Research Paper Economics

# Community-Based Tourism : A Universal Panorama

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**KEYWORDS**

Community-based tourism concept has been at the vanguard of the promotion of rural development, both in developing and developed countries (Honey, 2008). According to Cornelissen (2005:21) "the theoretical premises of community tourism have 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 directly linked to local cultural especially for tourism 'impact' and 'attraction' with astuteness that this special interest tourism should respect local culture and find ways to augment and salvage local culture, environment, and heritage (Telfar & Sharpley, 2008:124; Flacke-Naurdofer, 2008:252).

**Why "community-based tourism development?"**

"Tourism seems tailor-made for the world's poorer nations, and a growing number of developing countries have placed emphasis on tourism in their development plans. Reasons are because a ready market is available for the attractions these destinations can offer; many of them have an appealing climate, combined with exotic scenery and a rich cultural and historical heritage. Land and labor costs are comparatively low and, in the absence of significant mineral production or an export-oriented agriculture sector, tourism is a potential source of foreign exchange and can generate new opportunities for employment and stimulate demand for local products and industries". (Son, Pigram and Rugendyke, 1999, p. 211)

The above mentioned avowal refers tourism as a "hope" for communities especially in developing countries. Tourism always considered as a tool for community and economic development that serves certain ends (Davis and Morais, 2004; McCool, Moisey and Nickerson, 2001). Roe, Ashley, Page and Meyer (2004) identified examples in Gambia, Uganda and Cambodia where tourism is their only or best available export opportunity.

For tourism development various organizations which are directly or indirectly related with the tourism, promote "people" in the "community" as the "centre" or "heart". The "community-based tourism" concept arises from these forces. For instance, the UNESCO program entitled "Integrated Community Development and Cultural Heritage Site Preservation in Asia and the Pacific" or LEAP (UNESCO, 2000) is a detailed program illustrating this emphasis. Pearce and Moscardo (1999) also accentuate the concept "tourism community relationship" and repeatedly cite it in their research planning documents by giving precedence status in the global, national, and local tourism research agendas.

Due to imminent changes in tourism, Ritchie's (1993) foretell the growth of community-tourism perspectives. For future tourism, he specifically and increasingly focuses on the importance of resident-responsive tourism, global lifestyles, and demographic shifts. Dann (1999) highlighted the importance of the tourism community relationship was one of the nineteen tourism issues that emerged from the brainstorming of an expert panel in the area. They predicted the need for greater resident responsive tourism, which is the more democratic participation in tourism decision making by grass-root members of a destination society (Dann, 1999).

Several factors creates impediment in the study and analysis of tourism and community. Both Jamal and Getz (1995) and Kneafsey (2001) mentioned that community-driven tourism planning may be an unachievable idea because of the diverse community attitudes toward tourism development and growth raise. Walker, Mitchell and Wismer (2001) argued that group power, decision making, and recognizing the diversity within and among social groups at the local level are weak due to true involvement. Kneafsey (2001) noted that the "culture and economy" approach is not applied by any actor, but it is a combined effort of various players who operates at different types of spatial scales with sometimes conflicting agendas. Further, some evidences also prove that some sectors of the local population are not predominantly interested in alternative development. Also, up to very large extent a primarily market driven local development is decided by an individual private entrepreneurs in the community (Douglas, 1989). Furthermore, Dann (1999) also noted that with the international social aspect of tourism, it becomes paraphernalia of external constraints that can engulf both tourist choice and the aspiration of destination communities. Thus, from the experiences of above mentioned authors, tourism may not always be the most appropriate sort of investment for regions of the developing world. As suggested above, various questions have been raised related with the economic, socio-cultural, environmental, and political aspects which serve tourist choices and destination communities, and for the development of world's poorer nation's tourism can be included as a strategy (Son, Pigram, and Rugendyke, 1999).

Pearce and Moscardo (1999) have tinted the tourism community research as a central component in the future of tourism. For successful practice community tourism in developing countries it is necessary to give emphasis on community oriented tourism research. Like other social science concepts, community-based tourism also has some definitional difficulties. There is a challenge to express the concisely and quantitative appraisal of community-based tourism (Velikova, 2001). Additionally, Jamal and Getz (1999) stated, practicing sustainable tourism remains dreadful until unless in the strategy formulation and planning for sustainable tourism is not emphasized by the holistic approach of community-based tourism.

While, with the development of tourism especially for the enhancement of local community and poverty reduction Hawkins (1993) points out some research issues:

- Recognition of procedures for tourism development with accord by including the socio-cultural, ecological, and heritage goals of the local community, along with any other

related values and aspirations;

- Nurturing local community participation in the economic benefit of tourism development by searching the artistic approaches; and

- Understanding resident perception, values, and priorities towards tourism's role in the community.

Community ambitions are also related with the globalization and development pressures. D'Amore (1988) argued that there is a vast opportunities for individuals to achieve knowledge of destinations and as well as an opportunity to share information of their beliefs, ambitions, perspectives, culture, and politics. Additionally, development in the rural areas which always attracts tourists by their products and lifestyles is decisive. Promotion of depiction of idealized, emblematic, cultural landscapes depicting a less hurried lifestyle constantly attracted tourists to rural areas (Kneafsay, 2001). Collarade, 1994 cited in Kneafsay, 2001, mentioned that in 19th century, interest in disappearing rural cultures and with the idea of "real" and "authentic" holidays certain sections of the tourism market remain captivated.

