

Poverty Alleviation through Community Based Homestays

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has always been seen as a tool for reduction of poverty across globe. Community based Homestays (CBH) is one such tourism concept which has been commended as successful in alleviation of poverty among economically weaker section and poor population worldwide. This paper examines the academic discourse and available literature to bring an understanding about Community Based Homestay Tourism as an effective tool in poverty reduction. Extant literature available on the subject suggests that Community Based Homestay has certainly helped many economically weaker populations across globe in reduction and alleviation of poverty. As community based tourism calls for active participation from various members of the community, it has certainly aided employment generation and played a phenomenal role in helping rural poor to earn their livelihood. The earnings made through CBH remains with the hosts resulting in improvement in their economic condition. Apart from poverty alleviation, CBH has also facilitated women empowerment, increase in rural entrepreneurship, promotion of eco-tourism and natural conservation.

Keywords: Homestay, Community Based Tourism, Poverty Alleviation, Pro-poor Tourism

1.INTRODUCTION: COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM

‘Community based Tourism (CBT) is a kind of tourism in which economically marginalized local communities invite tourists to visit their community with the provision of overnight accommodation’ (Community Based Tourism n.d.). For the sustainable tourism development, community participation in tourism and its related activities has been advocated as an integral part for a long time (Okazaki 2008). Community-based tourism fulfills three criteria: it should be supported by local people and they should show their participation; the economic benefits of CBT should go to local population and those who are living in vicinity; and the local people’s cultural identity and natural environment must be protected by act of tourism (Russell 2000). It is managed and owned by local community and it enables visitors to learn about the culture, local lifestyle and people (CBT concept n.d.). Members of local communities are economically benefitted as they engage themselves as service provider such as accommodation, food, transport, guiding tourists etc., producer of various goods that can be sold to visiting tourists and can be employees of various units related to community based tourism.

First International Conference on *NexGen* Technologies

Sengunthar Engineering College Tiruchengode, Namakkal Dist. Tamilnadu (India)

05th - 06th January 2018, www.conferenceworld.in

ISBN: 978-93-86171-90-0

II.ECONOMICALLY WEAKER SECTION

India has been known as a home for most number of people belonging to economically weaker section (poor) in the world. As per the Millenium Development Goals Report of UN, 1.2 billion poorest people live in India (United Nations 2014). As per World Bank, 80% of India's poor people reside in rural area and the poverty rate among rural population is about 25% (World Bank 2016). Improvement in conditions of economically weaker section and reduction of poverty has always been priority in India and has been prime objective of Government of India under every five year plan. Even then 21.2% (poverty measured at \$1.90 a day) of the Indian population continues to live in poverty (World Bank n.d.). Considering aforesaid distribution of poor population mostly in rural areas, it demands for actions directed towards reduction & alleviation of poverty and development of rural economy. Community based homestay is one such concept that has shown some success in alleviating poverty (Truong, Hall and Garry 2014) .

III.POVERTY

"Poverty is denial of basic human rights and is today a concern to all societies" (Tresilian 2006). According to (RoberticoCroes 2015), Poverty is a situation in which a person cannot meet predetermined requirements of consumption. According to Planning commission of India, "the main determinants of poverty are (i) lack of income and purchasing power attributable to lack of productive employment and considerable underemployment and not to lack of employment per se; (ii) a continuous increase in the price of food, especially food grains which account for 70-80 per cent of the consumption basket; and (iii) inadequacy of social infrastructure, affecting the quality of life of the people and their employability" (Planning Commission n.d.). A more comprehensive definition of poverty includes inequality, exclusion, vulnerability, powerlessness, marginalization and relative deprivation. Poverty alleviation or reduction has remained a great challenge for government. Government has been trying to accelerate economic growth by focusing on employment intensive sectors that will facilitate eradication of poverty in the long run (Planning commission n.d.). "Poverty is a concept that has defied universally accepted and objective definition or assessment because it is not only an expression of life situation, but equally a state of mind and a perception of self in the complex web of social relation" (Ekong 1991 as mentioned in Adawo 2011).

IV. HOMESTAY

Community-based homestay tourism is a form of tourism which is closely related to culture nature, and local custom and is usually intended to attract a particular segment of the tourist market that is interested in gaining authentic local & cultural experiences (Jamal 2011). Homestay forms a significant component of many community-based tourism destinations. Tourists/visitors/guests opting for homestay accommodation get the opportunity to experience and learn traditional lifestyle of the community through close interactions and exchanges with the host family that includes taking part in some of the host family's daily lifestyle activities (Boonratana 2010). Homestay by definition

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is the stay at a residence by travelers hosted by a local family (Merriam Webster Dictionary n.d.). Oxford Learner's Dictionary describes it as an arrangement that provides accommodation to tourists and students in exchange of a payment (Oxford University press n.d.). Homestay is one of the fastest growing segments in Tourism industry and is the key to cultural tourism (Wang 2007). Government of Malaysia defined "Homestay as an arrangement that gives tourists the opportunity to stay with a chosen family, interact and experience the daily life of host family and learn the culture and lifestyle of the rural community" (Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, 2014). Participation in homestay program gives an additional income to the host families. Usually, the idle rooms in the host homes are converted into rooms for guest and that becomes an income- generating unit for the host (Guevarra S. V., and Rodriguez M. P 2015). The idea behind homestay arrangement is to accommodate tourist with a local village family by which they can learn about local life, culture, and nature (Louise GaiHjulmand, et al., 2013). Unlumert (cited in Rahman 2012) has defined homestay as 'one type of lodging that the tourists share with home owner with intention to learn culture and lifestyles from the home owner who is willing to transmit and sharing culture.'

