

Homestay Tourist Accommodation as a Tool for Socio-Economic Well-Being of Rural Communities in Kenya

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In most developing countries, tourism has been portrayed as a contributor to small scale enterprises, thus directly uplifting the standards of living as well as a catalyst for community development. As an extended form of local people involvement in tourism, the homestay concept aims to promote households to earn an income from tourism directly. Although homestays are purported to provide economic benefits to the local people, it is not clear whether the local people fully benefit from the venture. For instance, the majority of the people in Taita Taveta County still live below the poverty line despite the fact that the homestay concept has already been in existence in the county since 1989 and the highest number of homestay accommodation is found in this region. This research therefore sought to put the homestay concept into perspective: Identify motivational factors behind homestay operators' participation in the program and assess the socio-economic benefits of homestay accommodation to host families. This research adopted cross-sectional research design and made use of both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected by use of researcher administered semi-structured questionnaires and an interview guide. Secondary data were gathered from books, newspaper articles, academic journals, the Internet, and other relevant documents related to homestay. Census technique was used for the homestay operators. Hence, all the 54 homestay operators in the county were used in the study. Descriptive analysis and chi-square test of significance were used to analyse the data. The study revealed that the major motivation for local people participation in the homestay program was income and most operators considered the programme a significant contributor to their socio-economic well-being. These findings have important implications for the Ministry of Tourism to craft policies and legislations geared towards creating an enabling environment for the homestay accommodation sub-sector to grow sustainably.

Keywords: homestay, motivation, socio-economic benefits

Introduction

Tourism is one of the most significant socio-economic sectors in Kenya. The sectors' total contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) stood at Kshs 561.8 billion in 2014 and is projected to rise to Kshs 964.2 billion by 2025, representing an increment of 5.1% p.a. (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2015). It is therefore no mystery that the sector was identified as one of the leading sectors in achieving the goals of Kenya's long-term strategy (the Vision 2030) which aims to transform the country into a highly industrializing economy, providing a high quality of life to all her citizens (Government of Kenya [GoK], 2007). One notable

tenet identified under the tourism component in the first Medium Term Plan was “The certification of 1,000 homestay sites to promote cultural tourism in Kenyan homes” (GoK, 2008, p. 13). Ideally, the homestay concept was recognized not only as a way of enhancing community participation in tourism but also as a platform of enabling the local people to derive direct benefits from the tourism industry, an idea the government has grappled with for years on end. The homestay concept presents a scenario where the local people invite tourists to stay with them as members of the family at a fee (Kayat, 2010; Department of Tourism [DoT], 2013; Othman, Sazali, & Mohammed, 2013; Kimaiga, Kihima, & Pepela, 2015).

The attention the homestay concept has received from stakeholders and its prioritization in Kenya’s economic blueprint is a clear indication of the opportunities; it presents in raising the standards of the living of the local people through employment creation, both directly and indirectly (DoT, 2013; Kimaiga et al., 2015). It is worth noting that the homestay concept is not new in Kenya even though its origins in the country appear not to have been properly documented. For instance, in Taita Taveta County, the concept is reported to have been in existence since 1989 (Kimaiga et al., 2015). The pertinent questions therefore are: Has the contribution of this concept to the local people’s standards of living been worthwhile? What really motivates the local people to participate in the homestay program?

Despite the homestay concept having been touted as the simplest and most direct way of encouraging community participation in tourism and enabling locals to derive direct benefits from tourism (Hall, Kirkpatrick, & Mitchell, 2005; Kayat, 2009; DoT, 2012; Othman et al., 2013), not much literature is available on what exactly motivates the local people to participate in the program and the actual contribution of the program to their socio-economic well-being especially in Kenya. Revolving around the ideals of Skinner’s theory of motivation (Orodho, 2004), this paper therefore sought to draw insights into this phenomenon.

