

## **Homestays : An Agent for Socio-Economic Development of Coastal Areas in Kerala State**

**Binil V. Rajan\* and R. Sritharan\*\***

\* *Department of Business Administration, Annamalai University, Chidambaram (T.N.)*

\*\* *Department of Business Administration, Annamalai University, Chidambaram (T.N.)*

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### **Abstract**

Expenditure of one's leisure time away from home for the sake of recreation, relaxation, and pleasure, using the commercial provision of services is termed as tourism. It is a product of modern social arrangements which originated in western Europe in the seventeenth century. International tourism had become one of the world's most important economic activities by the early twenty-first century from the Arctic to Antarctica. In the Western tradition, coordinated travel with shielding infrastructure, with an importance on essential destinations and experiences can be seen in ancient Greece and Rome. It leads to the origins of both heritage tourism and beach resorts. Modern tourism is an intensive, commercially organized, business-oriented set of activities. A need was felt to analyse the homestay tourism in Alleppey, Kerala State which will act as a searchlight to understand the socio-economic importance of homestays in the development of rural people in Marari Beach Village of Alleppey District. The study throws light to the entrepreneurial view towards Homestay Tourism in Alleppey, Kerala State which helps to know the problems and prospects of the said kind of business opportunity.

### **Key Words**

Homestay, Socio-economic Development, Tourism Industry

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Journeys for health, leisure, and culture became common practice among the European middle classes by the nineteenth century. Beach holidays are an English invention of the eighteenth century, based on the medical adaptation of popular sea-bathing traditions. Eighteenth century onwards,

beach resorts extend across Europe, the Mediterranean, the United States, South Africa, and Latin America to Asia. The beach is only the most attractive settings for the tourist and generate a tourism industry. Historical monuments and places attract cultural tourists and collectors of iconic images. Indigenous peoples can sometimes profit from the marketability of their customs, and even the industrial archaeology of tourism, with historically significant hotels, transport systems, and even amusement park rides. The global footprint of tourism, its economic, environmental, demographic, and cultural importance was already very large at the beginning of the twentieth century and continues to grow at a faster rate.

In the present era, tourism is the fastest growing economic sector due to its diversification of destinations. It makes tourism, an agent for socio-economic progress. Today, the quantity of business related to tourism is more than that of oil exports, food products or automobiles and the important source of income for many developing countries. Depending on the quality and revenue, tourism contribute to the economic wellbeing of the people. As the UNWTO points out that developing countries stand to benefit from sustainable tourism and acts to help make this a reality.

As per the report of World Tourism Organization, France received more visitors (86.9 million) than any other country in the world in 2017 to see their major attractions as the Louvre, the Eiffel Tower, Versailles, and the Arc de Triomphe which are located in the capital city-Paris, the largest city in Europe by population.

One research found that Chinese outbound travellers spent nearly a fifth of the global tourism spending – 258 billion dollars – while U.S. travellers came in second, with 135 billion dollars. The main mode of transport for all these arrivals was by air, at 57 percentage, followed by road at 37 percentage, water at 4 percentage and rail with just 2 percentage. Leisure accounted for 55 percentage of visits while business came in at just 13 percentage.

### **Tourism in Kerala**

Kerala Tourism has gained a lot of tourists from all over the world, especially from the UK, USA, France, Germany and Saudi Arabia because of the local resources, thereby attracting investment and resulting in sustainable development of the people of Kerala. A calm climate, a long shoreline with peaceful beaches, mild stretches of emerald backwaters, green hill stations and exotic wildlife, waterfalls, plantations and paddy fields, ayurvedic health treatments, fascinating art forms, magical festivals, historical and cultural

monuments, exotic cuisine - make Kerala a unique experience for all. Kerala has been well-known for its practice of Ayurveda. Ayurveda is the traditional health science of India. The word 'Ayurveda' means science of life, which explains the knowledge of various guidelines to be followed to keep one healthy. In Kerala, Ayurveda is a part and parcel of every aspect of life. In fact, it is a lifestyle in Kerala, travellers from the western world reached Kerala for spiritual and physical awakening in the mid 1960's. The largest number of tourists coming to Kerala for Ayurveda is from Germany. The growth rate of tourists flocking for Ayurveda is increasing every year at the rate of around 20-25 per cent. The backwaters of Kerala, a unique product of the state and is found nowhere else in the world. Backwaters are a network of lakes, canals, estuaries and deltas of forty-four rivers that drain into the Arabian sea. The backwaters

