



## Home Stay Scheme in Himachal Pradesh: A Successful Story of Community Based Tourism Initiatives (CBTIS)

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study is based on the extensive literature review and is an attempt to understand the success of the "Homestay scheme" initiated by the Himachal government popularly called "Himachal Pradesh Home Stay, Scheme 2008". Himachal Pradesh is blessed with immense natural beauty and diverse set of tourism products like pilgrimage, excursion, adventure sports, heritage, culture, cuisines, festivals etc. has started paying attention towards tourism industry in past few years. The successful branding of Himachal as "Unforgettable Himachal" has generated multiple benefits to the industry in terms of revenue generation, employment generation etc., and the tourism has always motivated the community to participate and take maximum benefit out of it; the paper focuses on the impact of this popular scheme on the local community.*

**KEYWORDS:** Community, tourism, motivation, Home stay, initiatives etc

**INTRODUCTION:** Accommodation is the major tourism component and tourism infrastructure has been always a serious concern (either lack of infrastructure or unplanned infrastructure) in every form. Number of studies has revealed the problems and threats of tourism infrastructure. Specifically, infrastructure for tourism yields costs and benefits, including government expenditure, the rise in home prices, and loss of traditional housing and local characteristic, transportation issues, crime, as well as degradation of common resources. While tourism is intended to increase overall socioeconomic development, however, there is not a lot of evidence that the benefits actually reach the communities. Therefore, it's a high time that the planners must frame policies which are conducive to the host community and reap up maximum benefits to them.

### OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the research paper are:

- To understand the benefits of Home stay scheme.
- To identify the major problems areas in development of the Home stay scheme.
- To suggest some alternative strategies for the successful implementation of the scheme.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to meet the objectives of the study, Secondary data pertaining to the tourism and Home stay scheme has been collected from the various reports of the state like Economic survey of Himachal Pradesh, Reports of Tourism & Civil Aviation Department, Himachal Pradesh news papers, referring different websites and magazines etc.

### HOME STAY SCHEME AND HOST COMMUNITY:

In the attempt to fulfill the gap between the demand and supply of accommodation and to have community participation the 'Home Stay' Scheme was launched by the Himachal Pradesh Government in 2008 with the main objectives like to broaden the stake holder's base for tourism in the State, Take tourism to the rural and interior areas of the State, ease the burden of already overloaded Urban areas which cannot support any further tourism load, Provide employment and economic values in the interior areas, The activity shall be ecologically sustainable and to draw tourists to all over the world and provide them quality accommodation at reasonable rates during the peak season, has become a roaring success. The 'Home Stay' Scheme seeks to draw tourists away from posh and crowded urban areas to the rural hinterland replete with natural surroundings, by providing them clean, comfortable and budget-friendly accommodation and food. The government initiated the scheme to promote rural tourism, on 15-08-2010, Department of tourism, Himachal Pradesh has launched the scheme in all 12 districts of the state by selecting one village destination. The selected villages were Hewen in Shimla district, Sangrah in Sirmaur, Baniya Devi in Solan, Brua in Kinnaur, Udaipur in Lahaul-Spiti, Shamshar in Kullu, Bagi in Mandi, Salasi in Bilaspur, Bela in Hamirpur, Nari in Una, Nerti in Kangra, Saho in Chamba. The scheme generated an excellent interest and generated good response from the local community. Tourists prefer to stay in small accommodations in the lap of nature, instead of in costly

and noisy luxury hotels. The scheme has succeeded in bringing out tourists from the traditionally popular tourist destinations to new and untapped places which has enabled the state government to popularize new tourist destinations, and provide alternative source of income to the rural folks.

**TABLE 1 - REGISTERED HOME STAYS UNITS & OCCUPANCY**

Sr No	District	Regd Units	Rooms	National tourist	Foreign tourists
1	Shimla	51	146	2472	041
2	Kinnaur	49	140	0065	138
3	Lahaul-Spiti	28	080	0028	110
4	Kullu	113	289	4510	856
5	Mandi	10	024	0759	021
6	Kangra	34	089	5302	231
7	Chamba	26	074	1926	072
8	Solan	15	036	2889	007
9	Sirmaur	06	013	0205	009
10	Bilaspur	----	----	----	----
11	Hamirpur	----	----	----	----
12	Una	----	----	----	----
Till 28-02-2011					
Total 332 891 18156 1485					
Source: Tourism & Civil Aviation Department, Himachal Pradesh					

**BENEFITS RELATED TO HOME STAY:** A Home Stay offers the chance to experience a side of India that's only possible by staying with a family. According to Himachal Pradesh Government's tourism department, after successful implementation of 'Har Ghar Kuch Kehta Hai' (every house speaks something) programme, under which the department had compiled a list of historical buildings for tourism, it has come up with another scheme called 'Har Gaon Ki Kahani' (the story of every village). Under the 'Har Gaon Ki Kahani' scheme, the tourism department has asked villagers to come up with popular stories related to their villages which could help in attracting tourists to their villages while giving fillip to tourism in rural areas. Under the 'Har Gaon Ki Kahani' scheme, the tourism department has asked villagers to come up with popular stories related to their villages which could help in attracting tourists to their villages while giving fillip to tourism in rural areas. The scheme is expected to generate employment opportunities for the local youth, as Shimla, Kangra, Kullu etc. and many towns of Himachal Pradesh are known for their folktales and local legends.

