

An Analysis Of Role Of Women In Homestay Based Tourism

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Abstract

Background: An emerging concept of tourism, offering people's homes for staying on in vacation is popularly known as Homestay based Tourism. The present study tries to analyse the role of women in homestay based tourism. This form of tourism takes advantage of the local customs, culture and most importantly the natural beauty of the area. Tourists are encouraged to participate in activities of the host family, which gives it popularity compared to any other form of rural tourism. Thus, homestays are a model for originality and development in the tourism industry. The Indian Ministry of Tourism has been focusing on their various action plans to promote homestays as a tool for development of the communities as well as for the women in our society.

Materials and Methods: This study is a qualitative research utilising secondary data only. This data was obtained from diverse sources, including books, journals, government agencies, and non-governmental organisations.

Results: A significant impact is being noticed in the socio-economic upliftment of the rural local areas through homestay based tourism.

Keywords: Homestay based Tourism, Role of Women, Culture, Custom, Socio – Economic Upliftment

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I. Introduction

In the final decade of the century, one of the most significant topics is the empowerment of women. To improve their standing in society, women must be economically and socially empowered. Tourism has been recognised as an important instrument for women empowerment in the contemporary global economy. With the various opportunities, this tourism business industry faces so many challenges in terms of women empowerment as well as gender equality perspectives. Women in the tourism industry mainly work in low-skilled jobs for poor wages, even though the employment rate is high.

According to World Tourism Organisation (1993), Tourism encompasses the activities of persons travelling and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes. (<https://tourismnotes.com/travel-tourism/>)

Travel and tourism have recently become a major economic force globally, contributing over 12% to total world trade and expanding at an annual rate of 8%. The tourism sector, a component of the service economy, offers extensive prospects for employment generation and fosters entrepreneurship, especially in emerging and impoverished countries. It is acknowledged as one of the fastest-growing industries in India and globally, with boundless opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. Tourism, adhering to the traits of the service industry, differs slightly from other commodities. Customer satisfaction and seasonal conditions are significantly influence this sector.

The tourism industry, akin to other sectors, aggressively advocates for and facilitates the participation of women, encompassing occupations of diverse skill levels as well as positions as entrepreneurs and company executives. As a fundamental industry, tourism stimulates the growth of ancillary sectors, promoting their expansion and creating more employment and business prospects. The number of women entrepreneurs is rising, and their significant contributions are widely recognised and applauded globally.

It is important to enable women to fully engage in all facets of the economy in order to strengthen economies, accomplish globally recognised development and sustainability goals, and enhance the standard of living not only for women but also for men, families, and communities also. (Times of India, 7/2/2020)

This paper intends to investigate the role of women in the tourism industry along with the social progression and economic development of women through homestay based tourism. The objectives of the study are:

- i) To understand the dynamics of homestay based tourism.
- ii) To outline the role of women in homestay based tourism.

II. Material And Methods

This study is a qualitative research utilising secondary data only. The data and information for this present study have been sourced from existing secondary materials pertaining to the role of women through homestay based tourism. This data was obtained from diverse sources, including books, journals, government agencies, and non-governmental organisations. The reports from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Department of Tourism Development were referred. Multiple websites were also consulted for requisite information.

Now a days, globally tourism is a very popular source of income. Homestay based tourism has gained popularity significantly. This popular type of tourism contributes to the empowerment of women in India also.

In 2023, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reported that this industry accounted for 9.1% of the worldwide GDP, reflecting a 23.2% rise from 2022 and a mere 4.1% shortfall compared to the 2019 level. In 2023, 27 million new employments were created, reflecting a 9.1% increase over 2022.

The travel and tourism sector offers distinctive employment prospects for women. In 2010, the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and UN Women published a Global Report on Women in Tourism. This established a set of measures to assess the involvement of women in tourism within developing regions. Like men in other fields, the travel and tourism industry presents opportunities for women to work as entrepreneurs and be self-employed.

This sector is one of the fastest-growing industries in India, playing a major role in boosting foreign exchange earnings and generating employment for millions each year. It serves as a key employer of women and opens up diverse avenues for them to earn independently.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) emphasised the theme 'Tourism opens doors for women' during the World Tourism Day celebration on September 27, 2007, to promote women's involvement in tourism. It acknowledged that women have uniquely contributed to the advancement and enhancement of the tourism sector.

This tourism sector tries to minimize poverty and promote development through various programmes. The Millennium Development Goals also emphasise upon:

Goal 1: employment and poverty alleviation,

Goal 3: gender equality and women's empowerment, and

Goal 7: the relationship between employment and environmental sustainability.

It is also of utmost importance to understand that to achieve the above MDGs; the sector of tourism has to provide economic opportunities for sustainability and gender equality. Homestay based tourism has also gained popularity due to its role in achieving rural development, poverty reduction and as well as women empowerment (ILO, Toolkit on Poverty Reduction through Tourism, 2011).