**Table 1****Statistics of Foreign and Domestic Tourist Arrivals and Earnings Received**

| <b>Foreign Tourist</b>                       |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| No. of Foreign Tourists in 2017 (Kerala)     | 1091870         |
| No. of Foreign Tourists in 2016 (Kerala)     | 1038419         |
| % Variation over Previous Year (Kerala)      | 5.15%           |
| Foreign Exchange Earnings 2017 (Kerala)      | 8392.11 crores  |
| Foreign Exchange Earnings 2016 (Kerala)      | 7749.51 crores  |
| % Variation over Previous Year (Kerala)      | 8.29%           |
| No. of Foreign Tourists in 2017 (Alappuzha)  | 75037           |
| No. of Foreign Tourists in 2016 (Alappuzha)  | 78049           |
| % Variation over Previous Year (Alappuzha)   | -3.86           |
| <b>Domestic Tourist</b>                      |                 |
| No. of Domestic Tourists in 2017 (Kerala)    | 14673520        |
| No. of Domestic Tourists in 2016 (Kerala)    | 13172535        |
| % Variation over Previous Year (Kerala)      | 11.39%          |
| Total Revenue Generated 2017 (Kerala)        | 33383.68 crores |
| No. of Domestic Tourists in 2017 (Alappuzha) | 433456          |
| No. of Domestic Tourists in 2016 (Alappuzha) | 315466          |
| % Variation over Previous Year (Alappuzha)   | 37.4            |

**Source :** Kerala Tourist Statistics 2017. Retrieved from Kerala Tourism : <https://www.keralatourism.org/tourismstatistics/touriststatistics2017/book20181221073646.pdf>

of Kerala are a self-regulating ecosystem teeming with aquatic life. The Kerala Backwaters offer a spectacular opportunity to see Kerala and are easily traversed by boat.

With the heavenly touch of the Arabian Sea, Alleppey (also known as Alappuzha), popularly known as Venice of the East welcomes you to the backwaters of Kerala. The beautiful canals and green shores fluttering with glimpses from the day to day life in the country side, the mirror still lagoons, and its long sandy beach has blessed, the district, to become one of the best Backwater tourism destinations in God's Own Country.

In 2016, the Centre for Science and Environment graded Alappuzha as the cleanest town in India. Alappuzha, Venice of the East is considered to be the oldest planned city in this region and the lighthouse built near the serene beach is the first of its kind along the Laccadive Sea coast. A town with canals, backwaters, beaches, and lagoons, Alappuzha was described by Lord Curzon as the "Venice of the East." Hence, it is known as the "Venetian Capital" of Kerala.

### **Homestays for Tourism**

India is famous for its rich traditions and culture and very famous for its saying "Athithi Devo Bhava", which means "The Guest is God". Indians consider it a huge honour to have guests in their home, and try to do whatever possible to satisfy them. There's nothing like Indian hospitality. Unfortunately, most visitors who visit India and stay in hotels never experience true Indian hospitality. The good news is that is everything is changing as a result of the growing popularity of homestays in India. A homestay is much similar in concept to that of a bed and breakfast. Guests are either accommodated in the family home, or in separate cottages nearby. Nowadays, most homestays provide their guests with as much comfort and facilities as a reputed hotel.

The period of stay can extend from one night to over a year and can be provided for free, for monetary payment, home exchange in which host share their home now looking for a future sharing of the home of guest, or in exchange for housekeeping or work on the host's property. However, they must be comfortable with others using at least part of their home. Homestay provides several benefits to their guests which includes savings on accommodation costs, local information sharing that is not easily found in guidebooks, A deeper understanding of the everyday life of the local people, opportunities to stay in places where there is no hotels or hostels, opportunities to stay in unique

properties such as tents, cabins, and castles. In cases where students studying abroad stay with a family, the host family may play a pseudo-parental role, giving advice and sometimes supervising students' activities and even studies. In some homestays, families act as cross-cultural advisers, helping the students understand and adjust to their new culture and environment.

