where it gives the opportunities to a tourist stay close to natural, environment and to the host community.

Home stay tourism is a very new and trendy tourism concept, which is still in its evolutionary stage in the world of tourism. India has potential to set its homestay ecosystem as part of core tourism for its multi-faceted offerings. It offers unique experiences to wide range of tourist preferences like man-made heritages, Natural resource, ethnicity, cultural richness, pleasant hospitality, social bonding as community living, and many more untapped treasures that throws surprises to today's travelling fraternity. Homestay tourism has been a need based concept and hence has potential to prosper multi-fold under the ambit of demand driven i.e. pull mechanism. India has blessings of government policies and ecosystem to drive the demand further through mechanism like pro-poor programs, community based tourism, rural tourism, nature tourism and many more such unique proposition. (Bhan & Singh, 2014) This kind of tourism is based on three core pillars of service, attraction and facilities. Out of these three, India lacks in facilities and services. Through home grown resources and natural settings, this can be made more sustainable to take this forward to the next generation. So community plays active and important roles where promotion of tourism is concerned.

Concept of Homestays

Home Stay refers to book accommodation to anyone's residence outside his own local community that allows the tourist to experience a different lifestyle, authentic culture or even language. Herein the host community offers their furnished accommodation to tourist packaged with a personalized, homely hospitality which is authentic to local habitat. The infrastructure like amenities, living space etc. is shared with the tourist such that they can enjoy a homely hospitality. To make it an experience, the offering is usually packaged with meals, utility items and even allowing them to participate in their local festivals. Homestay packages are highly customizable based on the preference of any individuals based on the length of their stay or even extended or long stays unless specified by the host (Rivers, 1998).

Apart from accommodation, the Home Stay offers various activities for the guests to exclusively experience the cultural nuances of the area. Activities could be different from one home to another, which depends on the position of the geographical area. Instances like at a home stay in Thailand offers tourist to interact with monks, participate in nature tours, learning how to weave silk or cotton cloth, participating in agricultural activities, learn a specialized local skill such as cooking Thai Cuisine. Likewise in Japan one can learn craft of doll-making. Similarly, in India many Homestays in Kerala offers serene experiences of houseboats sailing around backwaters through narrow canals in canoes. In some of the Homestays in Rajasthan offers safaris by jeep or camel rides into the countryside, interact with tribes and to face-off with wildlife. In the hill stations, treks are offered by the host or tourist are engaged for nature walk to experience flora and fauna of the habitat. Few host family also hosts guests to take them around the

sights of their town or village, sharing local history and insights and an experience far removed from the usual tourist trudge.

The home stays are not just a regular holiday which to spend a few days to exploring the local area, they are a holiday destination in themselves. (Lama & Management, 2018) Homestay tourism can occur in any part of worldwide; residents of homestay countries can encourage the host community in order to develop their tourism industry. Also as a concept homestay can bring people from varied backgrounds under a single umbrella, quite literally, and can offer an ideal platform for long lasting sustainable development in society and in tourism business.

