

Impact of Homestay Tourism On The Local Community: A Study of Homestay Operator's Perspective in Kodagu District of Karnataka

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Abstract: *Tourism is one of the catalysts for economic development of a region. It provides employment opportunities for the local populace and uplifts their standard of living. The Homestay concept involves the participation of the local community through providing accommodation and enriching cultural experiences to the tourists. Homestays have helped uplift the economic and social lives of the locals. This study on the impact of homestays on the local populace was conducted in Kodagu, a small picturesque district of Karnataka, where tourism is one of the major revenue earners for the district. This study conducted through a questionnaire based survey of 60 homestay operators, tries to explore the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impact of homestays on the host community from the homestay operator's perspective. The study found the operators opining on a moderately positive note with regard to economic, socio and cultural impact of homestays on the local community and with respect to environmental impact some concerns were evident through their responses.*

Key Words: Homestay, Homestay Operator, Socio- cultural impact, Economic impact, Kodagu.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Kodagu the coffee growing district of Karnataka nestled within the Western Ghats is known for its scenic beauty. Also called the Switzerland of India, Kodagu is blessed with Mother Nature's bountiful beauties in the form of landscapes, lush green valleys, misty woods, rivers and waterfalls. The people are extremely warm and courteous. Besides Coffee, Tourism is another sector which is making an important contribution to its economy. In Kodagu also called as the Coffee Bowl of India, services and products with ecotourism characteristics have the potential to grow and sustain and, at the same time, contribute further to its tourism industry. A growth in tourism has a positive relationship to the expansion of other sub-sectors, especially the Home Stay industry which is also recognized by the government as an industry that will increase the participation of rural population in tourism-related activities.

Homestay is a form of community based tourism which provides accommodation to tourists at destinations which are very remote. As these tourism destinations are located in the remote rural areas where accommodation services such as hotels, resorts and lodges are not available, the rural communities have taken the initiative to provide accommodation facilities by hosting the tourists at their homes. The Homestay Program in Kodagu was introduced as an effort to diversify tourism products through the provision of an alternative accommodation for tourists. Officially launched in 1998, there are around 800 registered and more than 2000 unregistered homestays in Kodagu. This model started in the late nineties when the prices of coffee declined and the district witnessed a surge of tourist inflow with shortage of accommodations. This was the real push for the local communities to throw open their doors for tourists. This was not a difficult model to adopt as hospitality and *Athithidevobhava* is ingrained in the culture of the community residing here. Homestays provide an opportunity for the tourist to stay and interact with the host family and explore their tradition and culture.

Hospitality is one of the hallmarks of the culture of this place. Homestays are a popular tourist deluge today because of the homely environment and an opportunity to learn the unique culture and lifestyle of the people here. Homestays are today contributing towards the growth of ecotourism in Kodagu.

Homestay can be defined as a type of lodging where the tourists get to experience the essence of a different culture, tradition, lifestyle by interacting with their host during the period of their stay. Homestays world over differ in their offerings. Farms stays, a type of homestay is where the guests stay on a farm; some homestays further cultural socialization, some are arranged by academic institutions for their students to stay during their period of study. The broader understanding of the homestay concept is of the opportunities provided to the tourists to interact, gain knowledge, and experience the life style and culture of the host family as well as the local community for monetary payment.

Types of homestays in Kodagu include- renting one or few rooms of the main house, renting small homes adjacent to the main house, renting cottages built specially for this purpose or renovated and converted old homes into

homestays; some of the ancient homes are more than 150 years old. Today many homestays are run as business models. They promote ecotourism and heritage activities such as plantation walks, visits to national sanctuary Nagarahole, elephant camp Dubare, trekking, mountaineering, adventure sports, rafting, visit to ancient forts, palaces, temples, Buddhist monastery, the Golden Temple and so on. Sustainable tourism is promoted in Kodagu by emphasizing on the green tourism. The people here have a distinct culture and lifestyle including the cuisine which appeals to tourists once they land here. The memories they take with them after just one visit keep wanting them to return again and gain.

