



***Term Paper on:
The prospects of homestay tourism
development-ways & means.***

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Introduction

A Home-Stay, by its combined words (home stay) is staying in some one's home as a paying guest for short time period. But such guests are provided accommodation and services by individual family and community too. Therefore, the Home- Stay Regulation has accepted it as run (managed) by an individual or community (Timlasana, 2012). The “Home Stay “seeks to draw tourists away from posh and crowded urban areas to the rural locality full of splendid natural surroundings, by providing them with clean, comfortable and budget-friendly accommodation and food. Thus, homestay offers the traveler a unique local experience and possibilities of interaction with the host family. It offers the chance to experience new and untapped places which has enabled the government to popularize new tourist destinations, and provide alternative source of income to the rural folks (Gangotia, 2013). In home stay tourism visitors get a chance to spend time with the family observing their customs, values and culture, which gives them the opportunity to feel the taste of rural life (Devkota, 2010). In homestay tourism, both the environment and culture are commoditized; market value is created with the demand of visitors. This provides financial reward to the local indigenous community for conservation of the environment and their culture (Laurie et al, 2005). Under this approach tourism is considered to be a component of development, giving emphasis to explore ways of expanding positive impacts and reducing negative impacts (Ashley, 2000). Home stay tourism is a major player when it comes to the reduction of rural poverty. It integrates all activities of tourism such as trekking, cultural tourism, agro-tourism, health tourism, and ecotourism (Devkota, 2010). It is a good source of earning foreign currency. It reduces the gap in the balance of payment, provides increased tax revenue, gives rise to economic development of the nation, increases the employment opportunities. It may also provide new markets for local people to sell their products, such as agricultural products, livestock and others (Budhathoki, 2013). Growth in tourism motivates people to pursue higher education and to obtain new jobs, and it thus also increases the literacy rate. It provides opportunities for new generations to redefine and reclaim their cultural and ethnic identity. The villagers and other concerns were given trainings in hospitality and basic guiding skills to the local residents to provide them the opportunity to learn about hygiene, tourism and conservation techniques.

Impact of Homestay tourism in local economy

The homestay tourism can contribute to preserve the ecological sustainability, generate self-employment and initiate economic growth in the rural communities (Devkota 2008).

Homestay can create a mind-shift of the local people towards environment conservation. Primarily a homestay program helps to preserve natural structure of any destination because it encourages tourist accommodation in village-homes rather than any resort or hotel built up destroying agricultural land or forests. Additionally, it can directly involve rural people in the tourism and providing them with extra income which make them more conscious about conserving the natural resources like streams, lakes, forests which are tourist attractions. Another important outcome is that the local people become more conscious about waste management and maintenance of a clean and peaceful environment.

Devkota (2008) have identified a list of positive impacts of homestay tourism on local economy and society which are:

- it can address to build up the quality life of indigenous people of the village area.
- it makes rural people capable of accessing the benefits created by tourism industry, i.e. employment and income generation etc.
- it helps to expose the rural culture and nature to the outside world.
- it contributes towards protection against environmental degradation.
- it induces the increased use of natural and human resources of the rural areas for rural development.
- it is a way to decentralize the national economy through promoting local agricultural and other industries.

Most authors expressed their positive opinion in favor of homestay program indicating that it has shown the preliminary positive impact on rural village development, rural women development, local economy, environment, and the entire community and have increased awareness among the local people about the cultural and heritage preservation. (Tsonis, 2009; Logar, 2009 ; Devkota 2008).

Potential Outcomes of Homestay Tourism

Community Based Tourism (CBT) has dimensions of poverty alleviation, reduction in unemployment and environmental conservation. Through CBT we should try to fight poverty and inequality as well as promote sustainable development including climate change and environment sustainability. There is a need for nurturing innovative ideas and harnessing emerging technologies to achieve the above social goals. Homestay for Community based tourism (CBT) is a novel idea for country like Bangladesh.