The word Home-Stay as a combined words 'home & stay' replicates that staying or lodging in some body's home as a guest by paying some monetary value or book a room on rent basis for some specific tenure. Guests are offered accommodation with some other necessary services by specific host family and community. Thus, the Home-Stay tourism or business has managed by an individual host or community. The 'Home Stay' gives tourist to experience far away from busy, hectic, and crowded infrastructural urban areas to the peaceful calm locality with full of splendid natural surroundings, by offering them to stay in natural, clean, comfortable and pocket-friendly accommodation and authentic local food. Thus, homestay provides to the tourist an inimitable authentic local experience and the charming interaction to the local host community. It opens the possibilities to understand a new and untapped place which the government enable to promote widely as a new tourist place and arrange for an alternative source of income to the rural host population (Gangotia, 2013). In home stay tourism visitors get an ample of chance to spend an quality time with the local family observing their customs, values and culture, which is an excellent opportunity to feel the taste of rural life (Magar et al., 2013). India is one of the famous destinations for homestay tourism for its culture, heritage and geographical land. The environments along with culture are inseparable in tourism business. Market value of this homestay business has been grown up with the demand of visitors. This business offers financial reward and monetary help to the local native community for restoring, protecting and conserving the environment and their indigenous culture (Laurie et al., 2012). We can count tourism as a component wherein development is concerned, giving importance to discover the ways of expanding constructive impacts and reducing damaging impacts (Ashley, 2000). To minimize the rural poverty and reverse migration homestay tourism can play a significant role. It assimilates many type of activities like trekking, cultural tourism, agro-tourism, health tourism, and ecotourism (Magar et al., 2013). Homestay business is known for good source of income generation as well as making foreign currency. It helps to increased tax revenue in the particular country also upsurge to economic development of the nation and creates the employment opportunities and helps to overcome with poverty reduction. It may also stimulate new markets for local community to show case and trade their local products, for example agricultural products, crafts and others (Pizam, 1978). The progression of tourism business can help to increase the literacy rate. Also with the growth of tourism can motivate people to obtain for higher education and look for new jobs and livelihood.

This community development can lead to the upcoming generation to feel the hunger for redefine and reclaim their cultural and ethnic identity. But the main concerns are giving training in hospitality and basic skill of local tour guiding to the local so that they could optimized the opportunity of the homestay business. Also provide them the opportunity to educate about the safety, security, basic hygiene, tourism as a business and conservation of environment techniques. Having said that tourism development of any tourist place has a positive impact on the lifestyle and livelihood of the locals of that place. Wherein on the other side of the hand it also comes with few negative impacts of the lifestyle and living value of the people such as losing their interest in own traditional culture and heritage(Effects et al., 1995).Many researchers have blamed the growth of tourism for degradation and deforestation of the environment. In recent time we have seen many examples of vehicle parking issues in the cities along with the traffic problem due to heavy flow of tourists. This kind of increasing urbanization in tourist places where there is surge up flow of tourism is actually increasing the environment and noise pollution (Gurung et al., 1996). Also there are many other negative impacts can be lighten due to development of tourism business such as increasing number of crime, women trafficking, alcohol consumption in society, exploration and manipulation local resources, harmful and damaging impact of livelihood of the native, effects on religious practices of the local community. These grounds are accountable for negative impression towards growth of tourism business. Tourism should to help to preserve the local culture and promote it as a business model to attract the tourist so that the local manpower get jobs and local resources can be use, and at the end economy of that particular place can be rise. Hence the sustainable tourism development should be focus extremely carefully and organize a proper training and guiding for local people so that they could learn how to run a business without harming the nature. At the end we can state that Homestay tourism can be count as a significant tool for progress and improvement of any rural places in every sphere together with environmental preservation, socio cultural conservation and economic development.

Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism can be called as a subsection of the tourism. Cultural tourism helps tourist to explore any particular place's culture and religion, the native's livelihood, meet their local people and visit their geographical land, to get the knowledge about their traditions, craft, rituals, art, languages, dress and cuisine which they are used to life their life. In urban cities tourist can find cultural tourism in museums, theatres and in local street. Many cities have exciting and mind blowing history. But when you find the cultural tourism in rural areas you have to take part in their lifestyle to see their values, customs. Thus it has been proved that the intensity of the tour is higher for a cultural tourist rather than a normal leisure tourist. So that is why tourists more prefer cultural tourism over a normal just a trip and it helping cultural tourism to become more popular. .

Cultural tourism is defined now as "the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information

and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs". The cultural tourism is an amalgamation of one's cultural identification by spotting other's exotic one. As a result of that many researchers report that cultural tourism has been playing a significant role when regional development of many tourist places is concerned. Cultural tourism is also accountable for preserving and restoring the local cultural heritage of a place. Culture has always been a major aim for travel. It plays a significant role in the development of tourism at all the levels. Research is revealing that fastest growing segment is cultural tourism among all the subsets. The recent phenomenon is tourists are more concern about acquiring knowledge and to explore new things so that they could feed their intellectual skill and individual growth and thus tourist became choosier about the destinations which offers them cultural encounters along with history, art and interaction with locals.

