Designing a Training Module to Encourage Best Practices in Community Based Ecotourism

Archana Biwal

Lecturer, Department of Travel and Tourism, Maharashtra State Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Pune, India
Email: archanabiwal74@gmail.com, Mobile: 8007191946

Sunetra Roday

Former Principal, Maharashtra State Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Pune, India
Email: sunetraroday@gmail.com, Mobile: 9881471096

Smita Bhave

Instructor, MCVC, Maharashtra State Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Pune, India
Email: bhave.smita@gmail.com, Mobile: 9766594086


Global Impact Factor (2013)= 0.326 (By GIF)

Indexing:
ABSTRACT:

Tourism is one of the world’s largest and fastest growing service industries in the world accounting for 9.5% of global GDP (WTTC 2014). Tourism revenues bring economic growth and prosperity to tourist destinations which help in raising the standard of living of local people. As per WTTC, nearly 260 million jobs worldwide are supported by Travel and Tourism either directly in the industry or in related sectors. These jobs are vital not only for the livelihoods of those employed, but also for their families and the wider communities in host destinations.

In most countries, especially low income countries, tourism is seen as a viable option for economic growth, but current unsustainable tourism practices can impact the health and well-being of the environment and community as well as tourism itself (UNWTO 2014). Tourism is recognized as a resource-intensive industry; and therefore, it needs to be accountable in terms of sustainability at both local and global scales.

Keeping the need for trained tourism professionals for implementing sustainable and responsible tourism, a training module for home stay providers has been designed by Maharashtra State Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Pune. This training module aims to bridge the gap which exists between what Home-stay/ Bed & Breakfast (B & B) operators provide tourists by way of facilities and the requirements of tourists and the tourism industry, include local participation and set a minimum level of standard with respect to responsible tourism. If we want to achieve higher targets for tourism, it is imperative that Home-stay / B & B operators are trained. This training will help conserve the environment, maximize their earnings, preserve their cultural heritage and at the same time will be sustainable and meet the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC). This training module aims at providing basic tourism knowledge and skill sets, to ensure that operators keep pace with the changing needs of this vast industry.

Key words: Sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, Community-Based Home-Stays, training module

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the world’s largest and fastest growing service industries in the world accounting for 9.5% of global GDP [1]. As per WTTC, nearly 260 million jobs worldwide are supported by Travel and Tourism either directly in the industry or in related sectors. These jobs are vital not only for the livelihoods of those employed, but also for their families and the wider communities in host destinations.

India has a rich cultural heritage and innumerable tourist attractions ranging from religious places, forts, palaces, beaches, wild life, islands, Himalayan peaks, hill stations and many more. These attractions are mainly present in remote and rural areas. Despite being densely populated, India has a range of biodiversity products to offer to the tourists. The country hosts a variety of eco-zones like desert, high mountains, tropical and temperate forests, swamplands, plains, coastlines, islands and much more. India is also well known for its three biodiversity hotspots: the Western Ghats, the Himalayas and the Indo-Burma region which have abundant endemic species. Majority of the population of India live in rural areas as agriculture sector is the largest employer in India's economy. Tourism plays a significant role in reducing the rate of poverty among the rural communities especially those in rural tourism destinations. Most significantly, rural tourism is seen as an opportunity for local people living in and around tourism destinations to gain positive benefits from tourism development and the state’s conservation of forests and protected areas [2].

Like other countries India is also encouraging community-based eco-tourism in collaboration with various stakeholders from the government departments, tour operators, adventure specialists, and the community. The Forest
Department under their Community Forest Management Program supports the initiative by providing opportunities for jungle walks, forest retreats, wildlife tourism, bird watching and trekking [3]. The local or rural community can be involved in development and promotion of tourism. Rural communities, especially those that strive to become tourist destinations face many challenges, including limited human and financial resources in developing their own tourism sector [4].

It has been observed that the current unsustainable tourism practices can impact the health and well-being of the environment and community as well as tourism itself [5]. The continuous growth of tourism sector will place great stress on remaining biologically diverse habitats and indigenous cultures, which are often used to support mass tourism. The past few years have seen a steady growth in the adoption and endorsement of the principles of sustainable tourism as a development approach which has led to the creation of many initiatives to address concerns such as environmental conservation and protection.

It is necessary to create awareness about the concepts of sustainable tourism, ecotourism and responsible tourism to hosts, to tourists and also to all other stakeholders. Awareness can be created by conducting short duration workshops by training institutions, local Tourism Development Corporations, forest officials, etc. Training modules can be prepared for community based tourism operators to implement where the primary objective of conducting workshops should be:

1) To promote sustainable and responsible tourism.
2) To make the participant aware about the concept of ecotourism.
3) To provide an alternative source of income to the locals.
4) To provide training module for home stay providers to ensure hygiene.

