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A Study On Socio-Economic Empowerment Of The People Of [DARJEELING]

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ABSTRACT

Home stay tourism is an emerging tourism concept evolved lately in the tourism industry. Darjeeling with its multi potentialities, natural gifts, cultural richness, innocent social settings and pleasant hospitality can be a model home stay. It can give immense opportunities for rural employment, with government focusing on pro-poor programs. This form of tourism is mainly based on service, facility and attraction. Home stays are attractive alternative tourism product. The natural and cultural attributes of Darjeeling can be showcased best through home stays. Female ownership secures women's avenues for income generation. The hospitality industry must diversify its offerings to keep up with the exponential growth in tourism industry. Darjeeling cannot have big industries but tourism through home stay can flourish. The government also wants to promote it. Home stay tourism has been in practice in many developing countries as a model of social economic empowerment of the people in rural villages. Currently, there are thousands of home stays and large people had been involve in home stay tourism in Darjeeling. Quantitative method is the main method used in the study. With the objective to reveal the development that is taking place in the Darjeeling town due to the growth in the home stay industry. The paper is a study of how home stay is providing dynamics to tourism industry in the hills of Darjeeling.

Key words: tourism business, heritage tourism, home stay, financial challenges, home stay owners

Introduction

Home stay tourism is an emerging tourism concept evolved lately in the tourism industry. Darjeeling with its multi potentialities, natural gifts, cultural richness, innocent social settings and pleasant hospitality can be a model home stay. It can give immense opportunities for rural employment, with government focusing on pro-poor programs. This form of tourism is mainly based on service, facility and attraction. Home stays are attractive alternative tourism product. The natural and cultural attributes of Darjeeling can be showcased best through home stays. Female ownership secures women's avenues for income generation. The hospitality industry must diversify its offerings to keep up with the exponential growth in tourism industry. Darjeeling

cannot have big industries but tourism through home stay can flourish. The government also wants to promote it. The paper is a study of how home stay is providing dynamics to tourism industry in the hills of Darjeeling.

Darjeeling is a much sought after destination for tourist all over the world. The queen of hills Darjeeling is surrounded by definite slopes of bright green tea plantations and set against a back drop of jagged white Himalayan peaks. Tourism in Darjeeling is very old. It has a lot of attraction for the tourist. In the recent years a new concept of home stay has been growing at a very fast rate in the hills. Home stay is staying in someone's home as a paying guest for short time period. These guests are provided accommodations and services by individual family. The guest gets to experience the local way of life staying with the owners of the house. At times there can be more than one family staying in a particular house. As home stays are permitted to have a minimum of one room and maximum six rooms as per the ministry of tourism government of India norms. Home stay seeks to draw tourist away from posh and crowded urban areas to the rural locality full of splendid natural surroundings. Home stay has developed community based eco tourism in the Himalayan region of India. The rich culture and the highest level of hospitality attract the tourist from all over the world every year. Home stay is aimed at encouraging employment and revenue for villagers. It has reduced outward migration to a great extent.

HOME STAY IN DARJEELING-

Home stay in Darjeeling is typically an extension of house of the local. The landlord and his family would stay in one part of the property while there will be a separate rooms for guests. Most of the times the dining room and even the living room would be common, so that you can interact with the owner's family when you stay there.

You can also join the kitchen and lend your hand in cooking or learn from the family how to prepare local Nepali food which is often delicious. In the evening when you are back after sightseeing you can sit with the family members in the living room and watch TV.

So a home stay in Darjeeling is all about staying in local home experiencing and enjoying Darjeeling using the way and eyes of the local. You can even participate in their day to day life to get insight into their practices and culture. This experience is completely different from a hotel.

