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## **HOMESTAY TOURISM: FROM THE DISTANT PAST UP TO PRESENT**

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### **Abstract**

*While homestay tourism as an effective catalyst for socio-economic development in the rural areas has been widely discussed in the tourism literature, very few studies have investigated the historic roots and evolutionary path of the homestay. This study conducted a thorough review of homestay history in order to explain what factor gave rise to the homestay tourism and what significant forces in the modern society have shaped the contemporary homestay tourism. This paper shows that the business of homestay, from its earliest days as in the past shares the characteristics of the homestay tourism as we know it today. It also acknowledges how homestay tourism has evolved through societies' religious beliefs, financial incentives, and nobles' hunger for novel cultural experience, environmental awareness, enhanced demands for solitude, poverty reduction, and sustainable tourism development over centuries. Furthermore, it clarifies that the*

*modern tourists consider homestay as an alternative lodging experience to the normal chain hotels due to its capability in creating a short relaxing break in a homelike atmosphere allowing them to experience host culture and pristine nature in more authentic way.*

### **Keywords**

Community- based tourism approach, Homestay tourism, Local community

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## **1. Introduction**

The significant contribution of tourism industry to the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment has simply indicated how tourism industry works as the most powerful engine for economic development particularly in the developing countries where nations experience a rapid growth in the number of international tourists and tempting contribution of those arrivals to GDP, socio- economic development, and poverty reduction (Manyara, Jones, & Botterill, 2006). Therefore, it wouldn't be surprising if many less developed countries have launched tourism projects in order to improve local communities' livelihoods most specifically in the remote rural areas (Adiati, 2016; Scheyvens, 2012)

Community-based tourism approach (hereafter referred as CBT) is one of the most prominent tourism projects in rural areas supposed to make an equal distribution of economic opportunities amongst local communities (Blockstock, 2005; Tolkach & King, 2015). Simply, they are community owned and/or managed tourism businesses that are organized in the ways to deliver more community benefits (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009). In the CBT approach as the bottom up community approach, local communities should be fully involved in decision making process, developing tourism products, and putting into practice a tourism strategy (Hall, 2007; Iorio & Corsale, 2013).

By implementing CBT approach, locals experience the greater level of empowerment and ownership in tourism development which easily helps them to reinforce their socio- economic development (Khlaikaew, Buakwan, & Chaiyakot, 2017; Simpson, Wood & Daws, 2003). A specific form of CBT approach which has been promoted by many countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean is homestay tourism in rural area. A rural homestay program is kind of accommodation offered and organized by local community which involves tourists staying with local families where they can interact directly with hosts and learn more about

villagers' daily life and culture (Rea, 2003). Exploiting the existing traditional culture and natural environment particularly in rural areas makes rural homestay as an ideal strategy to produce a great source of income for poor villagers which in turn they ensure the preservation of those environments and guarantee natural, socio- economic and cultural sustainability (Siwar, 2013). By increasing people's leisure time and further accesses to the remote rural areas also enhanced demands for solitude, fresh air, and active leisure entertainment, homestay program has experienced a tremendous growth over recent decades (Ibrahim, 2004) and extensively has being promoted in rural areas by many economies.

Due to the enhancing interest amongst tourism stakeholders in implementing CBT approach particularly tourism homestay projects, it is important to provide a profound understanding of this form of alternative tourism by reviewing its past and present states. A rich review of homestay tourism program that explains a lot about historic roots and evolutionary path of the field, aids both tourism researchers and practitioners to understand how tourism homestay development is inexorably tied to the travellers' needs and trend, socio-economic growth of the regions and environmental awareness whilst appreciating its continuing development over the years. Simply, there is a general lack of literature regarding the homestay tourism development pathways.

The current paper tends to address this literature gap by reviewing existing tourism studies and historical documents even if they do not constitute a complete and comprehensive history of homestay worldwide. In summary, the principal objectives of the studying historical roots of homestay tourism were as follows;

- To explore what gave rise to the homestay tourism in different eras.
- To link modes of transportation with the growth and development of homestay tourism.
- To investigate what significant forces in modern society have shaped contemporary homestay tourism.