Motivational Factors for Homestay Operators’ Participation in the Homestay Program

Tosun (2006) argued that the majority of the local people are usually eager to be involved in tourism activities. In fact, in his study, he found that more than 80% of the local community in a local destination would like to take the leading role as entrepreneurs and workers at all levels. The motivation of local people to participate in the homestay program is central to the success of the program (Kimaiga et al., 2015). Therefore, Skinner’s theory of motivation provided the most appropriate lens to assess the variables under study (Orodho, 2004). Skinner posited a motivation theory whose central argument was that individual’s motivation to undertake a task depends on the expected reward. This study looked at the motivation for homestay operators’ participation in the homestay program because motivation is considered to be the force that drives all human behaviour (Amabile, 1997). In this regard, if the local people perceive that participating in the homestay program would bring them socio-economic benefits, then they are more likely to participate in the program.

For the local people to participate in the homestay program effectively, they must have the drive or entrepreneurial spirit. Baron (2005) ideated that one of the central questions in the field of entrepreneurship is trying to understand the reason why some individuals engage in entrepreneurship activities while others do not. According to Osman, Ahmad, and Zainal (2008), various schools of thought ranging from trait-based research to studies emphasizing cognitions make a fundamental assumption that entrepreneurship is a process of enabling an individual to voluntarily engage in pursuing desired goals. Wall and Long (1996) suggested that since homestays are locally owned and operated, they constitute a suitable tourist accommodation facility for the local community to participate in tourism activities as entrepreneurs.

As put forward by Hinch and Butler (1996), studies have shown that economic considerations have been the primary motivating force for the local people to become involved in tourism development. Dahles (2000) indicated that in most cases, the homestay concept is a source of additional income for the operators since they often take on other forms of employment and also maintain their social and religious responsibilities. In addition, the homestay concept brings about some changes in the way local people perceive their cultural and natural heritage, since it makes them recognize the importance of their heritage not only as a source of income but also as a treasure to be shared with the global community. Ideally, the homestay program allows the local people to experience other people's cultures from all over the world without leaving their own homes. Indeed, this can be considered as an important strength of this particular product, no other tourism product offers a similar experience (Kayat, 2009).

Socio-Economic Benefits of Homestay Accommodation to Host Families

The travel and tourism industry has been reported to be one of the biggest employers in developing countries (Moscardo, 2008; WTTC, 2015). Previous researchers have pointed out that homestay tourist accommodation has numerous benefits to host families and the community. For instance, Bhuiyan, Siwar, Ismail, and Islam (2011) pointed out that homestays provide job opportunities for local communities, thus improving their quality of life. Further, Chaiyatorn, Kaoses, and Thitphat (2010) found that homestays can ensure economic, social, and cultural benefits for local communities as well as sustainable development. This research therefore provided a platform to validate or reinforce these previous findings on the contribution of homestay accommodation to the socio-economic well-being of the rural populace.

In addition, Lynch (2003) and Lynch, McIntoch, and Tucker (2009) argued that the homestay concept boosts the supply chain in that it provides opportunities for local people living around the homestay to provide services that supplement the visitors' stay, such as cleaning services, production of finer home goods, or small local food supplies that may not be readily available in the hosts' home. Moreover, Moscardo (2008) ideated that because the homestay program offers job opportunities in rural areas, it decreases the number of people that leave small communities to search for jobs in bigger cities, which not only keeps local intellectual capital in communities, but also helps to prevent overcrowding in major urban hubs.

Further, due to the multiplier effect of tourism, the homestay concept has been reported to provide an opportunity for tourists to spend money within local communities which raises regional incomes sometimes by even more than the value of their spending (Lynch, 2003). This not only contributes to a monetary increase in the community overall but also alludes to social and cultural benefits brought about by the increased purchasing power. As Bhuiyan et al. (2011) substantiated, the homestay program enables homestay operators to contribute in various programs for improving the life standards of rural communities because the program gives focus to economic development and social advancement of the operators.

Colton and Whitney-Squire (2010) concluded that the homestay program has the potential to address many of the economic, environmental, and socio-cultural challenges that communities face. Precise benefits include preservation of cultural and natural heritage, increased training and capabilities in business development and tourism, education, increased economic diversification, enhanced environmental integrity, sharing of local culture, and improved infrastructure among others. The pertinent questions therefore are: Do the local people in Taita Taveta County perceive that the homestay program can bring them such benefits? Would they preserve their environments, culture, and heritage for the sake of tourism?