UN Tourism encourages the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics in Tourism, in order to maximize socio-economic contribution while minimizing its possible negative impacts (UNWTO). (<https://www.unwto.org/tourism4sdgs>)

The year 2001 has been declared as the International Women's Empowerment year by the UN. The organization's General Programme of Work for 2008 and 2009 was women's economic empowerment in tourism.

The Ministry of Tourism has developed a nationwide strategy to promote Rural Homestays as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative (MOT, GOI, 2022).

Homestay Based Tourism

A homestay is a privately owned residence situated in rural regions of the State, maintained in good condition and readily accessible within the countryside, such as among farmhouses, orchards, or tea gardens. The residence must meet the minimal criterion of providing one or more rooms, with a maximum of three rooms, each equipped with an associated toilet facility, designated for tourists as Homestay accommodation. (Misra, L, 2012).

Conventional tourism has been replaced by Homestay based tourism opening a new vista for the tourists to enjoy and experience more culturally engaging and multi-dimensional scope while also extending support for the involved local indigenous people. This type of tourism promotes cross-cultural interaction while also facilitating a more equitable distribution of tourism related economic gains. For several travelers, particularly those pursuing genuine and unconventional experiences, homestays provide an opportunity to diverge from

conventional tourist packages and connect with a region more profoundly. Visitors frequently engage in domestic tasks, agricultural endeavours, community celebrations, or the preparation of traditional cuisine, so enhancing their comprehension of the host culture. Simultaneously, homestay tourism has emerged as a crucial source of income for local hosts.

Furthermore, homestay tourism aids in the preservation of traditional knowledge and customs. In areas with rich heritage—such as indigenous groups, tribal settlements, or culturally significant rural locales—homestays serve as a conduit for preserving oral traditions, crafts, music, and ecological practices. Tourists develop a profound respect for these traditions upon observing their practice, and this awareness frequently results in advocacy for their preservation.

There are a number of reasons why staying at a Homestay can be preferable rather than staying in a hotel. Some of the benefits of Homestays in India include Distinctive Accommodations, Personalized Service, Local Knowledge, Home Cooked Food and Unique Activities.

Opportunities of Homestay

There are lots of economic and socio-cultural opportunities in rural homestay based tourism which makes this form quite unique. These are:

Economic Opportunities of Homestay

- 1) Homestay tries to bring jobs and economic opportunities to rural areas in order to reduce poverty.
- 2) Homestay business encourages local and foreign investment in rural tourism.
- 3) Preservation of native skills, such as handicrafts and artisan creations.
- 4) Direct economic benefits, such as food consumption, lodging, and souvenir purchases.
- 5) The promotion of micro entrepreneurship in the tourism industry and its numerous allied fields, as well as domestic and international investment in the industry.

Social Opportunities of Homestay

- 1) Homestay is an ideal platform for cross-cultural exchanges with guest-host interactions.
- 2) Homestay gives opportunities to connect with local cultural activities.
- 3) It tries to reduce conflicts among different races and nationalities.
- 4) Retention of youth by involving them in local opportunities.
- 5) Homestay business gives opportunities to learning new languages, skills and builds self-confidence among local men as well as women.

Homestay based Tourism has gained a unique popularity over the years. It is also quite noticeable that women of the households play a big role in ensuring all required support in this Homestay based tourism. A lot of factors like food, hospitality, cleanliness depend to a great extent on the involvement of women with Homestay based tourism. Homestay based tourism has emerged as an effective tool for empowering women. It has allowed women to participate in the decision – making process. It has ensured women's economic empowerment, thus allowing them their right to control and benefit from the resources, assets, income and their own time, as well as the ability to manage risk and improve their economic status and well being.

Homestay based tourism enables women to earn their living making them self – dependant. It is, therefore, important to understand do women themselves understand their role and importance in this entire business of homestay based tourism.

Role of Women in Homestay based Tourism

Women significantly contribute to homestay based tourism. Women do several jobs, including cooking, housekeeping, home maintenance, safety, guest communication, and sales and marketing. Daily domestic responsibilities include cooking, menu planning, cleaning, laundry, and grocery shopping. Consequently, homestays are the favourite employment sector for female workers. The male staff oversees the overall operations, while the female staff attends to the fundamental needs of homestay tourism business. The maintenance encompasses gardening, planting, repairing homestays, and other outdoor tasks executed by the male workers of the homestays.

A crucial responsibility of managing a homestay is engaging directly with guests and providing tour guidance. These responsibilities necessitate exceptional communication abilities, amiable dispositions, and familiarity with local cultural nuances. Women are instructed to leverage their inherent gentleness and kindness to excel in welcoming and interacting with tourists. Nonetheless, men are favoured for tour guiding. It is evident that women typically engage in work within the household, whilst men are accountable for tasks outside the household. In the homestay tourism sector, a distinct gender division of labour is evident, with women predominantly engaged in daily chores such as cooking, cleaning, and providing hospitality. on the other hand, men undertake responsibility beyond the household.