The major contribution of the current study is enriching tourism literature also encouraging tourism decision makers to focus more on the homestay as an innovative CBT product which generates sufficient funding and inexpensive human resources for preserving natural and cultural assets as well as making profit for rural poor. Furthermore, this historical review seems highly necessary while implementing such tourism initiatives. Because understanding homestay's

origins and its place in the human history helps tourism practitioners to realize how they can meet tourist needs by conducting some product modifications. However, this study starts with defining the emerging homestay tourism concept followed by a discussion of its historical roots and development over the time whilst elucidates its potential for sustainable tourism development.

## **1.2 Concept of Homestay Tourism**

In the 1970s, emerging neopopulist approaches stressing on the role of civil society in tourism development, brought forward the idea of sustainable tourism (Scheyvens, 2002). The communities owned /or managed tourism businesses, are the perfect form of sustainable tourism development. Meanwhile, homestay was developed as a most important CBT initiative and became increasingly popular among domestic and international tourists (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009b). Only in 2010, 128,000 tourists utilize this type of accommodation in Malaysia due to its unique creative features (Zanion, 2010). Although, homestay offers lodging and dining services to the guests as many other forms of tourism accommodation do, tourists choose homestay as a very affordable accommodation service (Pusiran & Xiao, 2013) with unrivalled capability in creating first- hand experience of host culture (Cohen, 1988; Mapjabil *et al.*, 2015). However, the long way that homestay has come to become a tourism product in the rural areas started with early history.

## **2. The History of Tourism Homestay**

### **2.1 Iron Age**

The roots of the current homestay tourism can be traced all the way back to the Iron Age (1200 - 550 B.C.) when Celts developed their culture throughout central Europe. According to Hope (1987), The Celts were a southern European people of Indo-Aryan origin who first surfaced in Bohemia and travelled west in search of the home of the sun in 1200 BC. Regardless of when and where those tribes had come from, hospitality was an important component of Celtic life.

As Cruden (1998) stated that in the Celtic territories, all householders either men or women were obliged to provide limitless hospitality to any stranger who knocked their doors by offering very best they had in terms of food, drink, bed and entertainment. The Celtic hosts were not allowed to commit any violence on their guests even they had to protect them from any

possible harm (Ubani, 2012). In return, guests had their parts by showing respect to the hosts and refraining from any dispute and hostility during their stay. They were also expected to offer some food items to their hosts and entertaining them by singing, storytelling and play a tune according to their abilities. Latter, those hospitality principles contributed to the body of Brehon Law that was developed in 438 AD, and served Celtic people for at least 1000 years (Kelly, 1988). Certainly, the ways that Celtic people served their guests constructed the basic foundations of contemporary tourism homestay.

However, a couple of reasons justify why such hospitality was greatly valued by Celtic people. One of the possible explanations for this type of hospitality refers to the importance of harbouring strangers as a sign of nobility within Celtic societies (Green, 1996). The ordinary Celts who ranked along skilled class owed their status to the generosity of the hospitality that they offered to travelers and supposed to stay at this rank until they refused hospitality. Another reason was originated in the Celts' 'religious belief. According to Ellis (1994, p.45), the Celts believed that gods are everywhere and sometimes walk abroad thus people never recognize if the stranger at the door was human or God. Undoubtedly, they believed that giving warm hospitality to the stranger was the same offering to a God and might keep them safe from evil fate also create good fortune for their family as well.

The similar manner of hospitality with religious purposes was practiced by ancient Greeks and Romans as a way of honoring the gods (O'Gorman, 2005). Apparently, the Olympic Games which used to take place in Ancient Greece since 770 BC had a religious significance to the Greeks as those games offered to honour Zeus the first among gods. Therefore, hospitality with strangers who took a trip on foot of a hundreds of kilometers to attempt the games was a religious duty and the host would share the merit of the pilgrims. In the same way, offering the generous hospitality to the strangers by ancient Romans was a way of honoring Jupiter, the God of the gods.

## **2.2 Middle Ages**

However, with the collapse of the Roman Empire in the 476 AD, the roads became unsafe and travel was only led to the short trips. Very few people during Medieval Period or Middle Ages (from the 5th to the 15th century) travelled for pleasure and tourism experienced a growing number of pilgrims.

A close interaction between religion and hospitality can be seen once again during the Middle Ages particularly between 768 and 814 AD or Charlemagne region. According to the law legislated by Charles the Great (he was a medieval emperor who ruled much of Western Europe from 768 to 814), all Christians were obliged to provide free food, drink and warm bed for travelers to three nights (Gray & Liguori, 1994). The time limitation of Christians' hospitality might be considered due to possible traveler's overstay and burden of offering free food and shelter by host. In addition to the role of hospitality in the Christians' religious well-beings, hospitality obligations enacted by Charles the Great or Charles I can be explained via wealth gathering and political affairs that mostly motivated the military, diplomats, tax-collecting officials, and a small extent of merchandises to travel that era.

