HOMESTAY TOURIST ACCOMMODATION AS A CONCEPT TO BOOST RURAL ECONOMIES IN KENYA: A CASE OF TAITA TAVETA COUNTY

BY

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Declaration

Student Declaration

This proposal is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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Supervisor Declaration

This proposal has been submitted for review with my approval as the university supervisor.

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Abstract

The economic potential of tourism in less developed countries has been identified as an important contributing factor to global tourism growth. In most developing countries, tourism has normally been portrayed as a contributor to small scale enterprises directly uplifting the standards of living as well as a catalyst for community development. As an extended form of community participation in tourism, the homestays concept seeks to empower individual households earn an income from tourism directly. Due to the potential of the homestay program to provide additional income and employment for the local people, the government of Kenya through the Department of Tourism in the Ministry of East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism (MEACT) conducted a mapping and identification exercise for homestays throughout the country in 2012 and identified 331 homestays. This was done with the objective of developing a criterion for licensing and regulation of homestays which will go a long way in creating a level playing ground and a conducive environment for homestays development. This implies that there is demand for homestay accommodation. This demand may be explained by the recent global social and cultural changes resulting in greater interest and appreciation in cultural heritage, lifestyles and environmental concerns. Although homestays are purported to provide economic benefits to the local people, it is not clear whether they fully benefit from the venture. For instance majority of the people in Taita Taveta County still live below the poverty line despite the fact that the homestays concept has been in existence in the county since 1989 and the highest number of homestay accommodation is found in this region. This research will therefore put the homestays concept into perspective; identify motivational factors behind local people's participation in the program; assess the socio-economic benefits of homestay accommodation to host families; identify host families knowledge and skills in their participation in the program; examine factors which influence tourist choice of homestays and formulate ways homestays can be further developed and positioned to enhance their contribution to host families and the community with specific focus to Taita Taveta County. This research will adopt both exploratory and descriptive research design and will make use of both primary and secondary data. Primary data will be collected by use of researcher administered semi-structured questionnaires. Probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling technique will be used to select the sample for tourists visiting homestays where a total of 95 tourists will form the sample size. Census technique will be used for the homestay operators hence all the 54 homestay operators in the county will form the sample size. Descriptive and correlation analysis will be used to analyse data. The findings of this study will lead to the formulation of strategies which the homestay operators and the government can apply to optimize tourism's economic benefits to host families and the community hence improve their livelihoods.