

GROWTH OF HOME STAY ENREPRENEURS WITH REFERENCE TO MEEMURE VILLAGE, SRI LANKA

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Abstract

Meemure is a well-known tourism destination with rich natural and cultural heritage value. Meemure can identify as an attractive, rural village with high tourist value and with great history from ancient Sri Lanka. The growth of tourism industry with niche tourism concept leads to make a lot of tourism business opportunities in rural areas specially like Meemure. This has caused high demand on homestays within the region. Therefore, this study presented of potentials, opportunities and barriers face by homestay tourism entrepreneurs. Study follows a positivistic philosophy, is deductive in its approach, practice qualitative exploratory using in-depth interviews by selecting five respondents through judgmental sampling who are actively participated in the business as homestay business entrepreneurs and operators. As the findings, Financial adequacy and knowledge in business can identify as issues. As the conclusion there is high possibility to develop homestay tourism business within Meemure due to richness on cultural, heritage and natural value of the region with the government support. The finding of the research benefited to all the homestay tourism business entrepreneurs to enhance their business and grab new business opportunities in the tourism industry.

Keywords: Niche Tourism, Entrepreneurship. Rural Tourism, Homestay Tourism, Heritage

Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's largest leisure industry. According to WTTC report, Travel & Tourism is one of the world's largest economic sectors as providing direct employments over to 100 million as well enormous indirect employments for different sectors and regions Sri Lanka is most famous tourist destination with long history. As a tourism destination there have been some ups and downs, heaps and bounds as an industry due to war and other conflicts arise within the country specially between the period of 2003 to 2009 and 2019. But with the time due to gradual development of the industry people willing to involving with new tourism

concepts (Fernando, 2015) as homestay tourism business as it is popular in many destinations; it adds authentic sociocultural richness to the tourist's experience. For a nation that cannot make extensive infrastructural investment a priority, but which possesses an abundance of tourism richness in remote communities, homestays are an attractive alternative tourism product (Acharya & Elizabeth, 2013). Furthermore as an authentic, rural destination Meemure can identify as a traditional agricultural village with a population of about 331 people, It is located in the Central Province, in Kandy District, 343 km from Colombo that has about five hundred years of history and is remaining isolated from the main society

with its own specific culture (Ananda & Nahallage, 2014). Many empirical studies argue that the village Meemure consist with a lot of tourism potentials to promote tourism and develop rural lives of the area. Additionally, Entrepreneurs play an important role in sustaining rural tourism and formulation of sustainable strategies being the initiators of the tourism business and the engine of the local development. Consequently, it is necessary to stimulate the development of entrepreneurial activities for the recovery of rural tourism potential and regional traditions, maintaining local employment growth and increase living standards in line with identifies needs and priorities of regional human resources development (Sharif & Lonik, 2017). Therefore, by identifying homestay tourism challenges and potentials can leads to enhance the business platforms to develop rural lives of Meemure village.

Objectives

This study is an experiment to assess the development of the rural areas which is high with touristic value and how homestay tourism business can contribute for the development of the rural entrepreneurs.

- I. To understand the challenges that face by the homestay tourism entrepreneurs in the village.
- II. To understand the opportunities, that motivate homestay tourism entrepreneurs in the Meemure village.

Literature Review

Homestay Tourism

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries today. With its rapid growth, a diversification of tourism products and destinations is taking place, consequently, demanding new alternative types of tourism, e.g. small-scale nature related and rural 'experience' tourism. Within the total world market for tourism, rural tourism forms a relatively small sector but is of growing importance (Mohamad, et al.,

2013). According to Mohomad (2013) emphasized the homestay programme is a form of alternative tourism in which tourists are given the opportunity to experience the way of life of host country village. The experiential nature of this form of tourism is becoming increasingly popular with both foreign and domestic tourists.

Homestay referring to a visit to the home of someone in a foreign country that allows visitors to rent a room from a local family to learn the local culture, lifestyle, or language. It is a living arrangement offered by a host or host family that involves staying in a furnished house or suite. Homestay guests will stay at home like accommodation with shared living spaces, facilities and amenities. Utilities and meals are usually included, and the length of stay can be daily, weekly, monthly, or unlimited unless otherwise specified by the host (Lynch, 1998). And, Homestay as the term suggests means staying in someone's home. Homestay is a home of "a dwelling place together with a family unit that occupies it – household". Homestay provides a unique opportunity to experience the way of life of the local people of an area along with the indigenous and traditional cultures within a comfortable homely setting (Boonratana, 2010). Additionally, Paul Lynch (2009) gave a broader definition of Homestay by referring it as commercial homes whereby visitors or guests pay to stay in private homes where interaction take place with a host or family (Lynch, 1998).

Homestay Tourism Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship emphasizes opportunities to create and operate businesses and organizations. Further, entrepreneurship has a significant influence on the evolution of tourist destinations. In simple terms, entrepreneurs conceive an innovative idea or see an opportunity and pursue it, resulting in them establishing a business. Such behavior explains the influence of entrepreneurs on tourism development (Jaafar, et al., 2015). Based on past researches can emphasized the reasons for the high prevalence of small

businesses in tourism include the fact that smaller businesses can often be established with a minimum of capital, there are few specific prerequisite qualifications for most tourism-related businesses, businesses can be localized, and the owner-managers are generally families (Morrison, et al., 1999). Accordingly, the entrepreneur is viewed as a person who either creates new combinations of production, or as a person who is willing to take risks, organizing and reorganizing of social and economic mechanisms, or as a person who, by exploiting market opportunities, eliminates disequilibrium between supply and demand, or as one who owns and operates a business (Mohamad, et al., 2013).