Methodology

This paper was part of a research thesis “Homestay tourist accommodation as a tool for socio-economic well-being of rural communities in Kenya: A case of Taita Taveta County”. Some of the objectives of study were to identify motivational factors behind homestay operators’ participation in the homestay program and to assess the socio-economic benefits of homestay accommodation to host families. Census technique was used to target all the 54 homestays in the county since the population was small, hence manageable to use the whole population. The homestays in the county were identified through the help of a local guide who was conversant with the area and the homestay operators. The operators found in their homesteads were informed of the purpose of study through oral explanations and guided through in completion of the research instrument while those who had already left their homesteads, the questionnaires were entrusted to the local guide and were collected later. Cross-sectional research design was utilized to collect both quantitative and qualitative data (Byrman & Bell, 2007). The design was considered most appropriate since it enabled collection of quantitative and qualitative data to be completed at a single point in time for all the cases. Researcher administered semi-structured questionnaires were used to collect primary data from the homestay operators while interview guides were used to gather data from tourism officers in charge of the county. Primary data collection stretched through the entire month of November from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m., four days a week (Thursday to Saturday), covering on average four homestays per day. These days and time were considered appropriate because they were convenient for the researchers. Descriptive analysis and chi-square test of significance were used to analyze data.

Results and Discussion

Response Rate

A total number of 51 questionnaires out of a possible 54 were collected for analysis, representing a response rate of 94.4%.

Demographic Information of Survey Respondents

The majority of the homestay operators (62.70%) were male while 37.30% were female. On the basis of age, most of them (72.55%) fell in the age categories of 40-49 years old followed by the 50 years old and above age group (11.77%), 35-39 years old age group (9.80%) while the 30-34 years old age group had the least representation (5.88%). On the level of education tenet, it was found that the majority (78.43%) had attained secondary school education and below followed by those with diploma level (11.77%), and those with skill certificate had the smallest representation at 9.80%.

Motivational Factors Behind Homestay Operators’ Participation in the Homestay Program

To identify the motivational factors behind homestay operators’ participation in the homestay program, motivation variables (Wall & Long, 1996; Hinch & Butler, 1996; Dahles, 2000; Kayat, 2009) were put on a 5-point Likert scale. The homestay operators were then asked to rate on a scale of 1-5 the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements. The Likert scale used ranged from “1 = Strongly agree” to “5 = Strongly disagree” (see Table 1).

The findings in Table 1 show that the motivation variable “earn income for household” had the highest mean of $M = 1.10$ and the lowest standard deviation ($SD = 0.300$). This was closely followed by the “diversify sources of income for household” ($M = 1.31$, $SD = 0.469$). The other motivation variables revealed low mean scores and high SDs.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Motivational Factors Behind Homestay Operators' Participation in the Homestay Program

	<i>N</i>	Mean		SD
	Stat.	Stat.	Std. error	Stat.
Earn income for household	51	1.10	0.042	0.300
Interact with different cultures	51	3.43	0.141	1.005
Preserve heritage and culture	51	3.29	0.146	1.045
Support tourists for community well-being	51	3.73	0.192	1.372
Diversify sources of income for household	51	1.31	0.066	0.469
Valid <i>N</i> (listwise)	51			

Note. Factors closer to 1 represent the strongest value.

From Table 1, it can be deduced that the other three items on the scale had lower means and high SDs. According to H. N. Boone and D. Boone (2012), a high SD would mean that there was a lot of variance on the observations from the survey. Therefore, these results reveal that the major motivation for individual household's participation in the homestay program was income. A possible explanation for this might be due to the high poverty levels in the area since the county is ranked number 28 out of 47 in terms of poverty levels in the country (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2013). Hence, the local people were looking for ways to earn an extra shilling by hosting tourists in their homes. Borrowing from the ideals of Skinner's theory of motivation that provided the theoretical underpinning for this study, the homestay operators' motivation to participate in the homestay program was driven by the major reward they expected from the program which in this case is income. These findings seem to be consistent with those of Hinch and Butler (1996) who found that economic considerations have been the major motivating force for the local people to become involved in tourism development.

