



Community Based Tourism: A Trend For Socio-Cultural Development and Poverty Lessening

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ABSTRACT

Community based tourism is an alternative to traditional forms of tourism. This form of tourism makes greater connection with the local community and for the tourist to enable the economic and socio-cultural development in rural areas. Community based tourism can also be used as a tool to develop poor communities and looking at the social context of rural areas which is characterized by high degrees of poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and unemployment, the study observe some ways in which local culture itself can contribute towards community based tourism outcomes because local culture is not only treated as a tourism attraction, but also a resource upon which social and community development can be built. Study explores the potential of the community based tourism to support the socio-cultural development and poverty lessening.

KEYWORDS : Community based tourism; development; impacts; poverty lessening.

Introduction

Community based tourism has been promoted as a means of development whereby the social, environmental and economic needs of local communities are met through the offering of a tourism product. It asserted as a tool for socio-cultural development and poverty lessening, it provides opportunities for selling traditional goods and services, creates opportunities for local economic diversification of poor and marginal areas without other development opportunities; is based on cultural, wildlife and landscape assets that belong to the poor; offer better labour-intensive and small scale opportunities than any sector but agriculture; promotes gender equality by employing a relatively high proportion of women; reduces leakage from, and maximizes linkage to, local economies (World Tourism Organization [WTO], 2002). As an alternative to other forms of tourism community based tourism have such appeal that they are rarely subjected to critical review. There are very few studies of the actual contribution of community based tourism to either conservation or community livelihood. However despite very little demonstrable benefit the ideas remain attractive, largely because little effort has been made to record, measure or report the benefits accruing to conservation or local communities. This form of tourism treated as a tool for the promotion of rural development both in developed nations and in the developing nations. According to Cornelissen (2005:21) "The theoretical premises of community tourism have a long history, originating from the participatory and empowerment development models that emerged as a new paradigm in development discourse in the 1970s". community based tourism has been linked to local culture especially from the perspective of tourism 'impact' and 'attraction' in the sense that community based tourism should respect local culture and find ways to enhance and rescue local culture and heritage (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008:124; Flacke-Naurdofer, 2008:252). In tourism sector, the focus on community based tourism is necessary for enhancing community development, poverty alleviation, socio-cultural development and conservation is increasing (Equation, 2008:62).

Community in developing countries "tends to inevitably be located in rural areas" (Equation, 2008:62) and most international literature and attention emphasize the attention on the same topic: community based tourism in the rural setting of poor countries (Ndllovu & Rogerson, 2004:436). However, community based tourism can be both urban and rural. In the rural setting of the developing nation's community based tourism has been conceded having the potential to contribute the livelihoods of poor rural people. As Sebele (2009:140) points out:

"Rural areas in developing countries are often characterized by a shortage of facilities and industries and are inhabited by the poorest people in the society; therefore, earnings from community based tourism create and alternative means of survival for locals".

This recommended here that various factors were already present within the socio-cultural locale of rural areas which provides a basis from which community based tourism in the rural areas can be facilitated and developed. With the relation of the cultural context with the community based tourism development process not only bolsters the local economy but also enhance the culture itself and it can be achieved in a number of ways. Already existing community cooperative framework for example, provide a natural structural basis from which community ventures can be launched which in turn address the need to diversify livelihood strategies. This form of tourism also has a capacity to alter socio-economic conditions, as for example in the case of new elaborations of the concept of hospitality and should therefore be seen as a form of the autonomous cultural evaluation. Moreover, given that community based tourism entails equal power relations and cooperative work, it has the capacity to facilitate or act as a countermeasure against unequal power relations and 'big men' within local communities. This paper find out the possible links between the communities based tourism concept and a specific socio-cultural background by investigating ways in which the specific socio-cultural context of a local community can interact with community development.