CBT, by definition, is aimed at involving local rural people in economic decision making directly. As a tool of CBT homestay program will use the existing household for food and accommodation of tourists rather than allowing construction of hotel, motel, restaurant, resort etc. The tourist will create increased demand for the products produced by the local farmers, craftsmen and small businesses. When a large hotel company comes from urban area and provides tourist accommodation in tourist destination, the income or employment generation becomes offset due to negative effects created through destruction of cultivable land or forest. Additionally, that hotel does not create any economic empowerment or involvement by the local people. So from this perspective, 'homestay' can be the solutions of social, economic, ecological problems created by traditional tourist accommodations (resort/hotels).

The goals of CBT can be achieved with the application of the homestay tourism in the following ways:

Table 1: Alignment of CBT goals with the outcomes of Homestay Tourism

	CBT goals	Outcomes of Homestay Tourism
1	to overcome poverty	Homestay can create income generation as a source of extra income for host family and increased income for local farmers, businesses, craftsman, cultural performers etc. plus can create employment generation for local people, most commonly as tourist guides.
2	to achieve financial and economic sustainability	Homestay can provide opportunity to improve economic condition of the whole community and also can empower them economically

		(allowing them making economic decisions about production and buyers).
3	to ensure environmental preservation	Homestay can provide alternative accommodation (existing village homes rather than hotels/resorts), not destroying local ecology (forest, farm-land) plus can create environment consciousness among local people and tourists.

The pro-poor approach translated through homestay (CBT) is the most important match between social business philosophy and that of homestay. Additionally, homestay can achieve many social goals and create a ‘social transition’ as a combined effect of women empowerment, reduction of family and group conflict, preservation of local traditions and cultures and so on.

On the basis of our discussion we can propose a social business model development process for establishing homestay in the rural areas near to any prominent tourist attraction as well as in the tribal villages within the naturally beautiful hilly regions (see Figure 2). Additional tourist accommodations if are established here, like traditional hotel, resorts etc. might be replaced with the eco-friendly ‘homestay’ which have numbers of community benefits identified so far.