Some of the registered home stays which have made a difference are –

- Happy valley home stay fifteen kilometer walk from the market.
- Himalayan inn, is cozy home stay run by local Nepali couple with two rooms
- Pahari soul home stay, three kilometer from main town run by a lady out of her passion
- Sameer home stay, young man and his family run two room cottages.
- Snow lion home stay, walking distance from mall run by a local Tibetan family.
- Singell home stay, located at singell tea estate in Kurseong by a worker and his family

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Mr. Venkatesh R The role of home stay in promoting rural tourism. The study provides a brief discussion of home stay and rural tourism development. It focused on the potentialities of home stay for rural tourism development and also discussed the positive outcomes of promoting home stay at the rural and remote areas. It revealed that home stay operation could be created alternative accommodation opportunities and a tool for promoting rural tourism and its benefits to the local community, economy and art and culture of the region.
2. Dr Suryakant D.kohosti and Ms Sonal Gaurav Sharma Hospitality industry: issues and challenges (a study with special reference to Agra - the study focuses on the issues and challenges of tourism in and around Agra city. The study highlighted the current issues of tourism industry based on human resources practices, operational practices and various financial challenges.
3. Md. Anwar Husain Bhuiyan, Chamhuri Siwar and Shaharuddin Mohamad Ismail Socio-economic impacts of home stay accommodation in Malaysia: a study on home stay operators in Terengganu state -home stay accommodation give focus traditional life style, local culture and customs to attract the tourist. The present study examines the economics potentiality of home stay for operators.
4. Yahaya Ibrahim, Abdulrasid Razzaq. Home stay income and employment the number of home stay provider in Malaysia has been increased. A study on rural community development in Malaysia- Yahaya Ibrahim, Abdulrasid Razzaq. The home stay is a tourism product that has been given special emphasis by government through the ministry of tourism. Due to the potential of home stay program to provide addition
5. Zainul Abedin Jangua, a systematic literature review of Rural Home stay and sustainability. Rural tourism journals, sage pub.com June 2021. In his study, he found that rural community especially homestay operator lack essentially marketing skill. He says homestay branding is largely ignored. He highlights important implementation for rural community based home stay to position their tourism product strategically based on sustainability.
6. Smriti Thakur, Status of Homestay tourism in India Himalayan region, analysis of customer review and policy support for Sustainable Tourism, Sage Journals 2023. She finds that homestay has emerged as a popular idea in the tourism industry act as the most suitable tourism activities in the Indian Himalayan region homestay not only provides economic benefits to rural community but also promote local art, architecture, tradition and food habits.
7. Priya Bhalla, Homestay contribution to community based ecotourism in the Himalayan region of India, Tourism recreation research 2016, she investigated how villages participation in the homestay program can influenced attitude behavior related to ecotourism within a Wildlife Sanctuary. She says home stay program has encourage local Guardianship behavior opportunities to improve and expand conservation efforts with the help of communities in the region could be further developed.
8. Ajay Thapa, role of home stay tourism on the socio economic empowerment of rural people of Nepal International Journal of recent advances in multidisciplinary research VOL-8-2021. He finds that Homestay tourism has been instrumental in generating livelihood of the families in the rural villages in Nepal it has created part time employment opportunities and generation income in the household of the home stay operators

. It has also held in empowering rural women with more employment and income .It has also help youth to migrate back to villages.

9. Anil ghimire, home stay service for tourist satisfaction in rural areas, research gate 2023, according to the finding of the study there is a relationship between Homestay experience destination satisfaction and behavioral intention. The study finds that improved satisfaction through Real Experience is derived from destination locals tourist can learn more about the destinations local culture through Home stay. Homestays are not only lodging facilities but also one of the destination tourist attractionsthat influences travel motivation as a pull factor.

