

A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF RESPONSIBLE TOURISM ON THE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF HOME STAY OWNERS IN KUMARAKOM

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Abstract

Tourism is a fast growing industry in India. It is believed that Tourism has huge potential for revenue generation. But it is important to explore the untapped aspects of tourism . Providing Home stay arrangements can enable tourists to experience the rich culture and traditions of the host community too. This study is an attempt to know about the economic conditions of home stay owners in Kumarakom before and after responsible tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been recognized as one of the prominent contributor towards the GDP of our country. In 2015, 44.2 billion US\$ was the direct contribution of tourism and hospitality sector to the Gross domestic product of our country. Trade, repair services, hotels and restaurants collectively forms the third-largest sub-segment of the services sector which contributed nearly US\$ 187.9 billion or 12.5 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014-15, The Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) over the period from 2011-12 to 2014-15 also shows significant progress. From the above figures we can easily understand that the Indian tourism and hospitality industry has emerged as one of the key drivers of growth among the services sector in India.

Apart from the contributions to the GDP, tourism is also considered to be important since, tourism in India has significant potential considering the historical importance of places, variety in ecology, culturally rich heritage sites, and naturally blessed beauty spots spread across the nation. Tourism is also a potentially large employment generator besides being a significant source of foreign exchange for the country.

Significance of the study

Apart from these positive aspects, when an area starts being visited by tourists, there are bound to be some social economic and cultural impacts of those tourists on the host community and economy of the destination . Locals may see increased congestion and overcrowding in towns and cities, perhaps an increase in crime, the introduction of new languages and values, and perhaps even an influx of migrant workers to be employed in the tourism industry. It is important to minimize these negative impacts and to focus more on positive aspects, such as promoting cultural exchange and preserving local traditions. This can usually be achieved by getting the locals involved in tourism. This is important from the view point of sustainability too as the locals will be more aware about the specialities of the location than any outsider. Having the community involved will not only offer visitors a more genuine experience, but offer a space where the locals will get an economic opportunity from tourism.

Economic sustainability means reducing leakages and building linkages—essentially, an attempt to keep the money local. A foreigner owned and operated hotel or restaurant is not likely to contribute much to the local economy. Much of the money gained will flow overseas. This is not sustainable. Therefore in responsible tourism ventures, guests are invited into the local houses where they get an opportunity to take rooms on rent, interact and share with the family members in the local household. This sort of accommodation is called as home stay.

Meaning of the term Home Stays

The home stay concept is ideal for visitors to experience the rural and traditional way of life, and for the local community to participate in and benefit directly from tourism. Home stays provide an authentic visitor experience that directly improves the lives and heritage of local Communities and aims to discover the nature and to enjoy the untouched and undisturbed country-side. The home stays are not hotels; instead they reflect the traditional and simple atmosphere of the rural lifestyle. Apart from the pleasure of being amidst peaceful and serene environment, tourists can also enjoy the tradition & culture of the rural hill communities.

Here the locals are also given a chance to gain from tourism without spending huge amounts on investments. This study is an attempt to know the socio economic conditions of home stay owners before and after their investment in tourism.

Objectives of the study

- To study about the economic conditions of home stay owners before and after their investment in tourism.
- To study about the association of literacy levels and income of home stay owners.

Hypotheses of the study are:

- H₀ : There is no association between literacy levels and income of home stay owners.

Methodology

Primary data was collected from home stay owners who belonged to Kumarakom . Respondents were selected on a random basis based on convenience. Data collected through survey were supplemented with secondary data which were found relevant to make the study more significant. The questions were pertaining to the income levels of respondents before and after their initiatives in tourism ventures. Data was also collected to know the literacy levels of individuals who earned from tourism . For testing the hypotheses, chi-square tests were administered at 5% level of significance . The period of study was from October 2015 to November 2015.

Analysis and interpretation

Out of the 50 home stay owners surveyed, 40 were men and only 10 were women . Respondents were asked about their satisfaction regarding the earnings from their home stay businesses.

Table No 1. Showing Genderwise satisfaction of respondents

Entrepreneurs	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Total
Men	25(50%)	15(30%)	40(80%)
Women	8 (16%)	2(4%)	10(20%)
Total	33(66%)	17 (34%)	50(100%)

Source: Primary data

Irrespective of the gender differences, large majority of the home stay owners were happy with what they got from tourism business . Majority of entrepreneurs in the home stay sector are men mainly because majority of the landholdings are held by men according to the patriarchal system being followed in Kerala. 66 % of the respondents were satisfied with their home stay business which amounts to a large proportion.