Homestay tourism has influenced the local community in many ways- economically, socially, culturally and also environmentally. A component of Community Based tourism, it has generated employment avenues for the local populace, thereby reducing the rate of youth migration to cities; it has given a fillip to local economic activities and industries (honey, wine, spice mixes, chocolates etc) , help improve the quality of living and has helped create a unique brand of Kodagu tourism worldwide. But alongside it has also given rise to some environmental concerns too.

1.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To understand the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impact of homestays on the host community as perceived by homestay operators in Kodagu district.
- To understand if there are significant differences between the perceptions of economic, socio-cultural and environmental impact of homestays on the local community.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

A study conducted at Taquile Island, Peru by Mitchell and Reid (2001) showed that tourism offers business opportunities to the small and medium sector especially the handicraft industry. Hence it contributes to the socio-economic development of the region. Lynch, 2003 ideated that when tourists spend money to avail various benefits within the local community, they are in fact adding on to the incomes of the locals which increase their purchasing power and thus enhance their quality of life. Quinn (2007) studied the effects of tourism in Venice and concluded that tourism brings lots of economic benefits to the people through creation of employment opportunities and additional income to the local communities who provide accommodation and food services.

A study by Fredline and Faulkner (2000) in Australia, found that the local community is in favor of tourism due to economic, social and cultural gains. Small and medium industry especially the handicraft industry thrives due to tourism and this helps the local community was an observation put forth by Mitchell and Reid (2001) in their study at Taquile Island, Peru. The economic factor emerged as the most important factor for local communities to support tourism activities in a study by Dyer et. al. (2007) at Queensland, Australia. Quinn (2007) studied the effects of tourism in Venice and concluded that tourism brings lots of economic benefits to the people through creation of employment opportunities and additional income to the local communities who provide accommodation and food services Homestays prevent the local populace from migrating to cities in search of jobs by offering jobs to the local youth thus sustaining intellectual resources within the communities and this also avoids crowd issues in cities according to Moscardo (2008).

Homestays have the potential to resolve economic, social and environmental issues of the local community according to Colton and Whitney-Squire (2010). Preservation of cultural heritage, increased educational avenues for the locals, training in tourism activities, economic diversification strategies as a result of homestay activities, improved local infrastructure are some of the accrued benefits. Chaityatorn, Kaoses, and Thitphat (2010) examined the role of homestays and concluded that they ensure economic, social and cultural benefits to the local communities. Anowar Hossain et. al (2011) analyzed the socio-economic impacts of homestays for the operators in Malaysia. They opined that homestays not only contribute to economic development but also social, environment and cultural development of the region. It enhances tourists' awareness towards sustainable tourism. From the community point of view homestays create employment opportunities thus enhancing the quality of life of the operators and the people indirectly benefiting from them. Yahaya Ibrahim and Abdul Rasid Razzaq, in their paper on the role of homestays on the rural community development of Malaysia commented on the potentials of homestays to generate employment opportunities and incomes to the rural folk. Through homestay operations, the operators are able to contribute to the improvement of living standards of the rural communities according to a study by Bhuiyan et.al (2011). Local culture is strengthened due to tourism was concluded by a study in Virginia by Kim et.al (2012). They concluded that tourism is seen by the local communities as a means of preserving for the future generations the cultural beliefs, traditions, rituals and lifestyle. On the contrary, a study by Haralambopoulos and Pizam (1996) in Samos indicated negative social changes due to tourism in a community such as drug addiction, vandalism and other crimes.

Tourism developments depend on the environment and as such tourism activities must not endanger or dilute the value of resources such as air, water, flora and fauna. A study by Kuvan & Akan (2005) at the Mediterranean coast

of Turkey showed that local community favoured tourism activities but at the same time voiced their apprehension with regard to the deleterious effects on forest areas. Tourism affects environment negatively and conservation is a vital aspect of environment based tourism was put forth by Mbaiwa and Stronza (2011) in a study in Setswana. The local community according to them has developed a negative perception towards tourism development because of its deteriorating effect on the environment. In a study in China by Zhong et.al. (2011), it was noticed that due to rapid developments in the tourism sector since 1980, the natural environment has been negatively impacted.