10. Dol raj kafle, exploring home stay tourism in Nepal: Unveling opportunities and challenges, historical journal 2023, homestay tourism in Nepal offers a unique and enriching travel experience, allowing tourists to immerse themselves in the local culture, traditions, and hospitality. It has the potential to foster cross-cultural understanding and friendship while contributing to the local economy and supporting small-scale tourism enterprises. The tradition of home stays in Nepal can be traced back to ancient customs of hospitality and respect for guests, making it a natural fit for the country's tourism industry. Homestay tourism has gained popularity in both rural and urban areas of Nepal, providing a family-like atmosphere for tourists and serving as an alternative to building immediate high-quality hotels in remote areas. Through homestays, rural tourism has flourished, positively impacting the income and overall wellbeing of local communities, offering employment opportunities, and raising living standards

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To study advancement, development and dynamics of home stay industry in Darjeeling
- To emphasize the major opportunities available through home stay tourism in Darjeeling.
- To identify the challenges faced by the home stay industry.
- To study the high growth rate in the industry through commercialization and its effect on the real stake holders.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study will be conducted in Darjeeling home stay tourism industry. The intrinsic features of Darjeeling fit in very well considering the development of home stay as a strong tourism option. The study will be based primarily on primary and secondary data sources such as previous studies, journals, books, reports, magazines and several online data sources along with field survey. The study is aimed to determine how home stay is redefining tourism in the hills of Darjeeling.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

- The local people of the proposed home stay tourism destination are not technically assisted to prepare home stay planning and development.
- Loan subsidy and other fiscal incentives are not provided to the local people for upgrading their existing facilities i.e. bed, rooms, bathrooms, tap, cleanliness etc.
- Home stay tourism destination should be connected with other tourism stakeholders of the country.
- Government should provide “LEAVE TRAVEL CONCESSION” for public servants and promote them to go on home stay tourism.
- There is a need of development of home stay tourism database so that tourist can easily explore, choose, and book their stay.

CHALLENGES FACED BY HOME STAY IN DARJEELING

- Owners are in a dilemma over government home stay policies.
- Fire license, sarai license and food license are mandatory.
- Poor infrastructural facilities, road, electricity, health care and communication are reducing the pace of growth of home stay.
- Peace, security and chaos situation de-motivate tourists to visit Darjeeling.
- The entry of big players in the sector may bring trouble to small and real home stay owners
- Home stay in Darjeeling is nothing new but it is only recently that the concept is flourishing as a business opportunity. The state has also promised to incentivize and promote home stay. However owners are in a dilemma over the governments home stay policies to operate it as a business.
- Anil gurung a retired govt. employee running a home stay for the past few years in Darjeeling sub division says home stay is an alternative source of income for us and provides employment. However according to the practice of the government on home stay; there are certain issues that are not relevant to us. Fire license, sarai license, food license are mandatory, specifications on room and bathroom size could be hindrance to the business. They are aware that safety and security of the tourist are of immense importance but home stay means tourist living in home having food with members and adhering family norms. It cannot be compared to hotels. Owners of 50 home stay from Darjeeling, kursong, and mirik have formed Himalayan home stay owners association (HHOA). Darjeeling cannot have big industries however tourism and home stay can flourish. So policies must be lenient towards them. At present home stays are running by having trade license. There are more than 400 home stays in Darjeeling.

GROWTH OF HOME STAYS IN DARJEELING

- There has been a considerable growth in number of home stay in the district of Darjeeling. In 2000 it were around 150 and now in 2018 it has gone up to more than 3000 in numbers covering Darjeeling, Kurseong, Mirik and Lamahatta. In 2022 the number has gone up to 8000.
- The foreign tourist booking has grown more than 500% in the last 5 years. Along with the growth there are many positive development as the 400 home stay in Darjeeling, Kurseong, Lamahatta hills have decided to declare war against plastic bottle water which is regulated with filtered water plastic cup with earthen ones to stay the queen of hills from turning into a giant garbage dump. Water is being served in thermo steel or uni-steel bottles to be returned after use. Tea to be served in earthen cups. The Himalayan home stay owners association brought out a cycle rally in the hills on the world tourism day to generate awareness. Darjeeling is one of the most untidy hill towns because of the rampant use of plastic. Darjeeling economy revolves around the tourism with every family dependent on this industry directly or indirectly. Lacks of tourists visit the hills every year and leave behind thousand of tones of plastic trash. Garbage finds its ways into sewages, rivers, and streams triggering landslides. Pollution is also causing climate change.