Community based tourism: Community development and Local culture

Community based tourism emerged during the 1970s as a response to the negative impacts of international mass tourism development model (Cater, 1993; De Kadt, 1979; Hall & Lew, 2009; Murphy, 1985; Smith, 1977; Turner & Ash, 1975). While, initially, most community based tourism programmes were related to small rural communities and nature conservation through ecotourism, the concept has been extended to a range of different tourism products (e.g. local culture and folklore, gastronomy, traditional handicraft) and managerial models around the world. This tourism is based on the active participation of the local community. This is why the creation of community events which may favor this type of tourism, while at the same time helping to create a relationship between the local community and visitors, is so important. Since its establishment, governments, development agencies, donors, and NGOs have placed considerable investment in promoting this development model (Jones & Eplerwood, 2008; Mitchell & Muckosy, 2008). The development of community based tourism is 'strongly correlated with support from the NGO community' (Jones & Eplerwood, 2008, p. 1).

Community based tourism rely on the development of tourism products characterized by community participation in their development. Community based tourism emerged as a possible solution to the negative effects of mass tourism in developing countries, and was, and the same time, a strategy for community organization in order to attain better living conditions. Community tourism development is a

strategy having capability to foster natural and cultural resource conservation and community development, it have lots of opportunities for the improvement of community livelihoods, provides alternative source of income in rural areas, and open a various skills-based jobs opportunities for rural people. It is necessary to understand community based tourism as engendering concern for the development of rural communities and their culture, it should respect local culture and lifestyle, and external factors should play a role as facilitators of community based tourism rather than as partners.

In the concept of community based tourism, it is important to underline the fact that those members of the community not directly involved in tourism should also receive some benefit so that the advantages of community based tourism can be widen to the greatest possible number of people. Altogether, this form of tourism can be recognized as a strategy for community development by mans o self-reliance, empowerment, sustainability and the conservation and enhancement of culture for improved livelihoods within the community. Community self-reliance, empowerment and local culture context can thus been seen to be re-emerging in to the forefront of community development in poor communities. However, while the aim is to achieve complete community self-reliance, communities need to be open to the external world, and self-reliance does not consist of political or economic isolationism, but it means that a community should depend on itself, not on others; while at the same time, trade and cooperation are possible when they are of mutual benefit (Nyere, 1974:99).

Impacts of Community based tourism

Community based tourism gives impacts on the community through increase in employment and income, skills and self-esteem, women empowerment and the environment. Now a day's community based tourism is recognized as a vehicle for poverty lessening and it could also enhance social development within the community, and as a result, some communities were already experiencing developed life-styles. This tourism has led to improved educational and health services, access to clean water and development of transport and communication infrastructure – all these indications of improved living standards. With the help of following table we can easily understand the impacts of community based tourism on the rural community:

Community based tourism impacts on the strengthening of rural community

Community based tourism fosters its social cooperation with....	To accomplish....
Public authorities and NGOs	To expand authenticity, licences to operate, training, credits, donations
Inbound and international tour operators, volunteer tourist programs	To magnetize further visitors, market access
Local tourism chains: through partnership between community based tourism, with local tourism companies and other tourists attractions	To accompaniment the supply of services and attractions
Supply chain of other local products	To dribble down the economic benefits of tourism and strengthen synergies between agriculture and tourism
Public private partnership (PPP) in charge of tourism destination management	To perk up the competitiveness of local tourism destinations where community based tourism is allocated
Other community based tourism through the creation of tourism network	To shore up cross-marketing, market access, policy advocacy, knowledge management

Conclusion

This paper explored the viability of the community based tourism to support socio-cultural development and poverty lessening. It also suggests that community based tourism is not a universal remedy

and cannot be seen as the only solution, but it should be included in the framework of strategies to promote rural development. As already mentioned, if community based tourism is thoroughly managed it can provide a range of development benefits to communities, especially in poor and disadvantaged areas. It can enhance the livelihood of rural people, and should be included in the contemporary pattern of livelihood diversification as a possible new and extra element to help poor families. Community based tourism cannot be understood, at least in the short or medium term.

At the same time, it must be remembered that the local culture context cannot be the fundamental element for sustaining community based tourism development, but must be understood as a condition that-together with other elements-contributes to community based tourism development through its specific cultural features. Therefore specific cultural contexts do not automatically imply positive community based tourism development by a particular community. It should not be externally controlled in its development but simply by facilitated by outsiders to provide necessary resources such as education and infrastructures before being handed over the communities.

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