3. AREA OF THE STUDY:

The sampling population covers homestays in Kodagu (Coorg) district of Karnataka.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA:

Kodagu (Coorg) is a tiny district in the Western Ghats of Karnataka. Known for being the birthplace of river Cauvery, it is adorned by beautiful coffee plantations, dense forests, lush green paddy fields, beautiful waterfalls and placid hill slopes and valleys. Kodagu is a rural region and most of its economy is based on forestry, agriculture and plantations produce such as coffee and paddy, fruits such as oranges, banana, wild mangoes and a host of indigenous fruits, berries, greens, shoots and mushrooms, spices such as pepper, cardamom, cloves . Of late, tourism especially ecotourism and community based tourism has become a major contributor to the economy of Kodagu. Kodagu is known world over for its coffee and its “brave warriors”. According to 2011 population census, Kodagu is home to a population of 5,54,319. With no major industry in the district, agriculture determines the pace and pattern of development of the district.

4.1. SOURCES OF DATA:

The study is based on primary data collection. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire. The survey instrument developed for the study had questions relating to demographic profile of homestay operators and their perception towards economic, socio- cultural and environmental impact of homestays on the host community. The secondary data was collected with the help of books, internet and journals.

4.2. SAMPLING DESIGN:

Convenient sampling was adopted in this study. The sample consisted of 60 homestay operators.

4.3. Hypothesis:

Ho: There are no significant differences in perception between the economic and socio-cultural impact, economic and environmental impact and socio-cultural and environmental impact of homestays on the local community.

4.4. TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS:

Statistical tools adopted to assess the data were Simple Percentage analysis, Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation and Students’ t- test.

4.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

- The survey was limited to homestays in Kodagu district only.
- The small sample size might not be substantive enough to represent the whole population.
- The objectivity is limited to the extent of the respondents’ honest opinions

5. RESULTS & FINDINGS:

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the respondents (N=60)

	Characteristics	Total	%
		60	%
Gender	Male	30	50
	Female	30	50
Age	20-25	08	13.3

	26-35	16	26.6
	36-45	18	30
	45-55	08	13.3
	56-65	09	15
	>65	01	0.03
Education	SSLC & Below	06	10
	PUC	18	30
	Graduate	32	53.3
	Post Graduate	04	6.6
Region	Urban	21	35
	Rural	39	65
Nature of Venture	Start-Up	37	61.6
	Acquired	15	25
	Inherited	08	13.3
Number of years in business	1-3 yrs.	12	20
	4-6 yrs.	19	31.6
	7-9 yrs.	10	16.6
	< 9 yrs.	13	21.6

A sample of 60 homestays was chosen for the study, 50 % of them were managed by women. 30% of the respondents were in the age group of 36 -45 years followed 26.6% in the age group of 26-35 years, the least representation of 0.03% was of the age group >65 years. On the education level more than half of the respondents were graduates. 65% of the homestays surveyed were in the rural region.

Table 2: Mean Analysis of Variable

Variable	Mean	SD
Economic Impact		
Homestays provide employment and business opportunities for local people	3.967	0.802
Homestays have led to increased incomes for operators	3.917	0.696
Increased incomes have led to development of villages	3.433	0.968
Homestays have reduced income gaps in society	3.333	0.968
Homestays have encouraged economic activities (hotel, taxi, entertainment)	3.8	0.798
Homestays have helped eradicate poverty	3.45	0.852
Homestays have increased the purchasing power of people	3.583	0.979
Homestays have increased local / village industries(honey, wine, chocolates/ spice mixes)	4.033	0.938
Homestays have improved public facilities	3.266	0.899
Socio- Cultural Impact		
Homestays encourages us to preserve traditional culture	3.966	0.712

Homestays provide an opportunity to interact with others’ culture	3.967	0.788
Homestays have led to restoration of historical sites in Kodagu	3.767	0.621
Homestays have led to reduced social problems in villages	3.35	0.709
Homestays prevent migration of youth to cities for employment	3.4	0.807
Homestays have improved the standard of living of people	3.417	0.849
Homestays have improved communication skills of hosts	3.716	0.691
Environmental Impact		
No waste management problems are created by of homestays	2.68	1.05
Traffic congestion and Noise pollution is not an issue due to homestays	2.66	0.99
Maintaining local cleanliness is not at all a problem	2.78	0.78