Research methodology

This study has been conducted in Darjeeling district, which is one of the districts in Bengal having multitude of tourism potentials. It is known as one of the best tourist place in the world. There are several well known home stay villages in Darjeeling such as Gandhi Road, Ghoom, Lamahatta, Sukiya, and Ranterung where thousands of households have home stay facilities and are famous as domestic and foreign tourist destination. The study has adopted the mixed method of research comprising of qualitative and quantitative methods. The study was conducted on 100 home stays in the Darjeeling town. The data has been collected from these hundred homestays by adopting a kind of DE FACTO method of senses. A structured interview schedule was used to collect the data for the study.

Characteristic of home stay operators

variable	N=90	Percent
gender		
male	28	31
female	62	69
age		
20-30	18	20
30-40	50	55
40-50	8	9
50-60	6	7
60-70	8	9
Statistics n=90 mean= 46.67 S.D= 12.112		
education		
Literate	69	77
illiterate	21	23

digitization		
Smartphone	90	100
Online booking	63	70
Online payment	90	100
registered	51	57

In demographic characteristic we studied the gender, age, education and digitization variable of the respondents. 70% of the home stay operators were found to be women. Home stays has lead to the women empowerment and entrepreneurship development which is the demand of the present time. Age is associated with experiences as well as the capacity of an individual. In the above analysis 55% of the home stay operator was in the age group of 30-40 years and the minimum age was 21 years. An interesting fact was that operators with the age up to 70 years were economically active in the home stay business. 9% of the respondents were in the age group of 60-70 years which tells us the fact that home stay is also considered as a retirement business. The literacy rate of the respondents was quite high. 77% were literate as Darjeeling has a high literacy rate of 96%. Education is a major source of knowledge and skill. Education is believed to have a significant influence on the awareness and behavior of the activities they are engaged in. most of the illiterate were in the higher age group of 50-70 years. As far as digitization is considered all the respondents had a smart phone and they had the facility to receive the payments in on-line mode? Only 57% of the home stays were registered with West Bengal tourism department and only 70% of them were doing booking through online mode. We can say that digitization is taking place at a rapid pace in the home stay industry in Darjeeling. Women entrepreneurship, retirement business and digitization are the key highlights of demographic study.

Income generated by home stay operators

Income 2022/2023	N=90	Percent
0-100000	5	5
100000-200000	15	17
200000-300000	55	61
300000-400000	15	17
Statistics n=90 mean= 92.70 S.D= 116.24		

Use of income from home stay

item	N=90	Percent
Food	37	41
Health	8	9
Education	29	32
Cloth	6	7
Festival	10	11

Number of home stay operators fully dependent on home stay for livelihood- 32=35.5%

As a added source of income- 58=54.5%

Income generation is the main motive behind the whole concept of home stay. From the above data we can observe that 78% of the operators are able to generate an income of more than 200000 in a year i.e 17000 per month, considering the seasonality aspect of the industry it is a good income as 54% of the respondent considered home stay as an added source of income which means they have some other source of income also. We can say that home stay involvement has lead to the economic empowerment

of the home stay operator. Since Darjeeling is a expensive tourist destination these home stay are providing their facilities at a reasonable price so they are having a regular demand. Most of the income generated from home stay business is being used for the basic necessities food, cloth and education.

Employment created by home stay operators

Employment	N=90	Percent
0	0	0
1	0	0
2	40	45
3	42	47
4	4	4
5	4	4
Statistics n=90 mean= 2.176 S.D= 0.886		

Income and employment are the basic logic behind the home stay business. Home stay operators are not only getting self employed but are also providing jobs to others. From the above data we find that 92% of the home stay operators are providing jobs to 2-3 people. This is the direct job creation that we are taking about but indirectly these jobs are created many times through drivers, guides, restaurants and local market product demand. Since Darjeeling cannot have big industries and factories but alternatively home stays can flourish and can provide huge employment opportunities and restrict the youths from migration. One of the respondent sons had returned from Dubai to look after the home stay which his father had started in Rangerung 5 kilometers from Ghoom.

