

TITLE OF PRESENTATION: Game, SET, and Match for home-stay tourism?

The concept of “home-stay” is firmly rooted in travel and tourism and in hospitality terms, it forms the basis of the lodging industry itself. Despite this, research conducted in Thailand demonstrates that homestay suffers from disparate perceptions and conflicting objectives at all levels, all of which hinder the commercial development necessary for sustainable social-economic economic exchange to take place. Beyond economic gain, homestay has the potential to provide a unique environment where different cultures intercept and generate positive interactions between tourists and host communities that engender greater understanding of cultures and traditions through participative learning.

Whilst homestay appears to be ideal, in practice there is uncertainty about the extent to which it fulfils the expectations of visitors, hosts and organisations alike. Questions regarding the availability, adequacy, and appropriateness of training for homestay providers and hosts have also emerged and issues arising such as cultural tensions need to be addressed.

Based on field work in Thailand, this paper discusses homestay’s inextricable links with destination management on macro and micro levels. This research concentrated on home-stays in 3 provinces and sampled 17 committees, 16 host families, 34 local residents and 151 tourists and demonstrates why development needs to focus on the interaction between Visitors, the Industry that serves them, the Community that hosts them and their collective impact on, and response to the Environment where it all takes place.

Beyond the training needs of providers lies the equally important area of clarifying the rules of the game. We are presented with an excellent concept to do some thing special yet homestay is open to poor interpretation that clouds the rules of engagement. To succeed, homestay operations and visitors need to make informed choices that lead to quality social exchanges and the best possible match between customer and provider.

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