A need was felt to analyse the homestay tourism in Alleppey, Kerala State which will act as a searchlight to understand the socio-economic importance of homestays in the development of rural people in Marari Beach Village of Alleppey District. The study throws light to the entrepreneurial view towards Homestay Tourism in Alleppey, Kerala State which helps to know the problems and prospects of the said kind of business opportunity.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Kamala Singh (1992) examined the profile of women entrepreneurs and has found dominating entrepreneurial characteristics, their motivational factors and performance both quantitatively as well as qualitatively. The study focussed in understanding the entrepreneurial development among women which helped them to attain the current socio-economic status and contribution in the Indian economy. In another study by Darrene, Harpel *et al.* (2008) analysed that self-employed women vary on most human capital variable when compared to the salary and wage-earning women. The study also points out the fact that the education achievement level is faster for self-employed women than that for other working women. Yet another study by Singh, Surinder (2008) ascertained the reasons and factors that influence entry of women in entrepreneurship and explained the major issues in the growth and development of women entrepreneurship. The study points out the determinants as familial responsibility, gender discrimination, lack of social networking, lack of interaction with successful entrepreneurs, societal nonacceptance as women entrepreneurs, inadequate family and financial backing. Cohoon, Wadhwa & Mitchell (2010) identified the important factors which motivates women to get into entrepreneurship. The factors found were desire to build the wealth, the desire to capitalize own business ideas and to walk forward in life.

Lindberg and Enriquez (1994) noted lot of examples of native earnings from employment related to tourism in Belize, Nepal, Costa Rica and Australia. Not only economic benefits, tourism also contribute to improve, inter cultural appreciation and understanding both for host and tourist communities. Another

study by Ferhan (2006) identified that the faster development and high concentration of tourist activities cause negative effects on both natural and cultural atmosphere, and when investment of locals is marginal or lacking, the results would be particularly unacceptable to the host community. A research by Manoj P K (2008) studied about the prospects of sustainable tourism in Kerala from an international viewpoint and extended some methods for the faster development of sustainable tourism activities in Kerala.

Patel, Chavda (2013) examined that majority of rural entrepreneurs is facing many problems due to not availability of primary facilities in rural areas of a developing country like India. This paper makes an attempt to examine the problems and challenges for the potentiality of rural entrepreneurship especially in the fields of marketing of products, financial support and other primary amenities like availability of electricity, water supply, transport facilities and required energy.

Na Le (2009) analysed the service quality and customer satisfaction in the hotel industry. The study identified that customer expectations and views of both men and women, Asian and European guests and disabled people related to the hotel services and found that customer expectation and perception varies among men and women, among people of Asia and Europe. The study also suggested that the hoteliers should make services much more convenient for the disabled people so that they can use all the services provided. In a study conducted by Sobhana Devi (2014) identified that a different category of accommodation operators look on to maximizing profits without having concern for sustainable tourism development. Hoteliers have utterly failed in the duty of sharing resource for protection of environment and the society.

Pazir Dil and Amin Insha (2015), in the study, concludes that the customers are very much sensitive towards the various service segments so every firms should concentrate more on maximising customer satisfaction so that a strong customer base is attained. The service providers, thus, need to render their services in such a manner that they meet the expectations of the customers and also enhance their services to meet the changing global scenario. Hotels must be customer-centric, should provide customized services, focus on handling the complaints of the customers and addressing their grievances. They must provide the services when asked for that will help them in building a good image and gaining loyalty. Employees must be trained well to exercise responsibility, judgement and creativity in responding to problems of guests.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To examine the socio-economic changes happened in coastal areas after the emergence of homestay business.
2. To know about the tourist inflow to the Kerala State and Alappuzha District.
3. To analyse the problems and prospects faced by homestay owners.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- The study is restricted to Mararikulam Panchayat of Alappuzha District.
- Schedule method is used for data collection, as some of the respondents are not educated enough to handle questionnaire properly.