The present paper provides a training module for the Community based Home-stay providers which can also be used in other sectors of tourism as a guideline training module. The problems faced by the large majority of tourist attractions all over our country are similar. There is scarcity of potable water, air and land pollution and garbage heaps lying around due to excessive use of limited resources and infrastructure due to mass tourism during season. Untrained staff lacking basic knowledge of hospitality, food hygiene and food and beverage service is also a major issue at rural tourist destinations as customers prefer to go to places which are clean, where they feel welcome and are treated well. If the concept of sustainable tourism is to be implemented it is necessary to train the grass root people involved in tourism and thus the need was felt to develop a training module.

**Review of Literature:**

**Sustainable tourism:**

There is an ancient proverb, ‘We have not inherited the earth from our ancestors. We have only borrowed it from our children’. The concept of sustainable development has a wide connotation. It includes social, economic, and ecological sustainability. This concept implies the sustainable use of resources considering the needs of future generations without endangering the environment. Thus sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It aims at using the present resources responsibly to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come [6].

Sustainable tourism is attempting to make as low an impact on the environment and local culture as possible, while helping to generate future employment for local people. The aim of sustainable tourism is to ensure that development brings a fruitful experience for local people, tourism suppliers, and the tourists themselves.

The concept of sustainability has been defined, interpreted and implemented differently by individuals, stakeholders and social groups; it is often referred to as a “balance” or “wise” use of resources [7]. Four basic principles for the concept of sustainability have been considered:

1) The idea of holistic planning and strategy-making;
2) The importance of preserving essential ecological processes;
3) The need to protect both human heritage and biodiversity and
Deforestation has resulted in environmental degradation due to extensive resources. In order to achieve a sustainable tourism development, local community centre of all activities and resources, in an economically viable way.

Hector Ceballos – Lascurain has defined the term as, “Ecotourism is travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strive to be low impact and (usually) small scale. It helps educate the visitor; provides funds for conservation; directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities; and fosters respect for different cultures and for human rights’ [14].

As per the International Ecotourism Society [15], following are the principles of Ecotourism:

1) Minimise impact
2) Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.
3) Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.
4) Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.
5) Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people.
6) Raise sensitivity to the host countries political, environmental, and social climate.

Community Based Tourism (CBT) is a distinctive type of tourism with features quite different from mass tourism. It is based on the curiosity or desire of visitors to learn more about the routine life of people from different cultures, traditions and lifestyles [16]. CBT is concerned with the impact of tourism on the community and environmental assets. It is a type of tourism managed by and for local community. Rozemeijer defines CBT as tourism initiatives that are owned by one or more defined communities, or run as joint venture partnerships with the private sector with equitable community participation, as a means of using the natural resources in a sustainable manner to improve their standard of living in an economically viable way [17]. Community Based tourism considers community at the centre of all activities and resources. It is also necessary to prepare and build the capacity of the host community to
manage tourism. Rest defines CBT as “tourism that takes environmental, social and cultural sustainability into account, with the purpose of enabling visitors to increase their awareness and learn about the community and local ways of life [18]. Community-based tourism has been actively promoted in many parts of the world especially in Asian countries, such as in Thailand, Cambodia, Mongolia, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

According to [9] the key aspects for sustainability of community-based tourism are implementation of

- Carrying Capacity study of a tourist destination.
- Code of Conduct: Code of conduct for tourist is essential to maintain the cultural significance of a place and have better host-guest relationships.
- Environmental Guidelines need to be followed.
- Training and Capacity Building of human resources.
- Education and awareness through interpretation material i.e. brochures, pamphlets, etc.
- Feedback and subsequent improvements. At some attractions the hosts or communities have problems like garbage management because of mass tourism.
- Cross-Site visits. Committees should be formed for the inspections which should comprise of members from different stakeholders.
- Monitoring: It should be an ongoing process.
- Certification: Certification by an authorized body will validate the training programme and the facility as well as the service provider.

**Community based Home stays:**

Community based home-stays have evolved over the years as an example of innovative ecotourism form of tourism focusing on sustainable tourism. The community-based home stay movement is growing across the Himalayan region and is becoming an important source of livelihoods for the Himalayan communities. Home stays offer an innovative and fresh opportunity to tourists and are actually ideal examples of ecotourism [9].

The concept of home-stays is not new to our country. Known as the Bed & Breakfast scheme, it is popular worldwide and is also being promoted by some State Tourism Development Corporations like MTDC, etc, while some home-stays are popular in Kerala and Himachal Pradesh. The state of Himachal Pradesh is promoting home stays through the state tourism department and has what is known as the “Himachal Pradesh Home Stay, Scheme 2008”.