This finding has important implications for the government to design and conduct sensitization programs for the local people with the main focus of pointing out the importance of the homestay program other than the income factor. This will contribute greatly to the local people's understanding that the conservation of their culture, heritage, and the environment is vital to the growth and development of homestay accommodation. This is because the flow of tourists to the homestays is very much dependent on the culture of the people, their lifestyle, and the quality of the environment (Levitt, 1996; Colton & Whitney-Squire, 2010). Such sensitization programs will hopefully enlighten the homestay operators, and hence, enable them to give equal attention to the preservation of their culture, heritage, environment, and the income from the program. This will ensure that the homestay program is sustainable; hence, the local people will continually draw incomes from the program.

Socio-Economic Benefits of Homestay Accommodation to Host Families

To assess the socio-economic benefits of homestay tourist accommodation to host families first, the operators were asked to indicate the approximate annual income they earned through accommodating tourists in their homes. The results revealed that the majority of the operators (70.6%) earned Kshs 59,999 and below, followed by Kshs 60,000-69,999 (19.6%) and Kshs 80,000 and above (5.9%), while those who earned 70,000-79,999 had the least representation at 3.9%. This finding shows that most homestay operators earned an approximate amount of Kshs 4,999 per month from the programme. Previous research found that these meager

earnings could be directly related to the homestay operators' level of education and their knowledge and skills to run the programme (Kimaiga et al., 2015). Second, socio-economic tenets were put on a Likert scale and homestay operators were asked to rate on a scale of 1-5 the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements. Table 2 shows the results from the descriptive analysis.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Homestay Operators' Perception on the Socio-Economic Benefits of Homestay Accommodation

Homestay accommodation	<i>N</i>	Mean		SD
	Stat.	Stat.	Std. error	Stat.
Increases business opportunities for the local people	51	1.20	0.056	0.401
Creates employment opportunities	51	1.16	0.051	0.367
Encourages us to preserve traditional culture	51	1.47	0.094	0.674
Increases stability of local people's lifestyle	51	1.27	0.063	0.451
Provides an opportunity to interact with other cultures	51	1.29	0.064	0.460
Valid <i>N</i> (listwise)	51			

Note. Factors closer to 1 represent the strongest value.

The findings in Table 2 show that all the socio-economic variables recorded high mean scores (closer to 1) and low SDs. This result implies that the majority of the homestay operators agreed that homestay tourist accommodation increases business opportunities in the community, creates employment, encourages them to preserve traditional culture, and provides an opportunity for the homestay operators to interact with other cultures from all over the world without leaving their own homes. The most probable explanation for this result is that homestay tourist accommodation provides the local people with opportunities to host tourists in their own homes at a fee hence they see it as a business venture. Moreover, for the homestay operators to meet the needs of the homestay tourist, e.g., food, they may need to buy food and other supplies to supplement the visitors stay. This increases the business opportunities for the suppliers of such goods. Further, since homestays are deemed to attract tourists who wish to experience other people's cultures and lifestyles (Kayat, 2009), the local people would endeavor to preserve their culture and continue with their daily activities as usual so that they can continually attract tourists which would translate to more income.

The interviews conducted on the tourism officers in charge of the county to establish their views on the contribution of the homestay program to the socio-economic well-being of rural people revealed that, the homestay program is a strategy that can bring massive benefits to the local people if developed within specified guidelines and are well-regulated. This is because the homestay concept enables the local people to earn an income from tourism directly, thereby benefiting directly from the tourism industry. The interviews also revealed that although homestay accommodation provided direct income to the operators, the income could be very little because at the moment the number of tourists to the homestays was quite small since some of the operators had not invested in very basic amenities, such as bed sheets, mosquito nets probably due to lack of finances. Besides, tourists' safety in the homestays was not guaranteed due to a lack of a legislative framework although the Ministry of Tourism was working on the matter. As one respondent noted: "Proper regulation will create an enabling environment for the growth of homestays in the county since it will instill confidence in the homestay tourists and play a great role to deter rogue operators".