V. POVERTY ALLEVIATION: A FUNDAMENTAL TASK OF GOVERNMENT

Poverty alleviation has been a fundamental task of the Government in many countries, with tourism being perceived as a significant tool that contributes towards economic development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (UNWTO 2011). Alleviation of poverty involves strategic use of education, income redistribution, economic development and health of the poor population by government and internationally approved organizations related to the purpose (eschool today n.d.). India is home to 22% of world's poor and alleviation of poverty has been a guiding principles of Government of India (Planning Commission n.d.). Government of India primarily focuses on two fold strategy for poverty alleviation. They are "providing greater opportunity for the poor to participate in growth process by focusing on specific sectors, which offer such opportunities; poverty alleviation and social sector programs have been strengthened and restructured with special programs for the weaker sections of society" (indiabudgetn.d.). According to Planning Commission of India (Planning Commission n.d.), poverty alleviation and reduction has been the primary focus of Government of India. Various programs of the Government are floated through different five year plans that are targeted towards poverty reduction. Such programs include Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA). Similarly, wage employment programs include JawaharRozgarYojana (JRY), Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), Million Wells Scheme (MWS), National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) etc. Other programs include Land reforms, Anti-poor Laws and Policies, Integration of Poverty Alleviation Programmes with Sectoral Programmes etc. The approach to 12th five year plan is based on the fact that tourism can serve the goal of faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth. It aims at pro-poor tourism that helps in increasing the net benefits to the poor and to ensure tourism growth for alleviation of poverty (Ministry of Tourism, GOI n.d.).

VI. COMMUNITY BASED HOMESTAYS- A PRO POOR TOURISM CONCEPT

In the recent years, 'focus in tourism sector has moved from mainstream form of tourism to pro-poor tourism such as Community Based Tourism' (Harrison & Schipani 2007). Pro poor tourism policies are mostly focused on rural population than urban poor as rural areas have much scope for tourism in this context (Chok, Macbeth and Warren 2007). The benefits of tourism has encouraged local population to engage themselves in various tourism activities to develop it further (MasturaJaafar 2015). Community based tourism is defined as environmentally, socially, economically, and culturally responsible tourism visit to local/indigenous communities to experience, enjoy and appreciate their cultural and natural heritage, whose tourism services, products, and resources, are developed and managed with their active participation & ownership, and the resulting benefits from tourism, be it tangible or otherwise, are collectively enjoyed by all the participating members of the communities (Boonratana 2010). The success of a collective participatory tourism project can be evaluated only after critically evaluating and identifying level of participation from the community (E. Okazaki 2008) Involvement of the local community in the tourism activities will facilitate the improvement in living standards which includes economic and social aspects. This creates conducive environment that will ensure productive and healthy living of the community. This is absolutely true because community based tourism sector has been proven to promptly stimulate the economic growth and progressive development of the areas where it has been adopted. In other words, based on various advantages possessed by a particular geographical area, active participation from the local communities in the tourism activities has shown results in overcoming the enduring poverty crisis. Therefore in this context, the equal distribution of resources and opportunities should be prioritized to ascertain the success of any given tourism project in an area, that fulfills aspiration of the pro-poor tourism (FauziahCheLeh and MohdRezuanHamzah 2012). The term 'pro-poor tourism' - 'a tourism that generates net benefits to the poor' was coined in 1999. Since then, wide range of agencies in tourism development industry such as bilateral donors, multilateral institutions, and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) adopted the term rapidly within a short span of time (Regina Scheyvens, & Janet Momsen 2008). Community-based tourism initiatives are useful component of pro-poor tourism that aims to increase involvement of local people in tourism so that the beneficial outcome can be maximized. To maximize the positive outcome of pro-poor tourism, its strategies should be incorporated by all players in tourism viz. government, business, policy or local level. The studies conducted by V. Dao Truonga, C. Michael Hall, and Tony Garry 2014 in Vietnam; Baikuntha Prasad Acharya 2013 in Nepal; Peaty 2009 in Himalayan regions of India; Regina Scheyvens, & Janet Momsen 2008 in small island developing states; Caroline Ashley, & Dilys Roe 2002 in Africa suggested that pro-poor tourism initiatives viz. community based tourism, homestays and other such components showed positive results in reducing poverty and improving the economy of the community.