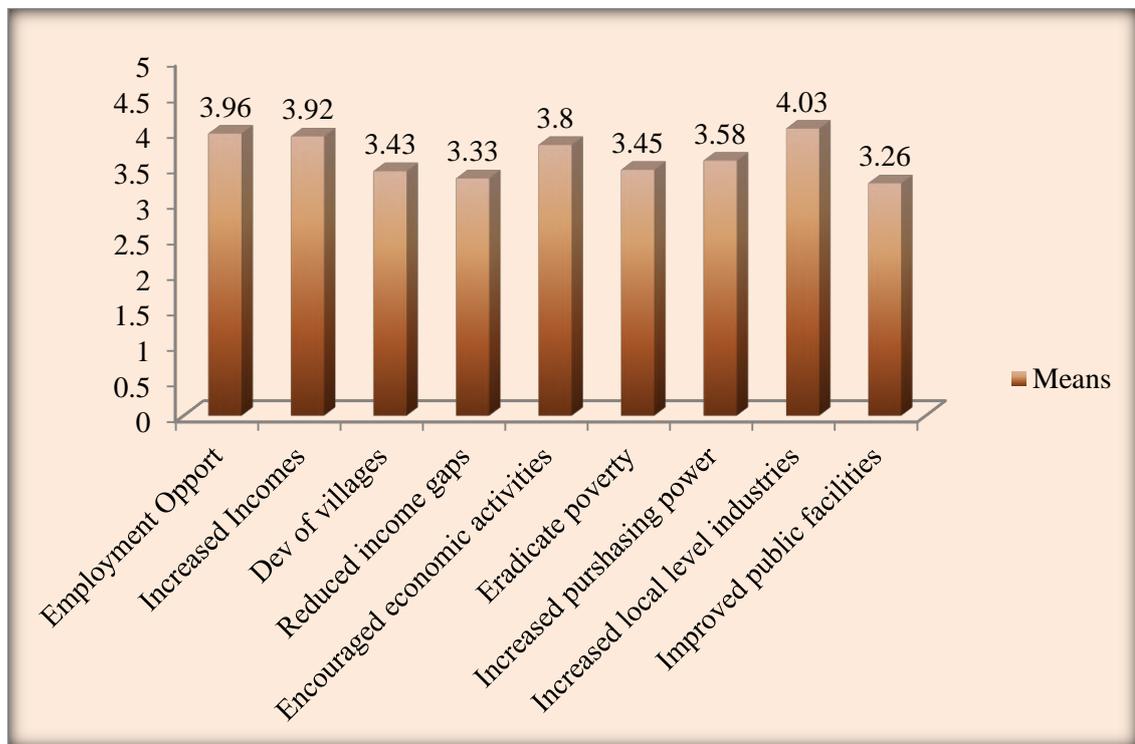


Figure 1: Mean Values for Economic Impact

Table 2 shows the mean analysis on three factors namely, economic, socio-cultural and environmental. Nine variables were considered to understand the economic impact with mean values 3.26 to 4.03 on a 5-point scale. This indicates that majority of the respondents agree that homestay operations have quite a significant impact on the economic life of the local community. The economic variable- *homestays have increased local / village industries (honey, wine, chocolates/ spice mixes)* has recorded the highest mean. This is followed by two very close variables in terms of mean values namely, *homestays providing employment opportunities to local people* (3.96) and *homestays increasing the income of the operators* (3.91). The lowest mean of 3.26 was recorded for the economic variable *homestays have improved public facilities* and the second lowest for *homestays have led to development of villages* (3.33). Hence the results show that except for one variable all variables have recorded means between 3.5 and 4. Most of the homestay operators feel that homestays have led to development of local industries and this has provided supplementary employment avenues. This implies that homestay tourism has a multiplier effect. So there has been economic upliftment but this has not reduced the income gaps in society to a considerable extent. Hence it can be inferred that the homestay operators have a moderately favorable perception of homestays having a positive economic impact. Economic considerations are one of the major forces for local communities to be involved in homestay operations.