Engagements apart from tourism

It is very important also to know whether the respondents surveyed have some previous connections with the tourism or related industries. Previous working knowledge can influence the way things are handled in a business venture. Rural agriculture, trading and fishing activities should be integrated with the home stay business so that people who are not directly connected with tourism would also start to benefit from this tourism ventures. This integration would help eradicate poverty from the locals by deploying the foreign funds.

Table No.1 showing the other engagements of home stay entrepreneurs

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Trading	12	24
Fishing	3	6
Business	05	10
Unemployed	05	10
Others	07	14
Agriculture	18	36
Total	50	100

36 % of the respondents depend on agriculture as their main economic activity along with home stays. This may be because of the agrarian nature of the kerala economy. 24% of the respondents were involved in trading activities. Traders should try to provide indigenous products which would attract the attention of tourists. If this is done, leakages can be minimized to the maximum possible extend.

Change in Income after engaging in tourism activity

Though agriculture was the main economic activity of the state, initiatives in the sustainable tourism development promoted the growth of many tourism related businesses . Questions were pertaining to the change in income after the beginning of home stays.

Table No. showing the income of home stay owners before and after their investments in tourism.

Annual Income levels of the family	Before	After
Upto 50,000	16	04
50,000-100,000	14	05
100,000- 200,000	12	20
200,000- 300,000	03	18
Above 300,000	05	07
Total	50	50

From the data analyzed, we can understand that the income levels have improved considerably. Respondents said that their returns from the home stay businesses are very good as they had to spend very little for the business developments. Children, Youth and the women folk also earn from the tourism initiatives of the home stay owners. Children can even earn by making garlands for the guests and by inviting them into the houses. Youth and the women folk can earn by preparing traditional delicacies for the guests. but they also pointed that they are finding it difficult to meet their ends meet during the off season periods. This may be because of the inefficient saving habits of the people. Mr A Varghese opined that savings can act as a source of income during off seasons for the seasonal income earners through his book 'Home management'.

Association Of Literacy Levels And Income Of The Home Stay Owners

Study was also done to know about the association of literacy levels and income of the home stay owners from tourism ventures. It is believed that education levels of a person can influence the way a person behaves and deal with people. People were surveyed and chi square tests was conducted to know the association of education and income generating capacity of home stay owners.

Table showing literacy levels and income of the home stay owners (in'000 s)

Particulars	Upto 50	50- 100	100 -200	200-300	Above 300	Total
Upto Higher secondary	06	07	09	00	01	23
Upto Graduation	01	04	05	01	00	11
Upto Post Graduation	00	02	02	01	01	06
Upto Professional Level	00	01	04	02	03	10
Total	07	14	20	04	05	50

Results

Chi Square Test Statistic

16.845

Degrees of freedom

 $(5-1)*(4-1)= 12$

Table Value

21.026

Calculated value is less than the table value, Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis. And it is understood hereby that they are independent .

From the analysis of primary data, we can understand that education levels have influence on the income generating capacity of the home stay entrepreneurs. Qualified people are able to earn more amounts by making use of all possible scientific tactics and integration of tourism with other activities. But there are people who are able to earn good numbers even while having a low educational qualification. This may be because of the entrepreneurial skills of the home stay owners

Findings of the study

- Irrespective of gender, home stay owners are satisfied with their earnings from the business.
- An integrated approach with other engagements is seen along with tourism. Rural agriculture and fishing are mainly integrated along with tourism in Kumarakom.
- Annual Income of home stay owners have increased considerably after their initiatives in tourism ventures.
- Education levels have an influence on the income generation capacity of home stays.

CONCLUSION

Local people organize and host the visitors and therefore are the primary recipients of the benefits, financial and otherwise, that build up from the tourism activity. In addition to the host families, many of the micro-enterprises in the locality can also get benefitted directly from the influx of tourists and increase demand for their products. The program also acts as an important mechanism to learn, share and conserve local values and customs. Such tourism activities provide direct economic benefits to the locals and make them participate in the conservation of the local environment that is the prime attraction for the tourists. Home stay Experience has potential in fulfilling niche segment market for both international and domestic tourists. Home stay Experience provides the local community with alternative incomes and becomes a poverty reduction tool.

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