Simultaneously, hospitality with religious motivations were practiced by Middle East people who affected by Islamic teaching on the other side of the planet. They used to give the travellers warm hospitality at their homes by offering a place to sleep and meals to eat. According to the Islamic traditions, the guest was God's friend thus God rewards hospitality with great fortune and if the guest stayed longer than "three days", hospitality would become charity (Ibn Abas, 1999 as cited in O'Gorman, 2009). Therefore, hosts were motivated to endure any burdensome and inconvenience caused by guest and even protect their guests from the possible harms.

Due to the economic burdens of providing meals and shelters, host's kindness gradually has turned into something that needs a reward and expanded into small businesses then. Although, there exists a few historical documents that show commercial hospitality has been founded in the classical Rome by 405 BC (Lane & Dupre, 1996), hospitality with business purpose became popular by forming primary inns in 500 AD (Arabhavi,2016), thus inn keeping can be considered as the first commercial enterprise and hospitality as the one of the first services where money was exchanged in return (Ghosh, 2000, p. 138).

Hospitality in exchange for a monetary reward encouraged European inn keepers even some local residents to develop their business places that were dominantly private houses to offer hospitality services more than bedding on the floor or bench in the corner of a room (Ghost, 2000). Some of those establishments as the predecessors of current B&B (bed and breakfast) were owner-occupied British homes that used to offer homemade breakfast and temporary lodging to gain more income for the family. They used to accommodate their guests in the rooms

where ventilation and privacy was non-existent but prices for staying at these homes were often cheaper than inns. After a while, those houses added more facilities and converted into specific lodging establishments which latter recognized as the traditional B&B.

By the 15th century, the custom of bed & breakfast arrangements was recognized by its abbreviation B&B in the British Isles. Thereafter, it became widespread around Europe and accommodated strangers who mostly were traders, soldiers, and pilgrims (Walkers, 2007). The initial B& B arrangements were usually informal and organized based on acquaintance and social ranks similar to charitable hospitality arrangements in the ancient Rome as described by Kevin D O’Gorman (2007) in his book. That means every traveler used to choose the host from his/her own social class.

Although, B&B arrangement has virtually boomed more recently in North America, the existence of primary B&B in the United States dates backs to early settlers when people travelled across that county and sought safe shelters in homes and inns (Warnick & Klar JR, 1991). Both terms "boarding house" and "tourist home" were used by Americans to define the houses that were located on state routes and opened before and after the Great Depression by their owners to travelers in order to gain supplementary income for their families (Paul,2014).

However, the B&B has grown rapidly after industrial revolution and evolved from the homestay with shared baths and a simple furnishing to the private room and bath decorated with luxurious amenities by host family. The decades passed, B&B establishment did not solely lead to the increased number of the users or the quality of offered services but it also changed the pattern of benefits sought by both guest and host.

In fact, the current B&Bs particularly the countryside or seaside ones are known for many tourists as an attractive alternative lodging experience to the normal chain hotels and motels due to B&Bs’ capabilities in creating short relaxing break in a homelike atmosphere, participating in the healthy and authentic activities, enjoying privacy and appreciating the beauty of natural environment (Upchurch, 1996). The B&Bs operators who used to serve the price sensitive tourist segments in pre- industrialized revolution have changed into the hosts who have the opportunity to make a profitable business and create new relationships as well as to teach guests about their ways of life (Kline, Morrison & John, 2004).

### **2.3 Grand Tour**

No doubt, the start for the more widespread and regular tourism was triggered by two factors of health and culture in the late Renaissance. Simply, health motivated travelers began to visit the spa and seaside towns of Europe to benefit from the spring waters and fresh air. Most specifically, culture as the main factor that gave birth to the modern tourism (Garther, 1996), has contributed to the current homestays hundreds of years after the emergence of B&Bs establishments.

After the centuries of the Crusades, the stable Europe particularly after 1648, became increasingly safe place for travel and the stagecoaches that were first built in England facilitated long journeys. Now many more people were able to do so simple for self-education and satisfaction of curiosity. Young aristocrats most notably the English were being able to afford the multiple months even years abroad. They travelled Italy, France and Switzerland on a cultural grand tour (Hitrec, 2003) with the intentions of learning appropriate behaviors at court, studying paintings, sculptures and architecture, visiting historical sites, and learning cultures (Kershaw & Likorish, 1958).