Social development of home stay operator

Variable	Highly negative	Negative	No effect	positive	Highly positive
Increase in confidence					
N			36	36	18
Percent			40	40	20
Statistics n=90 mean=4.562 S.D=0.572					
Social involvement					
N		8	8	36	38
Percent		9	9	40	42
Statistics n=90 mean= 4.548 S.D= 0.528					
Social network					
N				18	72
percent				20	80
Statistics n=90 mean= 4.466 S.D=0.555					
Prestige					
N			5	25	60
percent			6	28	64
Statistics N=90 mean= 4.763 S.D= 0.473					
hygiene					
N				12	78
percent				13	87
Statistics n=90 mean= 4.675 S.D= 0.589					
Living standard					
N			8	8	74

Percent			9	9	82
Statistics	n=90	mean= 4.875	S.D= 0.463		
travelling					
N		8	8	26	48
Percent		9	9	29	53
Statistics	n=90	mean= 4.766	S.D= 0.477		
Invitation in social ceremony					
N			28	36	26
Percent			31	40	29
Statistics	n=90	mean= 4.882	S.D= 0.442		

Source field survey 2022/2023

Social empowerment of the home stay operator-

From the above analysis it is evident that the involvement in the home stay has positively contributed in the social empowerment of the home stay operators. All the parameters are showing highly positive result, social network [100 %], prestige [94 %], confidence [60 %], social involvement [82 %], and living standard [91%]. Home stays has made a serious impact on the social lives of the home stay operators. They believe that the involvement in home stay has improved the health and hygiene of the whole area itself.

SUGGESTION

- Home stay planning and development cell should be created in order to differentiate between hotel with tag name home stay and real home stay.
- Home stay should be linked with the tourism department.
- Financial assistance should be provided to improve the standard.
- A strong data base should be created so that tourists can easily explore.
- Home stay are excellent options for tourists specially those who have got fed up with the urban hectic life. Guests here can truly get to live the life as the locals do, that is not at all possible in hotels. Guests come to know the culture and history of the destination. Darjeeling is ideal for home stay and it would expand the growth of tourism in a great extent.

SOME IMPORTANT POINTS

- ✓ Poor infrastructural facilities such as good road, transpirations, electricity, healthcare, communication and other residential facilities and without these facilities it is difficult to establish and promote better services to existing as well as potential home stay visitors.
- ✓ There is lack of proper legal regulations for example registration of home stay, booking of home stay and other relevant policies.
- ✓ Improper management of resources at the destinations is also a big challenge in extension of home stay viability.
- ✓ Poor maintenance of peace, security and chaos situations which de-motivate foreign tourists to Darjeeling.

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS -

- The local people of the proposed home stay tourism destination should be technically assisted to prepare home stay planning and development.
- Loan subsidy and other fiscal incentives should be provided to the local people for upgrading their existing facilities i.e. bed, rooms, bathrooms, tap, cleanliness etc.
- Home stay tourism destination should be connected with other tourism stakeholders of the country.
- Government should provide “LEAVE TRAVEL CONCESSION” for public servants and promote them to go on home stay tourism.
- There is a need of development of home stay tourism database so that tourist can easily explore, choose, and book their stay.

CONCLUSION

Home stay accommodation is an excellent way of experiencing the authentic style of living of a destination. Guests staying here can truly get to live the life as the locals do, in a way that they would not be able to in a hotel. They get to know about the culture and history of the destination. Home stay operators however need to work on the hygiene levels as well as provision of basic amenities to the travelers. They should also take care to have enhanced security measures that will greatly enhance the comfort level of their guests. It is also important to keep in mind that they should coordinate with the locals to maintain the natural and cultural beauty of the destination.

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