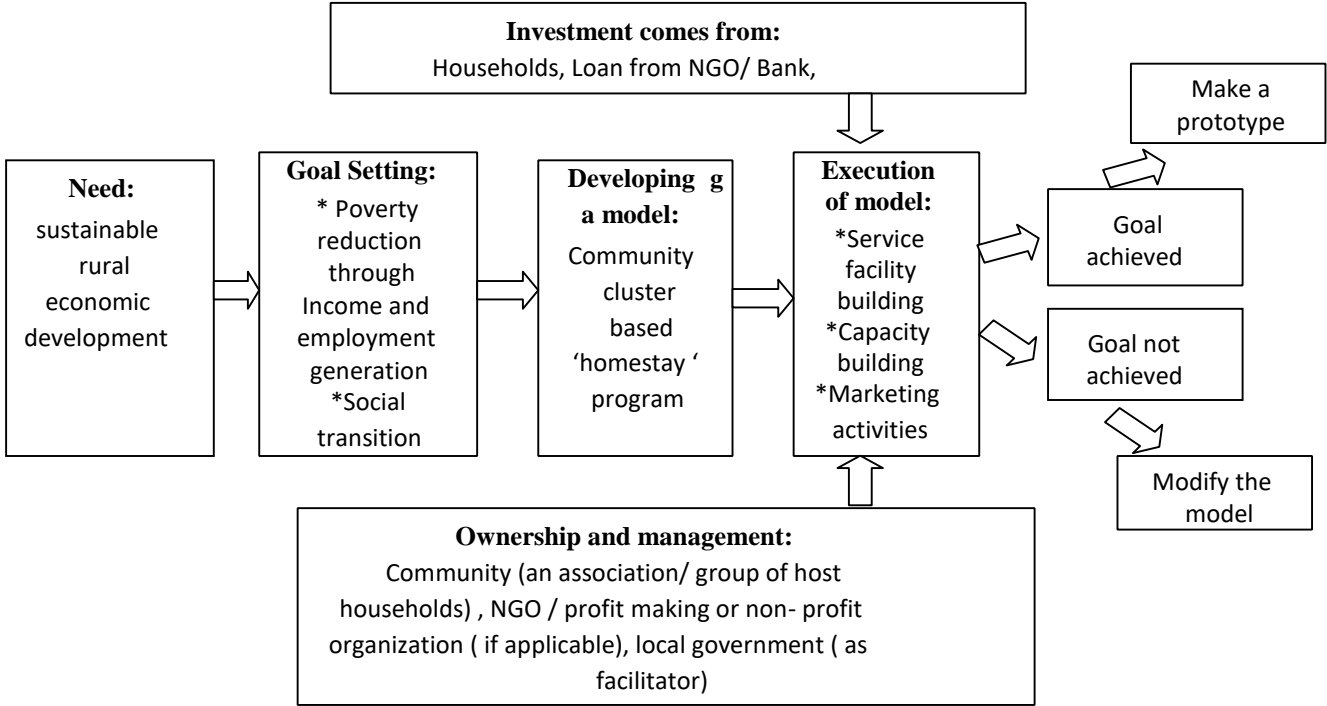


Figure 2: A Proposed Business Model for Homestay in Bangladesh (supported by a model developed by Rahman, 2014)

There is need in the rural areas for creation of employment and generation of income. Many village residents shift to the cities to find job, which eventually leads to a loss to rural economy. In the context of acute social problem, a social business model can be created to address the problems. The proposed model of Homestay program will be a cluster business. In this model the host-households will earn as individuals but should work as a cluster within the structure of a group or association and will share some common resources (tourist attractions, infrastructures, craft centers, cultural performers, social or cultural functions/festivals etc.). The partner investors like the households, their group (a group fund), the local government, the NGOs, banks together can create a organizational structure for smooth operation of the business. In Malaysia, Nepal and Bangladesh, such organizational structures have been created to run homestay businesses (Devkota 2008). As cluster they might create some infrastructure (a community center) in the spot with their combined fund. The household may invest in the program to establish service facility (sanitary toilet) and for this they can take loan from bank or NGO.

The government and for-profit/non-profit organizations, who can become investors in homestay program, may also participate in:

- Production activities through providing capacity building like training for food preparation, housekeeping, health and hygiene maintenance etc.
- Management functions through providing advice and consultation to aid managerial and financial planning.
- Marketing functions through proper advertisement and networking.

Marketing function will play a crucial role in success of this business model. It is applicable in any kind of tourism based business. Also, business partners like government and for-profit/non-profit organizations to play there to make the social business model successful.

Social Opportunities of Homestay

- An ideal platform for cross-cultural exchanges (guest host interactions).
- Reducing conflicts among different races and nationalities.
- Retention of youth by involving them in local opportunities.
- Learning new languages, skills and builds confidence among locals.
- Make locals tech savvy and “smart” and independent as modernization gradually creeps through.

Environmental Opportunities of Homestay

- Would be very helpful in reducing common sanitation related diseases since training would be conducted.
- Persuading the locals to keep the premises, kitchens and toilets etc. neat & clean.
- Increasing awareness on environmental conservation among host areas.
- Assembling funds for conservation of physical environment.

Tourism related Opportunities

- Tourists get a chance to witness natural & cultural diversity.
- Increase in accommodation supply capability of the destination.
- Removing the problem of seasonality by promoting the destination all year round.
- Increase tourism awareness amongst local and foreign tourists by the constant intervention by key role players.

Infrastructural Opportunities

- Increasing accessibility to villages by linking them with easily accessible roads.
- Increasing the number of education & training centers for capacity building.
- Increasing safety & security of locals as well tourists at the destinations in question.
- Improving healthcare & public utilities at the remote destinations.