Homestay has generated much revenue to the main provider of lodging through the arrival of guest staying in the room offered in the Homestay programme. There are also spillover effects to the community in terms of employment and business opportunities. It has also created employment as some of the Homestay operators could hire someone within the community to assist in operating the Homestay for example. The evolution of Homestay has shown to successfully becoming a catalyst for socio-cultural and economic development to the rural community development.

The development of Homestay programme has been seen to be attractive and moving forward to the right direction for the benefits of the local community. Some research studies that have investigated on the challenges encompassing the Homestay operators and local community managed to highlight several possible challenges (Pusira & Xiao, 2013).

Entrepreneurial Factors

Entrepreneurial factors can identify as pull and push factors. Entrepreneurs are people who have developed the ability to see and evaluate business opportunities, to gather the necessary resources, to take advantage of the resources gathered, and to initiate an

appropriate action plan to ensure success not only but also an entrepreneur could be operationally defined as an individual person who sets up a business or businesses, taking on financial risk for the principal purposes of profit and growth, who is characterized principally by innovative behavior, and employs strategic management practices in the business. (Gartner,1986). Synthetically, Entrepreneur is a person who that action-oriented, highly motivated individuals who take on risks to achieve the goals of the business.

Tourism in Meemure

Meemure is a village with a population of about 400. It is located near the border between Kandy District and Matale District in the Knuckles Mountain Range. Meemure is one of the most remote villages in Sri Lanka with the only access via a 14 km (8.7 mi) trail from the town of Loolwatte (Anon., n.d.).Based on empirical and theocratical research there is no enough evidence to identify homestay background of the Meemure village. According to Statistics of the SLTDA there is few numbers of home stay accommodation, 11 accommodation within the area and Meemure belongs to Ududumbara Secretariat Division and to Meemure Grama Niladari Division. Total population according to census in 2011 in Meemure GN division consists of 331 people belonging to 115 families (Ananda & Nahallage, 2014).

Research Methodology

In this study follows a positivistic philosophy, is deductive in its approach, practice qualitative exploratory using in-depth interviews by selecting five respondents through judgmental sampling who are actively participated in the business to identify the drivers and barriers to develop homestay tourism entrepreneurs. Interviews mainly concentrated on the areas of Potentials in the business in Meemure, Own interest to business, Flexibility to manage time, Desire to generate income, Knowledge in business.

Research Findings and Discussions

- *To understand the opportunities, that motivate homestay tourism entrepreneurs in the Meemure village.*

According to the interview conducted by five respondents who are actively participated in homestay tourism business, there are major opportunities in developing homestay tourism business in Meemure. Rich natural and cultural heritage is the biggest opportunity in attracting a lot of customers to the region. Along with that based on views, unpolluted natural environment, scenic beauty, geographical condition, climate and historical background with combine with king Rawana of the region specially contribute to the attract more and more customers to the region. Authentic rural culture of the village makes high possibilities in attracting more customers to develop homestay tourism business in the area.

Apart from the potentiality of the business, people's interest towards start up and manage the business, desire to generate more income and flexibility of managing business current infrastructure, knowledge of the people and personal qualities of the people like risk taking, passion, creativity act as opportunities, motivators in developing homestay tourism business in Meemure.

- *To understand the challenges faced by the homestay tourism entrepreneurs in the village of Meemure.*

From the interview conducted by five respondents who are actively participated in homestay tourism business, there were few major challenges in developing their business. Financial adequacy can identify as the biggest issue that they are facing as small-scale entrepreneurs. When they are managing their business, they are struggling with find enough funds for their business mainly in providing facilities to their customers and potential customers. Mainly they did not have the enough knowledge in the opportunities in funding their business using loans or the

investments, along with this they unable to sustain their monthly income and invest for the growth of the business.

Lack of knowledge in managing the business is identified as the challenge of the entrepreneurs who are involving homestay tourism business in Meemure. According to their views they do not have enough education and entrepreneurial capabilities to sustain in the market and grab high profit. Due to the reason they are not implementing enough advertising, promotions to attract more customers towards their business and specially the entrepreneurs not focusing the potential markets to attain the stability of the industry. Moreover, communication barriers, standard of the service quality, maintenance, infrastructure development also can identify as challenges based on the views of the respondents.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As the deductive study this paper examined opportunities and challenges in developing homestay tourism business in Meemure. As per the conclusion can conclude there is high possibility to develop homestay tourism business within Meemure due to richness on cultural, heritage and natural value of the region. Moreover, homestay entrepreneurship can significantly increase due to the personal trails like passion, risk taking and risk-taking ability.

Therefore, as per the recommendation, government or the public and private sector support is essential to get rid from current issue. Government can help in recognizing in business process by providing knowledge, providing loans, facilitate with possible infrastructures. Additionally, improve the standard of the service quality will help to sustain in the market and most important factor is developing niche tourism concepts using existing natural resources will be benefitted to attract more customers to the region which will leads to develop entrepreneurs of the region. Therefore, these are the most essential recommendations for

growth of home stay entrepreneurs in Meemure village, Sri Lanka

Thus, future research works are encouraged to investigate the heritage value of the Meemure as the famous tourist destination, authenticity of food culture in Meemure and can investigate the agri tourism practices and entrepreneurship of the Meemure village.

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