Homestays as a part of Community Based Tourism is prevalent in Asian countries such as in Malaysia, Thailand, Mongolia Cambodia, and Bali Indonesia. These countries have formed a Community Based Tourism network. Many

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ISBN: 978-93-86171-90-0

Countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean have also formed a Community Based Tourism Network (Mariam Jamaludin, Norain Othman, and Abdul Rahim Awang 2012). Phonwiset, Yomsatharn, and Chusakul (cited in SabbirRahman, 2012) has mentioned homestay as community based tourism product which is affordable and comfortable for tourists and is also successful in attracting tourists. Homestay is popular tourism option in many countries; it adds authentic social and cultural richness to the tourist's travelling experience. For the country which possesses an abundance of tourism richness among remote communities cannot make extensive infrastructural investment a priority, homestays are an attractive alternative tourism product (Baikuntha Prasad Acharya 2013). As the Homestay program developed, it brought out significant socio-economic benefits to the local community (Tsonis 2009). A Homestay is a combination of the comfort and distinction of a boutique hotel with the personalized hospitality, informal relation between host & guest and local knowledge of the host enjoyed when staying. A Homestay, being experiential tourism in nature offers an insight into the culture, traditions, history and everyday life of a family. Guests staying at homestay get the opportunity to enjoy authentic food at its very best – prepared at home (Venkatesh R. 2015). UNESCO had implemented community based tourism in eight South Asian countries during 2002 and 2005 vide it's project "Development of Cultural and Ecotourism in the Mountainous Regions of Central and South Asia". The aim was to develop community-based ecotourism in order to bring the economic as well as other benefits of growing tourism to poorer members of rural communities in remote mountainous areas. The project implemented through NGOs brought impressive results; household income increased by 25% through community-based tourism, women and youth benefitted from the opportunities for employment and skills building, the natural environment and cultural heritage could be protected and conserved through involvement of community in tourism (Tresilian 2006).

VII. POVERTY ALLEVIATION THROUGH HOMESTAYS

According to study by (AnandChandan, & Singh 2012) community based homestays in Korzok, Leh has been successful in reducing poverty; create employment opportunities to local youths as well as economic upliftment of women. Homestay in Korzok is an example of how money earned through homestay business remains with the poor and helps them run their livelihood. Community based Homestays operated in rural communities is a form of social entrepreneurship. It helped in reducing poverty and sustainable development by enriching the image of the destination in Nepal (Baikuntha Prasad Acharya 2013). Community Based Homestays in Nepal has not only been successful in alleviating poverty but has also helped in promotion of eco-friendly tourism and natural conservation (The Himalayan Times 2016). Similarly, a study by (Regina Schevyvens, & Janet H. Momsen 2008) observed community based tourism has been successful in providing genuine benefits to the poor in small island developing states. If the local population is encouraged for greater participation and they are empowered with decision making regarding development of tourism, it can help them corner benefits of tourism. According to (Jamieson, Goodwin and Edmunds 2004) pro-poor tourism initiatives has been successful in alleviating poverty.

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Since a section of tourists look for reasonably priced accommodation, they may opt for Homestay. As a result Homestay becomes one such means that gives poor population to earn something and help them in poverty alleviation. Community Based Tourism and Homestays in Malaysia have created employment opportunities and has been a proven tool in reduction of Poverty (Ibrahim and Razzaq 2010). It has become a proven tool for the development of rural areas (Kumar, Gill and Kunasekaran 2012). In Thailand, evidence of Community Based Tourism being successful in improving economic condition of rural population can be found in the study conducted by (Suriya and Gruen 2012). Homestay activities combined with souvenir production helped poor population of village in engaging in community based tourism that helped them alleviate poverty. Evidences of economic improvement through Homestays can be found in the study done by (Bhuiyan, Siwa and Ismail 2013) wherein they found homestay as a potential economic activity which ensures employment opportunities helping people generate income which in turn will help in alleviation of poverty in East Coast Economic region. Homestay tourism in South-Africa has been implemented as a main component Local Economic Development Programmes of Government for the reduction of poverty among disadvantaged women by turning them into self-reliant entrepreneurs (Kwaramba, et al. 2012). Realizing the significance of Homestays in alleviation of poverty among rural poor UNESCO has been supporting Homestay programmes in various Himalayan regions of India. Such projects have reaped positive results towards alleviation of poverty (Tresilian 2006).

VIII. CONCLUSION

The extant literature on Homestays & Community Based Tourism suggest that CBH has been an effective tool in poverty alleviation and has been successful in reducing poverty among the poor population of the implemented area. Community Based Tourism initiatives has been taken as a measure and forms part of poverty reduction programmes by various governments across globe. Homestay has been one such Community Based initiative that helped poor people earn their livelihood and improve economic condition. CBH has also been successful in women empowerment, employment generation in rural areas, promotion of eco-tourism, and conservation of natural resources. Further, CBH has also helped conservation of ethnic culture, art, art and architecture as these have become additional tourist attraction in combination with Community Based Homestays. Overall, CBH has undeniably benefited the economically weaker section, poor and marginalized section across places where it was implemented.

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05th - 06th January 2018, www.conferenceworld.in

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