India is rich with ancient history, many years old culture and the supreme heritage. These rich resources boosting the cultural tourism and became predominant factor for the growth of tourism business in India. Ministry of Tourism and Cultural is big step that has taken by Government of India to encourage the cultural tourism. In recent years 'incredible India' campaign was a great hit and is helped to attract tourist in India and to promote India's culture in worldwide.

The thousand years old Indian culture made with various rules and rituals, and that has a significant impact on India's culture. One can experience the diversity in Art, dance, festivals, traditions, cuisine, and languages in different state in India. The most exciting fact about India is though its diversified but its united and this diversification making tourism in India more attractive and vibrant. This richness of cultural resource making India the ultimate tourist destination for tourist.

The most popular states in India for cultural tourism are:

- Rajasthan
- Tamil Nadu
- Uttar Pradesh
- Uttaranchal

Rajasthan as a cultural tourism is most popular place in India. The secret behind this popularity is the rich heritage and their culture. Places like Pushkar, Marwar is worldwide renowned for its crafts fair, specially the camel fair and in every year thousand and thousand foreign tourist come to visit this fair and festivals. Culturally rich Rajasthan is also known for its year's old heritage and vibrant history. All these cultural components are pillar for welcoming tourist every year in Rajasthan.

On second number we can count the state of Tamilnadu, which has an oldest Dravidian tradition and culture. Their ironic culture replicates here by the mind blowing temples. Uttar Pradesh also has a rank when cultural tourism is concerned. Although foreign

tourist mainly come to visit the Taj Mahal but a large number of tourists also do visit places like Varanasi, Vrindavan, Mathura in Uttar Pradesh. Recently Uttarakhand added as favorite destination to the tourist's list. This state offers the unique Himalayan mountain range which is known as adobe of Gods. In Kumaon and Garwal regions tourist also visit to tribute prayers to many ancient temples. Cultural tourism in India varies from place to place, south to north, east to west. Such as Madurai is famous for temples, Mahabalipuram is famous for its carved rock-cut temples and caves while Agra for Taj Mahal and Jaipur for palaces. Tourist can see the the diversity and uniqueness in every state of this country.

Cultural tourism is tourism towards the cultural heritage of a place. Culture has always been a major object of travel. Tourism is now a culture. Cultural attractions play a significant role in tourism in all the levels. Cultural heritage tourism nowadays is the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry. As cultural tourism is boosting in India phenomenally, the Indian government needs to take proper and proactive steps to encourage the growth in a sustainable way.

Homestays in India

Homestay tourism is very new trendy concept that tourists are appreciating now a days. India has huge potentialities to become a role model in homestay business. The natural resources as well as the man made treasures helping tourist to full fill their dreams of tourism. Top of it India is known for its hospitality and ethno-cultural richness. India has both cultural and natural phenomena that can drive the more attraction to tourist.

Every traveller who has compassion to see the culture, nature and heritage, has wish list to visit India. The common reason is its vast extensive natural beauty, periodic weather diversities, cultural ethnicity and most commonly hospitality of its communities. Tourist finds a delicate mix of experience while staying in a simple homestay.

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. 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 which are known for catching the regional and international tourist. Tourist appreciates the uniqueness and authenticity of The Ahilya Fort homestay in Maheshwar (Madhya Pradesh). With the great view of 225 coffee and spice plantation in Karnataka 'Honey pot' is famous in tourist. Kamarjar Lake in western Ghats is another exciting place for tourism. People do appreciate the informal and tailored homestay in The Cardamom house in Tamilnadu specially to enjoy the monsoon season. The god's own country

Kerala has numerous spots like Casa Del Fauno. Tourist like to stay in authentic homestay in Allappuzha, Phillipkutty's Farm in Kumarakom, Fringe Ford in Mananthavadi and Tranquil Plantation Hideaway in Kolagapara and so on.