Women are demonstrated to be one of the main powers in homestay based tourism business operations. The influence of the patriarchal framework is evident in both rural and urban India, while women empowerment is significantly less apparent in rural regions compared to metropolitan settings. This is particularly concerning, as a significant portion of India remains rural despite the rapid urbanisation and expansion of cities.

The literature on tourism and women emphasises several advantages of homestay tourism for women, including:

- 1) Homestay tourism a greater propensity to hire women and minority groups compared to other sectors.
- 2) Homestay tourism provides local women with chances for business in handicrafts, food items, etc.
- 3) Women who have to take care of their homes can work part-time or on shifts in homestay tourism.

Tourism can be sustainable when managed meticulously, as it can support conservation measures, increase incomes, and generate employment without depleting the country's resource base. The infrastructure of the local population can be improved by an increase in homestay tourists.

(<https://www.rjhssonline.com/HTMLPaper.aspx?Journal=Research%20Journal%20of%20Humanities%20and%20Social%20Sciences;PID=2015-6-4-4>)

III. Result

The study revealed that Homestays can help women in many ways, including:

Social status: Social altitude: Homestays can enhance women's social status and influence. In addition to financial independence, homestay tourism has markedly enhanced the social empowerment of women in India. A multitude of women once restricted to domestic responsibilities have acquired enhanced confidence and decision-making power within their families and communities. Operating a homestay necessitates engagement with guests from various backgrounds, thereby improving communication skills and expanding viewpoints.

Economic empowerment: Economic freedom is one of the most important issues in women empowerment. Homestays can furnish women with a stable income, so facilitating their economic independence. The economic empowerment of women is one of the most notable contributions to homestay-based tourism. A significant number of women, especially in rural and semi-urban regions, have utilised homestays as a means of income, thereby diminishing their financial reliance on male relatives. Through the management of bookings, food preparation, and upkeep of guest lodgings, women provide income that sustains their families and boost their economic security.

Confidence and communication skills: Homestay guests often interact with women, which can help women build confidence and communication skills.

Networking: Homestays can facilitate women's networking for prospective business ventures. Homestays have afforded women the opportunity to engage in entrepreneurship. Numerous enterprises have augmented their operations by providing supplementary services, including guided tours, traditional cooking classes, and handcraft workshops.

Traditional knowledge: Homestays facilitate the transmission of traditional knowledge to subsequent generations. Through their hospitality, they provide guests with insight into the varied customs, cuisines, and lifestyles of distinct areas. Traditional home-cooked meals, local folklore, and indigenous art forms are essential components of the homestay experience, facilitating the transmission of cultural information to future generations. Homestays can help pass traditional knowledge on to future generations.

Domestic violence: Homestays may mitigate domestic violence. The active involvement of these businesswomen has established them as the backbone of homestay based tourism, significantly strengthening this industry.

Sense of recognition: Women can feel a sense of recognition through their participation in tourism. Women can feel a sense of recognition through their participation in homestay based tourism because they can easily run this business without hampering any other household work.

Therefore rural homestays benefit women by providing them with a consistent income, increasing their social upliftment, and by providing a catalyst for socio-economic improvements within their own communities. Homestay tourism can be a powerful strategy for empowering women, but there are some limitations to consider, including:

- 1) Lack of formal training and education is another challenge. Many women, especially in rural areas, have limited access to skill development programs in hospitality management, marketing, and financial literacy

- 2) Women in tourism face violence, sexual harassment, and stress.
- 3) One of the primary obstacles is societal restrictions and gender biases, which often limit their mobility and decision-making power. In some conservative communities, women may face resistance from family members or local authorities when trying to establish and operate homestays.
- 4) Women in the tourism sector receive low pay and limited opportunities for advancement.

IV. Conclusion

Although today's world is changing rapidly and there we can see much development in our society, yet gender inequality exists in every nation on the earth. Until women are getting equal opportunities as men, the actual goal cannot be achieved. Women represent almost half of the total population of the world so the utmost need of this decade is the modification in a social approach to women. Homestay based tourism works as suitable alternative to the traditional form of tourism. This form of tourism opens wide opportunities for local women to participate and play an important role in its sustenance. Homestay based tourism signifies a significant change in how people travel. It fosters intercultural understanding, boosts regional economies, and provides a frequently more sustainable and enriching option to mass tourism. As more women enter this field, homestay tourism will not only flourish but also serve as a model for inclusive and sustainable development in the country.

Women's empowerment is a crucial element of global socio-economic development. Promoting and empowering women in the workforce is an urgent priority for the nation. Contemporary corporations increasingly seek to incorporate more women into the workforce due to their dedication and commitment to task completion. Digitisation has enhanced women's safety through various applications and mobile technology. Digitisation represents a beneficial advancement for both India and its female demography, as its core is rooted in social and economic development. Women are essential for advancing a nation and steering it towards growth. To achieve women's empowerment in India, it is essential to provide women with equal chances to cultivate their skills without prejudice.

Despite all the limitations, tourism is a largest and fastest growing industry and give wide opportunities to women for making them self dependent through homestay based tourism.

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