

Community Based Tourism – A Model for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Local participation in tourism has been regarded as a positive force for change and identification to development. The principle behind local participation may be easy to promote, however the practice is far more complex. Generally, it is often assumed that members of a community are willing and able to participate equally (Hall, 1995). In reality however, local residents often lack the experience, resources and hence even interest, needed to establish successful tourism ventures (Scheyvens, 2002). Tourism has become a major agent of transformation in every society and destination. Local participation in tourism has been regarded as a positive force for change and passport to development. It is the combination of the two words local and participation that is paradoxically implying local residents being so often left outside of the planning, decision-making and managing of tourist development (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). The principle behind local participation may be easy to promote, however the practice is far more complex. Participation of local people is a criteria often agreed on as an essential condition for development and sustainability of any new form of tourism (Poon, 1994). The ideal would be for communities to decide the form and function of tourism developments and have full control over any tourism in their location. Many communities, particularly in developing countries, the cooperation for mutual benefits has initially developed community-based tourism. The willingness of the community to participate and its ability to develop practical options needs to be implemented. This study applies it to create an understanding of how a community constructs, perceives and participates in tourism development Travelling is inevitably associated with pleasure as well as to build economy in the local area.

Keywords: Community Participation, Community Based Tourism (CBT), Kashmir.

Introduction

Tourism is a growing market and is showing tremendous growth in this current scenario by spreading its arms all over the world. Tourism makes an enormous contribution to local economies, job creation and sustainable development, and can play a lead role in the transformation to the Green Economy, although it has not enjoyed the recognition it deserves at the tables of policymakers and world leaders (UNWTO, 2010). On one side it is generating positive fruitful results in the development of destinations, heritage, culture and economies and on the other side it is also creating challenges in the existence of destinations and other tourism products like- culture, ecology, etc. Because of these emerging challenges, a need to develop a safer approach towards tourism was raised, which leads to the emergence of 'Sustainable tourism'. It is believed that participatory development approach would facilitate implementation of principles of sustainable tourism development by creating better opportunities for local people to gain larger and more balanced benefits from tourism development taking place in their localities resulting in more positive attitudes to tourism development and conservation of local resources and by increasing the limits of local tolerance to tourism. The success of tourism depends on the active support of the local population, without which the sustainability of the industry is threatened. Residents should be the focal point of the tourism decision making process (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005).

Destination is a place of living for host communities where they perform their usual work and other social engagements. Development of a destination is not an easy task for any kind of agency and it cannot be done without involving the local community. Local community of a destination is an important component of a destination and their role in the development of a destination cannot be ignored. Various activities like traditions,

rituals and cultural festivals can be used as a tourist product to promote tourism in the destination. Local cultures, heritage and cultural festivals holds tremendous uniqueness and newness from touristic point of view, as different destinations have different types of cultures, heritage and cultural festivals. Local residents know their tourist product much better than outsiders and they can play an important role in terms of the promotion of a destination. So it is very important to include host communities in the process of tourism development in a more positive way to get the best support from them. Arguably, the tourism development is dependent on local community involvement through their roles as employees in development authorities, hoteliers, guides and their attitudes towards tourists.

Community participation is an important component of tourism development of a destination. In other words, we can say that community participation acts like a backbone of a destination. A number of tourism related organizations around the world promote "people" in the "community" as the "centre" or "heart" of tourism development. Murphy (1985) argues that often there are conflicts of opinion amongst residents; with some residents acknowledging the benefits of tourism development, whilst others such as Harrell (2004) argue that tourism is having a negative effect on their life style.

Although in general many researchers have a common opinion that community participation is an important tool to achieve sustainable tourism development at a destination and it is also believed that greater the degree of community participation is, the better development or planning will be. Most of the scholars supported the importance of community participation in tourism development of a destination and we have many examples where we saw that community participation played an important role in the development of a destination but it is also found that many tourist destinations instead of having tremendous tourism potential are still not developed and community is not taking initiative to participate in tourism related processes. The question that why these communities are not participating in tourism development processes of their destinations is still there and unfortunately no empirical work has been done to identify the reasons for non participation of communities at their destinations. This study is basically focused on the identification of barriers mentioned by Tosun (2000), which prevents a community to participate in tourism development activities of their destination. Tosun (2000) states that community participation also has many constraints like paternalism, racism, clientelism, lack of expertise and lack of financial resources along with other structural problems in many developing countries, which creates troubles in the actual process of community participation.