## **NEED OF STUDY**

As the study area is one of the most popular tourist attractions of Kerala State, it is to be analysed that whether there are enough places to accommodate the tourists. Only through providing good facilities for accommodation, the government can attract more tourists to the place. Here lies the importance of homestay units. It is much needed to check the existing homestay owners were satisfied with the business and also with the support extended by the government authorities. The study is much needed to find out the socio-economic changes taking places in the coastal villages of Alappuzha District after the emergence of Homestay units.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study is based on primary as well as the secondary data. An attempt has been made to know the socio-economic changes taking place after the emergence of homestay units in coastal villages of Alappuzha District by selecting 110 homestay owners in Mararikulam Panchayat of Alappuzha District, the method which was adopted by Binil and Sritharan in 2018. Convenience Sampling method is used to select these respondents. Schedule method is used to collect the information from the respondents as some of the respondents were not so educated in order to handle the questionnaire on their own. Various journals, books and websites form the secondary sources of information. The collected data is analysed by using Percentages. The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature.

## DATA ANALYSIS

**Table 2**

**Field of Work of Respondents Before Starting Homestay**

| Responses                                       | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|---|--------------------|------------|
| Fishing Related Works                           | 79                 | 72         |
| Coir Related Works                              | 3                  | 3          |
| Skilled Works (Carpenter, Mason, Painting etc.) | 17                 | 15         |
| Unskilled works                                 | 7                  | 6          |
| Private company Jobs                            | 2                  | 2          |
| Government Jobs                                 | 0                  | 0          |
| Unemployed                                      | 0                  | 0          |
| Others  | 2                  | 2          |
| TOTAL   | 110                | 100        |

**Table 3**

**Responses Towards the Statement "Are you doing the previous job currently?"**

| Responses                            | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Yes, Together with Running Homestay  | 106                | 96         |
| No, Completely Focussing on Homestay | 0                  | 0          |
| I am Doing the Same Job; My Family   |                    |            |
| Members are Engaged in homestay.     | 4                  | 4          |
| TOTAL                                | 110                | 100        |

**Table 4**

**Level of Satisfaction Towards Different Statements**

| Responses  | VDS |    | DS |    | N |   | S  |    | VS |    | TOTAL |     |
|--|-----|----|----|----|---|---|----|----|----|----|-------|-----|
|  | F   | %  | F  | %  | F | % | F  | %  | F  | %  | F     | %   |
| Opinion about Government and Local Authority Support | 12  | 11 | 90 | 82 | 8 | 7 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 110   | 100 |
| Are You Satisfied with the Business of Homestay      | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 77 | 70 | 33 | 30 | 110   | 100 |

VDS - Very Dissatisfied, DS - Dissatisfied, N - Neutral, S - Satisfied, VS - Very Satisfied

**Table 5**  
**Level of Agreement Towards Different Statements**

| Responses   | SD |    | D  |    | N |   | A  |    | SA  |    | TOTAL |     |
|---|----|----|----|----|---|---|----|----|-----|----|-------|-----|
|   | F  | %  | F  | %  | F | % | F  | %  | F   | %  | F     | %   |
| My Income has Increased after Starting Homestay   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 12 | 11 | 98  | 89 | 110   | 100 |
| My Assets are Increased and Liabilities are Decreased After Starting Homestay Business          | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 85 | 77 | 25  | 23 | 110   | 100 |
| I Feel Socially Accepted than before.   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 16 | 15 | 94  | 85 | 110   | 100 |
| I Feel Confident than Before.   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 6  | 5  | 104 | 95 | 110   | 100 |
| It is very Easy to Start the Homestay Business.   | 21 | 19 | 80 | 73 | 9 | 8 | 0  | 0  | 0   | 0  | 110   | 100 |
| I feel like I am creating Good Relationships Worldwide.   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 2  | 2  | 108 | 98 | 110   | 100 |
| I feel that My Guest (Customers) are very Happy and Satisfied with the Services I offer them.   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 13 | 12 | 97  | 88 | 110   | 100 |
| I am sure that I can improve the Service Quality in Future.                                     | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 5  | 5  | 105 | 95 | 110   | 100 |
| I am sure that my Financial Strength will improve in future with the help of Homestay Business. | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 12 | 11 | 98  | 89 | 110   | 100 |