**TABLE 2 - TOURIST ARRIVALS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH**

Year	Indian	Foreign	Total
2004	63.45	2.04	65.49
2005	69.28	2.08	71.36
2006	76.72	2.81	79.53
2007	84.82	3.39	88.21
2008	93.72	3.37	97.50
2009	110.37	4.01	114.38
2010	128.12	4.54	132.66
2011	146.05	4.84	150.98

Source: Department of tourism, Himachal Pradesh

The Himachal Pradesh Government had accorded a number of incentives for the Home stay scheme which includes:

- Providing employment avenues for many local people, the home stay tourism scheme has taken grip in many areas of the hill state.
- Including exempting these units from paying any taxes, and supplying them water and power at concessional rates applicable to domestic consumers.
- Generate avenues of self-employment etc.
- Most women (who work as local guides, and who receive the cash payments) felt that the income from Homestays has made a significant change in their lives. The income has given them greater decision making powers at home that they hadn't had before.
- Participation in the Homestays strengthens the sense of pride local people have their culture, lifestyles, surroundings plus provided opportunities to interact with people from other countries.
- It has succeeded in moving the tourist from traditional popular tourist destinations to new places which has helped to popularize new destinations and provide alternative income source to rural enterprise.
- The department of Tourism lists the registered Home stay houses on its web site, free of charge, the approved Home Stay units on an application by the owner. HPTDC also include them in their online Reservation system, on payment of commission as fixed by HPTDC from time to time which automatically generates the clientele for the stakeholders.

The scheme was launched by the department to popularize rural tourism and give a feel of the socio-cultural life, festivals and cuisine to those wanting a get local flavor. This scheme has been quite a success, especially with foreign tourists who come here specially to get a feel of the rural and local life which they get best while staying in the homes of locals. But, there are few concerns also related to its effective implementation and its affect on the hotel industry, like when Tourism ministry proposed to raise the limit on the number of rooms from three to five, the Hoteliers Associations strongly oppose it, The hotelier's plea that the scheme is affecting their business as people prefer to stay in homes where the tariff is low and one can get a decent room with complete home comfort. Moreover, home-cooked food and a feel of local life is the biggest attraction, which the hotels cannot offer. Hoteliers say that they have made a huge investment on constructing a hotel and paying

luxury tax. In that case, government needs to work on some win-win situation for all the stakeholders. In addition to that government need to educate people regarding the multiple benefits of the scheme with the help of the volunteers, NGO's, self-help groups (SHGs) so that the scheme attains the maximum popularity amongst the local community and the fragile ecology on the hills can be protected without compromising on the benefits tourism industry reaps for them.

**SUGGESTIONS :** By creating and participating in real and authentic Home stay, the host community is trying to provide and promote the development of increasingly Sustainable Communities Today, when all the destinations which have achieved a saturation stage are facing the challenges like congestion, pollution etc. tourism needs to support community sustainability; India which is primarily an agricultural society needs to give fillip on the tourism without compromising much on the ecological fragile of the destination. Here, the Home Stay Scheme acts as a great boon to the society and a destination in particular.

There is an immense need to develop grassroots experience in developing and marketing community-based tourist programmes, the government must work with other rural communities to develop, market, and manage tourism based upon best practices. The focus must be on building the capacity and training among community members to conduct Community Based Research, which enables the community to identify potential tourism products that are based upon viable business models. The host community must be successfully assisted as owners and decision makers in tourism that is based upon their natural and cultural heritage. And to take up the "Home stay Scheme " at different platform .in addition to Create tangible economic benefits for local people the other training which includes education and training in a broad range of skills such as customer service, communication, project management, and business accounting must be given to them to be self-employed in a sustainable manner. Government with the help of NGO's etc. can be instrumental in supporting cultural pride and identity in many Himachali communities, while promoting awareness and support for natural heritage protection in these same rural communities. For example, in Kullu, Manali the home stay programme has created a revitalized interest in traditional dances by the youth, helping to reduce rural-urban migration. This can be very well replicated in the other part of the state.

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