Factors influencing tourist choice of homestays

For homestays to gain the economic benefits from tourism and sustain their source of income, they need to pay special attention to factors influencing tourist choice of homestays and tourists' satisfaction. According to Kozak and Rimmington (2000), tourist satisfaction is considered to be an important element to maintain competitive business in the tourism industry because it affects the choice of destination and the consumption of products and services. Tourist satisfaction has become an important tool to measure the cultural and heritage sector (Peleggi, 1996). To satisfy guests, accommodation providers need to understand their guests in terms of the experiences they seek. Therefore, it is important for homestay providers to understand which attributes satisfy guests in order to develop better business strategies and gain the attraction of more customers.

Another important aspect of tourists' satisfaction is the motivation of tourists to visit homestay destinations. Tourist motivation is the combination of the needs and desires that affect the tendency to travel in a general sense (O'Leary & Deegan, 2005). Even though other issues apparently influence tourist behavior, motivation is still taken to be a major indicator and explains why tourists behave in certain ways (Fodness, 1994). Individuals escape routine environments and seek their choice of recreational opportunities such as visiting new places, having new experiences and meeting new people (Mannel & Iso-Ahola, 1997). For instance, specific attributes of a cultural destination such as friendliness of the local people, a relaxed atmosphere and cultural events and are important pull factors in attracting tourists.

Homestay tourists believe that the homestay represents a unique way of living in a new setting and culture. The tourists are looking for an authentic experience, to see the new architecture and a sense of being at home. Lynch (2003) asserts that homestays are popular with tourists who want

to interact with local culture, social system, lifestyle, and people. Further, Levitt (1996) concludes that the important components of the homestay program are education, entertainment, enrichment, food, accommodation and hospitality.

CHALLENGES OF HOMESTAY

- Poor infrastructural facilities such as good roads, transpirations, electricity, healthcare, communication and other residential facilities and without these facilities it is difficult to establish and promote better service to existing as well as potential homestay visitors.
- Lack of skilled human resources such as guides, entrepreneurs, hospitality professionals and this is due to lack of availability of education and training institutes.
- There is lack of proper legal regulations for example registration of homestay, booking of homestay and other relevant policies.
- Marketing and promotion of homestay tourism is also lacking in the country. There is no proper arrangement for extension of marketing and network in the nation.
- There is poor coordination among different tourism participants such as government, tourism players, tourism intermediaries and other non-government bodies associated with homestay tourism.
- Less awareness regarding conservation of natural as well as cultural resources among locals. Lack of ecotourism practices is also a major challenge in successful development of homestay in Bangladesh.
- Improper management of resources at the destination is also a big challenge in extension of homestay viability.
- Poor maintenance of peace, security and chaos situations which demotivate foreign tourists to visit Bangladesh.
- Basic communication can be a problem because not all people in village in Bangladesh have skill in communicative English.

- Marketing and promotion are necessary for survival of the homestays, where households must rely on others, like government body or an NGO.
- Capacity building in hygienic environment maintenance, healthy cooking, housekeeping etc. are to be established.
- Lack of coordination and supervision (government organization, travel agencies).

Possible Solutions to Address the Problems

1. Loan or subsidy for housing and management and infrastructural support from local government.
2. Special provision for infrastructure from Village Development.
3. Capacity development training.
4. Networking and communication skill development and access to medias for promotional activities.
5. Marketing and promotional support from different stakeholders.

Conclusions

Community Based Tourism (CBT) itself is a revolutionary idea to bring micro-economic improvements of the deprived and poor people in the world. CBT comes with the philosophy for rural community development. The idea of socially focused business model in the form of homestay can introduce a new era in the tourism sector in Bangladesh. The strength of rural Bangladesh is growing in the context that the people are more literate, women are more empowered and sanitation of the villages are dramatically improved.

In Bangladesh electricity is available in rural areas now, most of the girl children are school going, and internet facilities have reached the rural areas with implementation of the government program on 'Digital Bangladesh'. So we have lots of potentiality in developing homestay tourism. However, the author feels that further studies are required to assess the successful implication of the model and proposes that the future researchers should conduct longitudinal study to appropriately assess the success and failure of homestay models to develop policy suggestions.

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