One of the important principles of ecotourism is ‘to provide financial benefits and empower local people. This can be achieved in different ways using existing resources, for example converting the existing house or part of the house into ‘home stays’ and renting it out or implementing a concept like agri-tourism where farm and agricultural activities become the main focal point of tourist attraction. If both these concepts are implemented correctly and with attractive combination with few more novel activities, it can be a good source of income for farmers.

Based on this research and our own vast experience in community development, designing customized training programmes and training service providers from different strata of society, we perceived this need of designing a training module for home stay providers which can be used anywhere in India. Basically the culture, the ethnicity, local heritage has to be preserved at the same time, while promoting home stay ecotourism. Home stays have been a good tool for empowerment of women as most of the home-stays are run by women.

**Objectives:**

This training module aims to bridge the gap which exists between what Home-Stay/ Bed & Breakfast operators provide tourists by way of facilities and the requirements of tourists and the tourism industry, include local participation and set a minimum level of standard with respect to responsible tourism. If we want to achieve higher targets for tourism, it is imperative that Home-stay / B & B operators are trained. This training will help conserve the environment, maximize their earnings, preserve their cultural heritage and at the same time will be sustainable and meet the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC). This training module aims at providing basic tourism
knowledge and skill sets, to ensure that operators keep pace with the changing needs of this vast industry. Keeping
the need for trained tourism professional in mind, the topic was selected with the following objectives:

- To design a training module for Community-Based Home-Stay providers.
- To promote local cuisine and preserve culture.
- To promote sustainable and responsible tourism.

To convey the above concepts to new entrants in this field a training module has been developed by the faculty of
Maharashtra State Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Pune for best practices in community
based eco-tourism. Workshops could be conducted to guide those who want to implement the module.

The outline of the training module is as follows:

1) Significance of tourism: Importance and significance of tourism, Community based Eco-tourism
2) Personal Development: Job opportunities, grooming of staff
3) Cleaning and Housekeeping: Importance of hygiene in hospitality and catering, simple housekeeping
   practices, Need to control pests.
4) Food Preparation: Use of local products/authentic cuisine of the area, basic food preparations, preparation of
   simple value added products
5) Culture: Introduction to culture of Maharashtra, converting simple objects/rituals into tourist attractions,
   preserving and displaying art and craft of the region.

Based on the above outline planned, a three day workshop has been planned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Morning Half</td>
<td>1) Significance of Tourism</td>
<td>What is tourism and how it is going to help the host community in different aspects like income generation, preservation of art and crafts, preservation of artisans, improvement of infrastructure, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Income generating opportunities for locals</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tourism will help in income generation for locals. Depending on the type of destination s these activities will vary e.g., If it is a pilgrimage then locals can generate income by carrying out activities like making and selling garlands and flowers, photography, working as guide, drivers, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Tourist attractions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Locals should be aware of the tourist attractions both natural and manmade in and around their destination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) Basic facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Infrastructure needed to make tourists comfortable for Home-stays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) Welcoming tourists</td>
<td></td>
<td>Behaviour of the host leads to repeat tourism. It will lead to word of mouth publicity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|     | Tea-Break | | - Host has to be extremely careful about the personal hygiene of his and his workers,
- Host and his team should be well groomed and presentable. |
|     | Lunch Break | | Host should be very careful about the cleanliness not only of the inside of the house but also of the surroundings. There should not be any garbage dumps present nearby, garbage should be disposed off correctly, no sewage line, etc. |
| 01  | Post lunch | 1) Basic housekeeping practices | Location of the room- It should not be near the garbage bin, open drainage. It should be in a safe place for tourists to stay. |
|     | 2) Cleaning of the guest room | | The guest room should be cleaned properly. There should be no cobwebs, no dust, and no flies, with proper ventilation. |
|     | 3) Basic amenities required | | Basic amenities required in a room are: 
a) Clean bed  
b) Shelf :i) for keeping luggage  
   ii) For keeping clothes |
<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c) Mirror</td>
<td>d) Clean water jug with cover and clean glasses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>e) Table</td>
<td>f) Hangers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>g) Clean and covered dustbin</td>
<td>h) Well ventilated, well lit room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Toilet and Bath facilities</td>
<td>- Preferably attached to the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Basic but clean, safe and secure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Basic housekeeping tools needed</td>
<td>Soft brooms, hard brooms, ceiling brooms, mops, brushes, cleaning materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bed making</td>
<td>Teaching staff simple bed making techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pest Control measures</td>
<td>Informing about importance of pest control.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Day 2**

| 2 | Morning Half | 1) Food preparation and service | - Host should use local produce as far as possible. Try making special cuisine which is a specialty of that particular area which would be an added attraction to the tourists. |
|   |              |                                | - Try using local cooking practices and try to serve authentic cuisine. |
|   |              |                                | - Host and his team should know the importance of hygiene and should know the ways of serving food hygienically. |
|   |              |                                | - Create attraction and reduce cost by using banana leaves or patravali for serving food. |
|   |              |                                | - Host and his team should know the importance of safe service of food and beverages. |