Tourists like to experience calmness and quietness vacation in the environment of beautiful ecological surroundings in for Kerala's homestays. Tourism India is considered by many tourists as a perfect land for homestay. Thus, to give a proactive and accurate attention to expand the tourism by analyzing its opportunities and challenges as they exist in the phenomena.

Homestay as a Cultural Promotional Tool

(Acharya & Halpenny, 2013) The essence of homestay lies in connects with nature and its aboriginal community inclusiveness to offer access on their unadulterated lifestyle and culture. All these attributes and experiences can be well packaged under Homestay offerings. Similarly, Rural Homestay primarily offers the proximity to natural and access to local cultural attractions ((Anand et al., 2012)(Gu & Wong, 2006);(MacDonald & Jolliffe, 2003);(Musa et al., 2010)). These unique experiences are fantasized by the modern urban tourists (George et al., 2009).

Local and international tourism is getting increasing traction from cultural landscapes. The very same cultural landscape is in the epicenter of Homestay programs. In recent times, the cultural landscape concept has been a key sustainable lever to promote tourism. In tourism development, attraction of space and values attributed are important to preserve and maintain the originality of the natural landscape, cultural aspects and assets.

The essential element of such tourism is pivoted around environmental sustainability, in order to maintain the ecological eco-system, biological diversity and biological resources. Furthermore, associated elements are social and cultural sustainability to preserve social and cultural identity of the destinations.

In order to maintain the natural harmony, the local practices are important to be appreciated with caution of improving the same rather than questioning the existing rudimentary practices (if any). Of let, tourist footfalls has significantly increased to visit off-beat such locations to be more close to nature, explore cultural elements in other countries to experience and connect back to roots. They are quite demanding in their need to explore and experience the local lifestyle. These demand drivers are opportunities for the civil and governmental authorities to promote Homestay. This is important to note that Landscape is not just people seeing the area, but the way people experience the cultural elements, interacts with local eco-system and interprets the destination.

Cultural landscape for sustainable tourism is a strategic arsenal for tourism industry. Moreover, tourists are attracted to traditional flavor of food, traditions and customs, folks and cultural heritage. There are commercial products that are bucketed with individual modules based on natural landscapes and cultural attractions(Scheyvens,

1999). In the studies, most of the researchers and authors explain that tourism is a way of people seeing and experiencing the activities during their vacations. In order to strengthen the sense of identity of local community, the Local participation often expresses alternative perspectives on these aspects. (Suvantola, 2018) stated that the experience of a place is much more intense when it is found by the traveller, 'lived' rather than 'seen.'(UNESCO, 2003) stated that the national heritage can be well preserved through rural cultural landscape. Ironically, the National Landscape Department has limited involvement in conservation of such Heritage. Nowadays, the rural cultural landscape has threat of disappearances due to rapid urbanization, unless the knowledge and eco-system is preserved through a sustainable model.

Developing countries are at the fore front to utilize the levers of cultural landscape to grow tourism industry. Through this, the local community to learn, and practice cultural landscape in their daily lifestyle and receive information. This program generally engages veterans from the community who can correlate present with historic lineages and how cultural transformation took place over period of time; such creates a convincing storyline for the attraction of tourist. The next generation must be motivated to learn and continue this knowledge migration from those veterans to take this forward. (Samsudin & Maliki, 2015) Even rituals, stories, songs, legends, traditional performances and idioms, sometime become essential contributors of cultural elements and history.

Social Opportunities of Homestay

- The guest host interaction is the best example for cross-culture exchange.
- An ideal platform to encourage the harmony between different races and nationalities.
- The migration can be control when locals get the employment opportunity.
- Employment, income will build the confidence within the local community.
- With the development in tourism, literacy rate will increase. Locals will be familiar with smart technology and will be independent gradually.
- Locals will be aware about the conservation and sustainability of the environment.
- Economy upliftment and increase of employment opportunities.
- Poverty alleviation through tourism
- National and foreign investment will be increase in tourism.
- Economic benefits to the locals through handicrafts, organic food, souvenirs etc.
- Tourists can observe the phenomena of natural & cultural diversity.
- Rise tourism awareness in Host and guest community and attract the foreign tourist.