Even though, the young upper-class European men used to rent an apartment or inn during their stay, some of the British aristocrats' itineraries were organized in the ways that accommodated those nobles for day trips even long stay in the homes of French and Italian aristocracy and British envoys. This kind of accommodation was in the line with the British elites educational travel purposes which latter planted the seeds of the current homestay more specifically the educational homestay programs in the developed countries. Although, those programs normally relate to families intending to accommodate foreign students who are studying at local universities and colleges in the developed countries (Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002), there are some exchange field programs practiced by developing countries hosting foreign students in the homes of locals in order to teach them the host way of life (Farthing, 1997; Hamzah, 2008).

However, the custom of Grand Tour flourished from 1660 and then terminated after French Revolution more precisely in 1840s when the locomotive steam engines with their large-scale rail transport emerged (McCarthy, 2012). Although, the influences of returning Grand Tours shaped the art and architecture of the young nobles' hometown countries, it also initiated a new Grand Tour particularly by the mid of 19 century when discovery efforts and education experiences in the nature were taken into account by featured characters (Paden, 2009). The well-



known figure of the new Grand tour tourists was Charles Darwin the founder of evolution theory. He intended to develop a new way towards scientific education of nature and wrote some essays about importance of environmental conservation.

The continuous evolution of the new Grand Tour which getting more affordable by nature based travelers coupled with the rising incomes, reduced working time, the advent of the railways, and cheap air travel in the 1960s, exposed more people to the remote areas where both nature and local cultures were suffering from adverse impacts imposed by mass tourism. Such an exposure triggered the global society awareness about environment which subsequently established the foundations of ecotourism in 1980 (Honey, 2008).

Thereafter, ecotourism went further and has been expanded into many branches such as agro- tourism, pro-poor tourism and responsible tourism. Although, each type of ecotourism differs from one another in its own way, all of them are trying to respect and benefit protected area as well as the locals who living on or around.

## **2.4 Farm Tourism**

However, the nearest form of tourism product to the contemporary tourism homestay dates back to 100 years ago when farm tourism as a specific branch of ecotourism in Europe and America took place (Frater, 1983). The farm tourism as defined by Frater (1983), is a form of rural or agro- tourism when paying guests stay at the working farms and share farming life. Over recent decades, this type of alternative tourism has highly demanded by tourists who seek novelty and demand interaction with locals and natural environments in the more authentic ways (Kontogeorgopoulos, Churyen, & Duangsaeng, 2015).

The advent of the recent mainstream tourism trend has motivated many farmers to diversify their own farms into farm-based tourism particularly in the European countries (Dernoi, 1981; Talbot, 2013). Change user of farm in favor of tourist is increasingly growing in the North America, Oceania (Busby & Rendle, 2000) and Asian countries as well (Garrod – 2011). Although, the farmers' inability to earn sufficient income from traditional farming practices has contributed to the farm tourism, the rapid development of this product has been mostly attributed to the governments' policies in using farm tourism as an effective tool of revitalizing and preserving rural areas (Hjalager, 1996 as cited in Hill & Bussy, 2002).

However, the major segment of the farm tourism is recognized by provision of serviced and self-catering accommodation (Frater, 1983b) which later clustered by Sznajder and

Przezborska (2004) based on the type of activities and services offered by hosts including “farm-stays”, “country-stays”, “rural home-stays”, and “rural B&B”. Whist all those categories share common features, rural homestay program enjoys the significant differences in terms of community participation level, geographical location and the idea behind its development. As the Salamia, Othman and Maheeran (2011) stated that the geographical restrictions which bounded most farm tourism categories to the countryside, doesn’t apply to the rural homestay and those programs are more dominantly situated in the less developed areas and not necessarily linked to the specific landscapes. Furthermore, in the rural homestay whole villagers are involved in conducting tourism activities but other forms of farm tourism only involve the host families (Salamia, Othman and Maheeran, 2011b).