Significance of Homestay Tourist Accommodation in Boosting the Socio-Economic Well-Being of Rural People

Having assessed the socio-economic benefits of the homestay program to host families and the community, it was imperative to establish whether homestay tourist accommodation was a significant means of boosting the socio-economic well-being of rural people. The overall perception of the homestay operators was therefore sought and tested against each tenet under the socio-economic benefits Likert scale. Chi-square test of significance was used and the results were as displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

Chi-Square Test Results for the Significance of Homestay Accommodation to Boosting the Socio-Economic Well-Being of Rural People

Variable	χ^2	Df	V	p
Creates employment opportunities for the local people	38.166	1	0.865	0.000
Increases business opportunities for local people	33.277	1	0.808	0.000
Encourages us to preserve traditional culture	12.485	2	0.495	0.002
Provides opportunity for locals to interact with other cultures	12.314	1	0.407	0.000
Increases stability of local people's lifestyle	8.439	1	0.491	0.004
N of valid values	51			

Notes. Computed using $\alpha = 0.05$; V = Cramer's V; Df = Degrees of freedom; p = Probability significance; χ^2 = Chi-square value.

According to Bostch (2011), chi-square interpretation involves looking at the significance probability quoted. Thus, for a value less than 0.05, one can conclude that there is an association between the variables in question and the population from which the sample was drawn. Table 3 shows that all the five variables had probability significance values below the conventional cut off point of 0.05 ranging from $0.000 \leq p \leq 0.004$. This implies that the group of independent variables (socio-economic benefits) showed a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable (socio-economic situation).

The symmetric measure of Cramer's V which is normally calculated alongside the chi-square test was used to test the strength and direction of association between the variables. Bryman and Cramer (1997; as cited in David & Sutton, 2004) suggested the following for interpreting the measures of association: "0.19 or less is very low association; 0.20 to 0.39 is low association; 0.40 to 0.69 is moderate association; 0.70 to 0.89 is high association, and 0.90 to 1 is very high association". Based on this interpretation, the findings in Table 3 show that Cramer's V values for the first five variables ranged from $0.407 \leq V \leq 0.865$, which indicates a moderate to high positive association between the group of independent variables and the dependent variable. This finding implies an increase in the socio-economic benefits from the homestay, i.e., as the business opportunities from the homestay program increase, the employment creation, the ability of the homestay operators to focus and preserve their culture and heritage as well as the opportunity to interact with other cultures increase, they lead to an improvement in the general socio-economic situation of the community. On the evidence of the results from Table 3, it would be justifiable to conclude that homestay accommodation is a significant means of boosting the socio-economic well-being of rural people.

Previous researchers have pointed out that homestay accommodation has numerous benefits to the host families and the community (Bhuiyan et al., 2011; Moscardo, 2008; Lynch, 2003). The results of this study show that homestay accommodation is a significant means of boosting the socio-economic well-being of rural people. This study therefore validated the assertions by earlier researchers on contribution of the homestay

program to the socio-economic well-being of local communities. Particularly, this finding corroborates the findings of Chaivatorn et al. (2010) who found that homestays can ensure economic, social, and cultural benefits for local communities as well as sustainable development. In addition, these findings seem to be in agreement with those of Colton and Whitney-Squire (2010) who found that the homestay program has the potential to address many of the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental challenges faced by communities.

This result may be explained by the fact that, as an extended form of community participation in tourism, the homestay concept empowers individual households to earn an income from tourism directly while providing them with the opportunities to share their cultures and interact with other cultures without leaving their homes. This finding has important implications for the Ministry of Tourism to craft policies and legislations to create an enabling environment to encourage the growth and development of the homestay accommodation sub-sector in a sustainable manner. The present results are significant in at least one major aspect in that they were able to depict the direction and strength of the relationship between the groups of dependent and independent variables. However, there is abundant room for further research and progress in determining whether homestay accommodation is a significant means of boosting the socio-economic well-being of rural people.

Conclusion

This paper provides useful insights into the motivational factors behind homestay operators' participation in the homestay program, the socio-economic benefits of the program and its significant contribution to the socio-economic well-being of rural communities. The study found that the major motivation for local people's participation in the homestay programme was income. It also found that from the perspective of the local populace, the program was a significant contributor to their socio-economic well-being. The finding has important implications for the state agency responsible for tourism (Ministry of Tourism) to craft policies and legislations geared towards creating an enabling environment for the homestay accommodation sub-sector to grow sustainably. It is hoped that with a conducive environment (legislative and legal framework) coupled with the necessary financial and infrastructural support and training, this sub-sector will greatly contribute to the achievement of Kenya's long-term strategy—the Vision 2030.

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