Objectives of The Study

1. To have conceptual analysis of community based tourism (CBT) as a model of decentralization of tourism.

2. To find out the opportunities and barriers in the application of community based tourism (CBT) in J&K.
3. To find out the role of community tourism in employment, income, infrastructure development, regional development in J&K.
4. To provide some feasible suggestions that may prove valuable for the future development of tourism in J&K.

Research Methodology

In view of the specific objectives, methodology followed in carrying out the present study involved mainly the use of data from secondary sources, collected from various organizations like United Nations World Tourism Organization, World Travel and Tourism Council, Ministry of Tourism-GOI, Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation and Directorate of Tourism (Jammu/Kashmir). In addition to this, data have also been collected from other reliable sources like articles, journals and newspapers

Community Based Tourism as A Model Of Decentralization of Tourism

The term Community Based Tourism (CBT) emerged in the mid 1990s. CBT is generally small scale and involves interactions between visitor and host community, particularly suited to rural and regional areas. CBT is commonly understood to be managed and owned by the community, for the community. It is a form of 'local' tourism, favoring local service providers and suppliers and focused on interpreting and communicating the local culture and environment. It has been pursued and supported by communities, local government agencies and non-government organizations (NGOs). There are a range of actual legal forms of the ownership and management in which communities participate.

Internationally there are a number of different terms used for very similar activities; for example, in Latin America the term Rural Tourism is often used, alongside CBT. In parts of Asia, Eco-tourism is often delivered via CBT. Typically Sustainable Tourism, Community Based Tourism, Rural tourism and Eco-tourism have similar objectives. Planning tourism to safeguard a destination's cultural heritage and enhance its natural heritage while at the same time improving the socio economic welfare of communities. Eco-tourism, rural and Community Based Tourism are seen as both a set of principles as well as a tourism market segment.

Regardless of the actual terms used, there are some key processes and practices that can ensure CBT is appropriately and effectively considered, planned and managed for the benefit of both people and place.

The following attributes are common to CBT operations:

1. aiming to benefit local communities, particularly rural or indigenous people's or people in small towns, contributing to their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their cultural and environmental assets
2. Hosting tourists in the local community
3. Managing a tourism scheme communally

4. Sharing the profits/benefits equitably
5. Using a portion of the profits/resources for community development and/or to maintain and protect a community cultural or natural heritage asset (e.g. conservation)
6. Involving communities in tourism planning, on-going decision making, development and operations.

The Benefits of CBT Community based tourism has been popular as a means of supporting biodiversity conservation particularly in APEC developing countries and linking livelihoods with preserving biodiversity whilst reducing rural poverty and achieving both objectives sustainably (Kiss 2004).

CBT may enhance social sustainability by empowering local communities to manage their own resources, provide meaningful employment, and assist with capacity building and cultural preservation. Environmental benefits include income generation for communities to actively protect their land from degradation and could enhance conservation efforts to attract tourists especially with regard to eco-tourism initiatives.

Where it is working effectively, CBT

1. Supports local economic development through diversification of employment
2. Is financially viable
3. Respects and encourages equitable participation of local community
4. Is ecologically sustainable and minimizes impact on the environment
5. Conserves and promotes living cultural heritage and welfare
6. Educates visitors about culture and nature
7. Demonstrates good management practices
8. Ensures a quality and safe experience for all of individuals involved.

However, there are a number of risks associated with the developing CBT particularly where it is introduced to provide a 'quick fix' for communities without diverse livelihoods, resources or capacity.

Role of Community Based Tourism in Kashmir

Jammu and Kashmir with its vast potential and growing economy has immense potential for the sustenance of tourism industry. Tourism has no doubt remained an instrument of economic growth in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and has contributed a lot in developing the economy, particularly in Kashmir valley. Tourism is an important industry of Kashmir. This sector has given jobs to a large number of people of Kashmir and generated economic activities especially in the tertiary sectors. Its impact in Kashmir is visible in service industry sectors, such as transport, hospitality, horticulture, handicrafts and small scale industry

Community based tourism can be harnessed as a strategy for rural development. The development of a strong platform around the concept of community tourism is definitely useful for a region like Kashmir where more than 70 percent of the population resides in rural areas. The trends of industrialization and development have had an urban centric approach

across the world. Along with this, the stresses of urban life styles have led to a counter urbanization syndrome. This led to growing interest in rural areas. Rural development initiatives if taken in consideration with the concept of community based tourism can facilitate the process of community tourism in rural areas. The progress of community participation in tourism in turn can facilitate the process of rural development of the rural areas. The majority of people in Kashmir live in villages. The main source of livelihood and income for people here is agriculture. There is huge unemployment among youth of Kashmir. Also there is a lack of industrial development. Community Tourism, if given considerable importance in Kashmir can become source of creating employment and income. Visiting any rural area by the tourists is accompanied by various other income generating activities like trained tourist guides, trained cooks, hotels, stalls etc. Developing these places in rural areas of Kashmir could benefit the rural people and could encourage the development of community tourism in the valley. In the hilly areas of the valley, the production of land is very low because of climatic constraints and practices of single crop cultivation. The people in villages mostly depend on agriculture. Due to less productivity, they are facing rural poverty. To solve the problem of rural poverty they need to avail