## **2.5 Contemporary Homestay**

Perhaps the main contributor of the current rural homestay as a tourism initiative links to the increased awareness concerning the necessity of community development in the rural areas. Amongst many community development approaches, the CBT approach which owes its sustained attention to the Murphy’s study in 1985 (Kontogeorgopoulos, Churyen, & Duangsaeng, 2015b) has been promoted as a strong mean by which the social, environmental, and economic needs of local communities can be satisfied through locals offering of a tourism product (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009b). In the simple words, CBT mainly acts as an alternative economic development option for rural areas where the traditional agriculture, mining, or forestry face with many challenges and do not contribute to the locals economic and social well-being any longer. This is largely due to the tourism reliance on the unique natural, historic, culture, and ethnic resources that can be easily found in rural areas (Butler, 1998). Therefore, there is no need for external resources.

However, CBT contributions to poverty reduction and tourism development cannot be fulfilled without the help of local residents and their involvement (Aref, 2011; Fallon & Kriwoken, 2003; Kontogeorgopoulos, Churyen, & Duangsaeng, 2014). Undoubtedly, the locals’ involvement in the CBT approach leads to benefit them to some extent of the empowerment and ownership which in turn guarantees the sustainable tourism development. Such an involvement easily helps locals to reinforce their socio- economic development and protect their environmental resources.

Clearly, the reasons behind flourishing contemporary tourism homestay and its increasing popularity among tourists don't only refer to the increased need for rural community development (Simpson, Wood & Daws 2003) or enhanced service quality offered by host families, but it also owes its evolution to the emergence of new modes of low fares' transportation that enables movement over long distances for tourists who seek a rustic atmosphere in the heart of nature far from the noisy cities tied with a first-hand experience of local culture (Decrop, 2009). Therefore, finding wilderness and privacy no longer requires multi-year journeys by ships.

Today, car travel as the most dominant vehicle in the movement of both international and domestic tourists notably due to its affordability, availability, and independence, enables all sorts of new travel possibilities. High speed electric trains and low cost air transport as the other modes of tourism transportation positively contribute to the long journeys which enable tourist to visit different places and link to the nature in a minimal time whilst appreciate a variety of local customs and cultures in the more authentic ways.

### **3. Discussion and Conclusion**

The current study set out to explore the historical origins of homestay tourism within the ancient, classical, and contemporary worlds. The major finding of such an exploration indicates homestays is not only the early type of lodging services offering by many nations (Borchgrevink, 1999), it is also the ancient kind of tourism product.

In the simple words, tourism and hospitality began by homestay in the ancient times when the only way of paying homage and offering honor to the gods was providing meal and bed for the strangers. From the further exploration, the key elements affecting tourism homestay have been detected. Those factors were evolving from the beginning of human history till the contemporary era in order to satisfy the travelers' needs. Apparently, the early form of homestay was mainly concerned with the societies' religious beliefs coupled with host's hunger for enhancing social class. The emergence of commercial hospitality, elite networks of cultural communication, increased demands for experiencing authentic culture in the protected natural environments, enhanced awareness regarding the necessity of locals' empowerment and ownership in the sustainable tourism development, and modern human man's need for solitude

and escape from the pressures of urban life are other elements that have given continuity to the homestay development over centuries.

Simply, study outcomes have identified four common features of the tourism homestay. First of all, homestay as a primary type of hospitality supports the fundamental principle of human survival within societies since it deals with a broad range of human basic needs such as meal, shelter and security. The second trait of homestay refers to its ability in developing close relationships between host and guest leading to the lifetime friendship and well established loyalty. Furthermore, the key foundation of the homestay is treating others in the ways as if they are in their own homes. Indeed, homestay is the only housing option that creates a homelike atmosphere rich in the safety and comfort. It makes guests feel right at home whilst they are many miles far away from their own homes.

Finally, offering things and services to the guests, with the expectation of a reward highlights the form of reciprocity of guest and host in the homestay tourism. However, the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests through homestay is not always associated with monetary rewards. It can also be appreciated by a spiritual reward when it becomes a virtue and most worthy thing to do such as offering honor and paying homage to the gods.

Although, there exists a strong agreement amongst tourism academics and practitioners concerning the role of rural homestay in improving the livelihood of the locals in terms of economic and social status (Blockstock, 2005; Goodwin & Santilli, 2009; Kayat *et al.*, 2015; Tolkach & King, 2015), the role of homestay in reducing individual loneliness that stems from isolation imposed by modern life has been neglected. Therefore, further research is recommended to investigate how individual loneliness can be eliminated by homelike atmosphere of homestay and guest-host social interaction.

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