Challenges of Homestay

- The poor infrastructure is one of the main concerns as its becoming a bottleneck for potential homestay tourists. Government should immediately focus on building good roads, transport connectivity, electricity, medicine and healthcare and all other residential facilities.
- Although India is known for hospitality but in homestay professional skilled human resource is lacking and the behind reason is proper education and training center.
- The lack of policy leads to face problems like issue in registration of homestay, booking through internet etc.
- Proper marketing and promotion are very much needed to generate new business or to run the existing business. But lack of literacy and limited number of expert could not get the hold on promotion of homestay properly.
- The big loop hole in this business is the poor coordination among the main pillars of the business i.e government, stakeholders, intermediators and Ngo & non-government bodies.
- Communities is taking an incredible step to protect the nature and environment nut still they are lacking in terms of ecotourism practice and this is one of the major challenges.
- Homestay's viability is getting affected by the improper resource management.
- Apart from all the above points foreign tourists are demotivating to come to India because lack of social security, chaos, crime and peace.

Recommendations

After analyzing and deep diving in the topic, the following recommendations can be made to catapult growth and popularity of tourism by means of homestay:

The first and foremost recommendation is to preparing an adequate plan and strategy for the homestay business and for the local community. Without preparation and technical assistance homestay development is impossible.

Local people are main component for Community based tourism and they have direct interaction with guest. For enhancing their skills, they need proper training on leadership, hospitality along with good communication and personality development.

For improving the infrastructure host community needs the fund from government. Loan subsidy and other fiscal incentive should be provided to the locals so that they could build the nessecery arrangements' like bathroom, kitchen, proper rooms etc.

To promote homestays, tourism stakeholders should take the responsibility and also tourism entrepreneurs should take the charge to do marking campaign for the homestay tourism.

Government should offer "Leave Travel Concession" for their employ and encourage them to visit homestay tourism.

To avoid conflict every member of the host community should get the proper benefits. Therefore while planning for strategy, benefit sharing mechanism should be taken care of.

It is recommended to establish a community fund from where local can invest money on capacity building and infrastructural development.

Government should be treating differently in both community and private organization while providing the assistance and the facilities.

To generate more business homestay tourism needs a proper database where necessary information should be loaded, so that tourist can book, choose and explore without uncertainty.

Conclusion

Now a days Homestay tourism and cultural tourism both are one of the substantial studies. The studies reveals that developing the sustainable rural tourism the most important part is to restore the cultural values and tradition for the future generations. The proper strategies and planning will ensure to help the sustainability of the culture through the tourism and it will help the youth to learn more about their cultural traditional values in real life. This activity defiantly will stimulate the hunger to enhance their knowledge about their roots and will help to promote the same.

The unlimited products made tourism market huge in India. However, there is a large number which is untapped virgin and unexplored. Homestay considered as a micro entrepreneurship tourism business. Indian tourism newly adopted this version of the business. As people are enlightened with this homestay idea and knowledge, they are feeling courage and enthusiasm to develop homestay business. Because they know with the help of tourism business development they can secure their lost heritage, culture and identity. But government's lack of interruption is making the work harder. Proper planning, policy strategy and vision needs to be address if the government wants to expand the tourism business and to community development. A lot many homework needs to be done so that it can helps to reduce poverty alleviation, migration and economical sustainability. Currently only stakeholders are getting benefits through this tourism business. The Indian government should focus on diverting the international tourist in a rural place, so that the benefits and profitability comes directly to the local community as well as to the stakeholders. However, the innumerable temporary challenges can be fixed with growth of tourism and with proper strategic planning and hope to flourish more and more as a cultural homestay business in india.

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