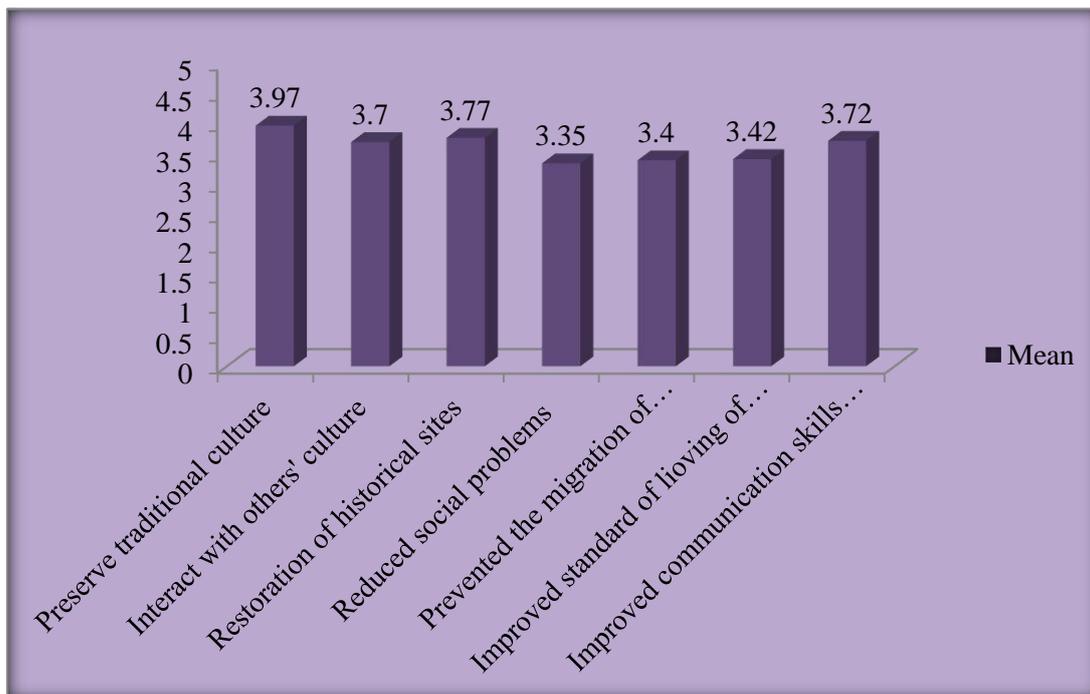


Figure 2: Mean Values for Socio- Cultural Impact

Seven variables were considered to understand the perception of homestay operators' about the socio-cultural impact of homestays on the host community. The findings in the above table indicate mean values between 3.4 and 3.97 on a 5-point scale. Two variables namely *homestays help preserve traditional culture* and *homestays provide opportunity to interact with others' culture* have recorded the same mean value 3.97 respectively though the SD for the former variable is lower. The variable *homestays have helped restore historical monuments* ranks third with a mean of 3.76 followed closely by *homestays have improved the communication skills of hosts*. The variable *homestays have prevented migration of youth to cities for employment* has recorded the lowest mean in this category of 3.4. One of the reasons why tourists prefer Kodagu as a destination is the rich unique culture which they want to experience first-hand from the host community. The socio-cultural impact of homestay tourism is evident as it not only provides avenues to understand and appreciate new cultures but is also seen as a means of preserving the local culture, traditions, lifestyle, cuisine, rituals for the future generations. It creates a sense of pride among the local community members and this leads to greater unity.