**Lunch Break**

|       |       | Food preparation and service | - Regional recipes could be modified to suit tourist palate. |
| Post lunch |       |                                | - Host and his team should know ways of storing different food materials in safe and clean way. |
|           |       |                                | - Demonstration of simple recipes so that there is no loss or wastage of food. |
|           |       |                                | - Participants can be taught about waste management e.g. educating them about vermi-composting, etc |
|           |       |                                | - Participants are taught about simple methods of cooking e.g., solar cooking which will cut down costs of electricity. |
|           |       |                                | - Recycling of kitchen waste i.e. using waste materials in kitchen gardens, gardens etc. |
|           |       |                                | - Optimum use of water i.e. washing hands near plants etc, |
|           |       |                                | - Teach to follow the principle of reduce, reuse and recycle. |

**Day 3**

| 3 | Morning Half | Places of tourist interest in and around their area | - Guidelines to identify places of tourist interest in and around their area |
|   |              |                                                | - Knowing brief history, importance about monuments – if any. E.g., Monuments, temples, lakes, dam, wildlife sanctuary. |
|   |              |                                                | - Teaching participants to showcase art and craft of that area, village fairs and festivals of that area. |

**Tea Break**

|       |       | Innovative ideas for educating and entertaining tourists | Giving participants innovative ideas to attract and fascinate tourists. |
|       |       |                                                        | - Having lunch in farm. |
|       |       |                                                        | - Taking ride in bullock cart. |
|       |       |                                                        | - Sitting on back of buffalo. |
|       |       |                                                        | - Observing/gazing stars at night. |
|       |       |                                                        | - Swimming in the river. |
|       |       |                                                        | - Milking of cows, etc., |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Displaying</th>
<th>Teaching about conservation and display of specific articles used in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
items used by the locals in day to day life that area/village. For example antique brass/copper vessels, grinding stone, large water storage/heating pot, potters wheel etc., converting them into objects of tourist attraction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lunch-Break</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions:
Tourism activities can generate benefits for all sections of society if they are well planned and carried out. The money that tourism brings in will benefit the whole community. Every individual can have a part to play and apart from promoting tourism, it can be seen as a way for empowering women and elimination of poverty and inequalities. Home-stays have been a good tool for empowerment of women as most of the Home-stays are run by women. The Home stay providers should be trained through this training module as it will help them in serving the tourists in a better way and help them get repeat customers and more tourists through word of mouth publicity. The State or Visitor Information Centres can also provide assistance and act as strong links between visitors and Home stay providers.

Best practices in Community based eco-tourism will help the nation and the economy as more and more satisfied visitors will travel to destinations in India rather than going abroad. Foreign tourists will be encouraged to savor the local delicacies once they are sure that adequate hygiene and sanitation is maintained. Clean, safe and secure facilities will help in tourism promotion and marketing of a destination. Newer sustainable locales will reduce the stress on remaining biologically diverse habitats and indigenous cultures, which are often used to support mass tourism. Adequate participation of local communities in such activities will lead to a more involved and constructive tourism practices. Since water is a major concern, there needs to be a centralized plant for water filtration in 10 homes. Tourists should take back their water bottles. Cultural artifacts should not be taken back by tourists.

In conclusion, along with other basic and advanced training programmes which are being offered for capacity building of school dropouts and unemployed youth, this particular training will go a long way in empowering women folk and curtailing youth from leaving their roots and migrating to urban areas in search of employment. Involving locals in tourism activities and educating and training them with respect to tourists may be an incentive for promoting responsible tourism at their destination. This programme needs to be tried and tested and may need to be modified in terms of duration and content to meet the capacity building needs of locals.

Recommendations and Suggestions:
- Follow up refresher training programme is needed at least every two years.
- Certification and subsidies on electricity and gas should be given to trained service providers as motivation to participate in training programmes.
- Certification by an authorized body will validate the training programme and the facility as well as the service provider. The certification procedure will audit the facility and give a written assurance that the facility, product, process or services offered meets specific standards which cover necessary management, social, cultural and environmental criteria. According to Bhat S, certification will be beneficial as it would help raise the international standard for ecotourism in the country.
lend credibility to tour operators.
Ensure that ecological impacts from tourism are monitored in ecologically fragile areas.
Bring credibility to local community-based tourism initiatives.
Help tourists make informed choices.

- ‘Train the trainers’ programmes should be carried out regularly and information about future programmes should be widely circulated amongst all beneficiaries.
- If this module is to be successful, it is necessary that training should be given at the site i.e. at the destination, and trainees should be identified from nearby areas. Making arrangements for lodging and boarding of all trainees and displacing them from their village/town for the duration of the programme would affect their day to day life since many of the trainees are likely to be women.

REFERENCES