SD - Strongly Disagree, D - Disagree, N - Neutral, A - Agree, SA - Strongly Agree

**Table 6**  
**Problems Usually Faced in Running Homestay Business**

| Responses  | NP |    | MNP |    | MDP |    | SP |    | TOTAL |     |
|--|----|----|-----|----|-----|----|----|----|-------|-----|
|  | F  | %  | F   | %  | F   | %  | F  | %  | F     | %   |
| Regular Strikes and Harthals.  | 22 | 20 | 85  | 77 | 3   | 3  | 0  | 0  | 110   | 100 |
| Problems with the Procedure of Homestay License.   | 0  | 0  | 0   | 0  | 20  | 18 | 90 | 82 | 110   | 100 |
| Problems in getting Financial Assistance from Banks and other Institutions.                                      | 0  | 0  | 5   | 5  | 30  | 27 | 75 | 68 | 110   | 100 |
| Problems from the Society I live.  | 54 | 49 | 56  | 51 | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 110   | 100 |
| Problems from Other Homestay Units and competitors.  | 32 | 29 | 78  | 71 | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 110   | 100 |
| Problems arising out of the news Broadcast about the Epidemic Diseases, Terrorist Attacks and Natural Disasters. | 0  | 0  | 0   | 0  | 102 | 93 | 8  | 7  | 110   | 100 |

## INTERPRETATIONS AND FINDINGS

- Alappuzha District contributes a small portion of total tourist arrivals (433456 domestic tourists and 75037 foreign tourists in 2017) even though there are plenty of tourist attractions. Steps should be taken to improve the number of tourists to the district by making the place a good hub for lodging, for that development of homestays will have a great role
- The study reveals that 72% of the respondents belong to fishing-related business before starting the homestay business which is followed by skilled workers (15%).
- The study also reveals that 96% of the respondents still continue their previous job together with running the homestay business. None of the respondents were completely focussing on homestay business.
- The study points out that majority of the respondents (82%) are dissatisfied with the support extended by the government and local authority for homestay tourism. It revealed that 70% of the respondents are satisfied with the business of homestay.

- The study further examines the level of agreement of respondents towards various statements related to homestay business and found out that majority of the respondents (89%) strongly agree that their income have increased after starting homestay business. 77% of the respondents agree that their assets has increased and liabilities are decreased after entering into the homestay business. Majority of the respondents (85%) strongly agree that they feel socially accepted than before and (95%) strongly agree that they feel much confident than before. The Table also reveals that 73% of the respondents disagree to the statement "It is very easy to start the homestay business". It is inferred that 98% of the respondents strongly agree that that they feel like they are creating worldwide relationships. Majority (88%) of the respondents strongly agree that their customers are very happy and satisfied with the services provided by them, 95% strongly agree that they can improve the service quality in future. The Table further infers that 89% of the respondents strongly agree that their financial strength will improve in future with the help of homestay business.
- From the study it is identified that the major problems faced by the respondents were the problems related to the procedures for getting homestay license (82% marked as a serious problem) which is followed by (68% marked as a serious problem) the problems in getting financial assistance from banks and other institutions. Respondents usually were not facing any issues from local people and from competitors.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study focussed on the socio-economic changes taken place after the emergence of homestay units in coastal villages of Mararikulam Panchayat of Alappuzha District. The study also focussed on the major problems faced by existing homestay entrepreneurs. From the study, we can analyse that the social and economic scenario of rural people have changed after entering into homestay business. But the entrepreneurs are not satisfied with the government support for conducting the business. If Government provides them enough support by liberalising the procedures and rules, a greater number of entrepreneurs will be much benefitted which will further lead to the social and economic development of the community. It is much appreciated that the people belonging to the poor households have now changed their standard of

living just because they started homestays. So, without a doubt, one can say that this particular business option will bring greater prosperity to the people of coastal areas, provided the government renders enough support to them in the manner they wish.

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