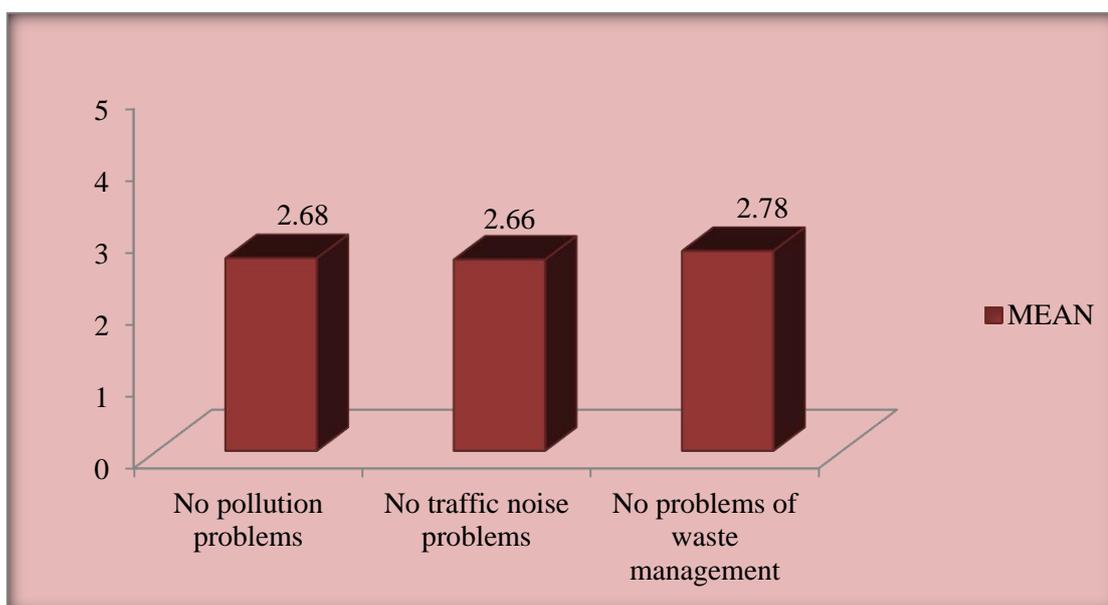


Figure 3: Mean Values for Environmental Impact

To understand the perception towards the environmental impact of homestay tourism three variables were considered. This factor has recorded the lowest of all the means. For all the three variables the means are below 2.7 on a scale of 5 indicating that the homestay operators feel that homestay tourism has definitely some negative impact on the environment- in terms of creating waste management problems leading to local cleanliness issues and traffic congestion problems. This negative perception sometimes acts as a deterrent for tourism activities because the local communities have a high reverence towards nature and expect tourism development to protect and enhance the value of natural resources and environment.

Table 3: Independent Samples t test

	N	Mean	SD	t Stat	P(T<=t) two-tail at 5% level of sig	Sig
Economic impact	60	3.6425	0.87802	-0.085978	0.932701	No significant differences (Do not reject Ho)
Socio-cultural impact	60	3.6547	0.73957			
Economic impact	60	3.6425	0.87802	5.355323	0.000321	Significant differences exist (Reject Ho)
Environmental impact	60	2.7067	0.94			
Socio-cultural impact	60	3.6547	0.73957	5.901062	0.000361	Significant differences exist (Reject Ho)
Environmental impact	60	2.7067	0.94			

No significant differences are noticed between economic and socio-cultural impact of homestay tourism as perceived by the homestay operators in the sample according to the t-test analysis. But there are significant differences in their perception between economic and environmental impact as also socio-cultural and environmental impact.

6. CONCLUSION:

The study was undertaken to understand the homestay operator’s perception of the impact of homestay tourism on the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impact on the local community. The homestay operators had positive perceptions about the economic impact of homestays on the local community especially for the development of local industries, generating employment avenues leading to increased incomes for the people. Employment opportunities have increased leading to enhanced incomes and improvement in quality of life. This is one of the reasons for homestay programs to thrive in the region. But the respondents felt that there is more scope for improvement of public facilities. With respect to socio-cultural impact, the respondents felt that homestay tourism have led to preservation of host community culture and paved the way for its transmission to the younger generation through the process of socialization and promoting the understanding of local culture to the outsiders. In terms of the environmental impact, the opinion that emerged showed the concern the respondents had on the impact especially on pollution, traffic and waste management issues with the increased tourist arrivals. Nevertheless Homestay tourism has a great potential as community based tourism and to evolve as a business model which can lead to economic, social and cultural development of the region, while addressing the issues and concerns in a concerted manner. An organized effort by all the stakeholders of the tourism industry to strategize and create an enabling environment that eliminates the environmental issues and provides a conducive ecosystem with necessary institutional and infrastructural support for sustainable tourism in Kodagu is the need of the hour.

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