Themselves of the allied sources of income generation options for these people. They have land but it is less productive, and this needs to be utilized for farm tourism activities like establishing large dairy farms, fish ponds, poultry farms, sheep farms, floriculture units, horticulture units etc. Such units should be established in such a way that they can become examples used in order to attract more domestic and international tourists. In addition, these units should become spots of recreation for the local people. These types of innovations in terms of rural tourism can become the instruments of increasing the rural economy. They can diversify the land use activities, create employment avenues and can reduce the rural poverty.

Barriers to Community Participation

Tosun in his study of limits to community participation in the tourism development process in developing countries pointed out that it is important to involve local community in tourism development process. The main aim of the research was to examine the limitations to public participation in the decision-making process of tourism development in developing countries though public participation in the benefits of tourism was not totally ignored. Tosun raised many questions on the concept of community participation in developing countries as according to him there are limits to community participation in the decision-making process of tourism development in the context of developing countries. Tosun classified these limitations across three heads i.e. (i) Operational Limitations (ii) Structural Limitations and (iii) Cultural Limitations to community participation in the tourism development process in many developing countries although they do not equally exist in every tourist destination. Firstly limitations at the operational

level include (a) centralization of public administration of tourism, (b) lack of co-ordination, and (c) lack of information. Secondly structural limitations includes (a) attitudes of professionals (b) lack of expertise (c) elite domination (d) lack of appropriate legal system (e) lack of trained human resources (f) relatively high cost of community participation and lack of financial resources. Finally cultural limitations include (a) limited capacity of poor people and (b) apathy and low level of awareness in the local community. Tosun accepted that these limitations may be an extension of the prevailing social, political and economic structure in developing countries, which have prevented them from achieving a higher level of development. On the other hand, it should be accepted that community participation as citizen power is not a simple matter but it involves different ideological beliefs, political forces, administrative arrangements and re-distribution of wealth and power in developing countries.

Tosun states that most of the developing countries are characterized by a number of structural deficiencies, which can be grouped under three main headings- (a) socio-economic features, (b) political features, (c) cultural features. Socio economic factors includes low level of living, lack of services of welfare state, high rates of population growth and dependency, low per capita national income, low economic growth rates, increasing income inequality, increasing unemployment and inadequate human resources. Secondly political features consists of features like high level of centralization in public administration system, elite domination in political life, high level of favoritism and nepotism, and high level of clashes among supporters of different ideologies or tribes. Finally a cultural feature includes apathy among the poor, lack of education and poor living in highly stratified societies. All these kind of deficiencies creates serious troubles in the process of community participation and slows down the destination development process.

Tosun suggested that future research should investigate preconditions for participatory tourism development approach and develop strategies to operationalise this proactive tourism development approach. Aref and Redzuan (2008) also pointed out that there are some factors which create hurdles in the actual participation of community in tourism development processes in case of developing countries. They applied the concept of barriers to community participation given by Tosun in their study conducted in Shiraz city of Iran. They included leaders of different communities of old and new city of Shiraz for the filling up of questionnaire. Their study identified barriers in both new and old cities of Shiraz, although some were more dominant than others in both these cities.

Conclusion

There is vast potential for the development of community based tourism in Kashmir. If properly developed, community tourism could bring great benefits to the valley. It could be a sustainable revenue generating project for rural development of the government. It can help the inflow of resources

from the urban to the rural economy. It can prevent migration of rural people to urban areas which are crowded. Both short-term and long-term planning, implementing and monitoring are vital in avoiding damage to rural areas.

Environmental management, local involvement, sound legislation, sustainable marketing, and realistic planning are crucial for development of rural tourism. Community based tourism will emerged as an important instrument for sustainable human development including poverty alleviation, employment generation, environmental regeneration and development of remote areas and advancement of women and other disadvantaged groups in the region apart from promoting social integration and international understanding. The government should promote community tourism to ensure sustainable economic development and positive social change after various security related problems and natural disaster in Kashmir valley.

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