Community tourism industry is considered as a collection of business that produced and sells a variety of goods and services (Hatton, 2002). Responses of community towards the development of such type of industries are treated as an opportunity, and in some cases the threats of tourism (Hatton, 2002). The opportunities and threats are seen as a typical or stereotype sequence, which is identified by Hatton. With the positive impacts of tourism such as economic development, employment generation, and its contribution in the conservation of natural resources, it is welcomed by destination communities. Later, undesirable impacts of tourism are appeared due to its inception in large-scale (Twining-Ward, 1999). The study of Walker et al. (2001) in Molas, Indonesia, related with the implementation of livelihood strategy for community planning, highlighted that for short-term personal economic benefit villagers sells their land to speculator and developers, but they failed in generating potential long-term economic benefit from tourism development. This case study exhibits the negative changes to the biophysical and economic components: which causes the fragmentation of agricultural land and insecure agricultural livelihood (Walker et al., 2001). Changes in livelihood pattern persuade tourism planning and management and vice versa.

Wearing and McDonald (2002) explained tourist destination spot as a synergetic space which supports the interaction of different social values for defining new meanings. Therefore, there are a lot of opportunities for community in community tourism. In the past, various problems such as the exploitation of natural and cultural resources created by the conventional tourism and other industries. The high leakages outside the local communities is controlled by the owners of owned companies or by the companies controlled by outside members. The involvement of local people in the tourism is cramped up to the use of their natural resources at minimum or no cost to the travel agents or tour operators (Wearing and McDonald, 2002). The problem with much development work is that it adopts a top-down approach (Pretty, Hine, Richardson and Blake, 2000; Wearing and McDonald, 2002). For rectifying these customary patterns of tourism impact and successful community tourism practices, tourism organizations placed more emphasis on community tourism in destination.

Developing countries emphasizes on "community" for the escalation of tourism in many destinations. Kline (2001a) noted that, several programs in tourism development confirms the trend of "community based partnership" in the development of the notion "sustainability", he also observed the role of experts who provides advice, and answers towards people partnership with organizations. For instance, following the appearance of "Our Common Future, the Brundtland Report" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), various attempts have been done by individuals, communities, and organizations to adapt the intentions of sustainable development into practices (Ko, 2001; Sharpley, 1997). World Tourism Organization and World Travel and Tourism Council organized various regional seminars for the purpose of increasing awareness and to acclimatize the program for local implementation (Brunet, Bauer and De Lacy, 2000). At the Rio Earth Summit held in 1992, Agenda 21, was implemented by 182 countries, provides a wide-ranging if generic programme of action. There was a belief in sustainable tourism that, it contributes to the economic, social and environmental growth of a region or local community and should avoid obliterating the destination's resources (Brunet, Bauer and De Lacy, 2000). Now 'ecological friendly' and community-based tourism development is highly encouraged (Wilkinson, 2002).

Li (2004), mentioned the example of sustainable development approach, in modern society when individuals deal with the opportunities and responsibilities of citizenship community tourism can be implemented. Community-based tourism planning would not only introduce the new tools of management but also a language of management and new ways for philosophy (Wearing and McDonald, 2002). Li (2004) suggest that, in tourism planning and decisions community should participate for better handling the impacts. In developing nations due to tourism inequalities, resulted in the lack of participation of residents in tourism planning and suitable benefits.

Public involvement in all aspects of community development makes impossible to take all the decisions by the elected representative and their delegates (Reed, 1997). This view is similar with the notion that sustainable tourism growth cannot be achieved without the destination community participation (Wu, 2000 cited in Li, 2004). Community tourism success is mostly depends upon active participation of locals who are able to converse local culture aspects to the tourists (Kneafsey, 2001). Jamal and Getz (1995) noted that, those destinations where communities are experiencing heavy growth and change because of tourism, development of dynamic and collaborative planning process is crucial. As Wearing and McDonald (2002) stated, the deconstruction of tourist-local dichotomy, where as human activities tourist and tourism have been accepted increasingly and can contribute to the appraisal of tourism based community in this post-modern era. Reed (1997) raised the questions that who will involve in decisions about tourism still emerge when demographic and economic changes are occurring within local communities.

Many tourism researchers consider community tourism as a valuable approach to sustainable tourism development (cf. Li, 2004; Woodley, 1993). Further for answering the question "why community-based tourism" Toson and Timothy (2003) proposed seven propositions of importance of community participation in tourism development. The propositions are:

1. Community participation is a vital element in the implementation of tourism plans and strategies;

2. Community participation contributes to sustainable tourism development in several ways;

3. Community participation increases tourist satisfaction;

4. Community participation helps tourism professionals design better tourism plans;

5. Public participation contributes to a fair distribution of costs and benefits among community members;

6. Community participation can help satisfy locally identified need;

7. Community participation strengthens the democratization process in tourist destinations.

William and Lawson (2001) suggested that, the impact of

tourism on host government and communities has been a wide area of research because it has become extensively recognized that if the industry is to be sustainable in long term the planners and entrepreneurs must take a view of the host community into account. In economic and political resources people have equal access because community tourism analyst assumes and often utterly, that the planning and process is pluralistic one (Reed, 1997).

Community-based tourism emerged as a comprehensive occurrence and the potential to generate economic development was widely endorsed by developing countries, which looked at community-based tourism to generate earnings, employment and to bring economic benefits to regions with limited options for alternative economic development. When tourists are visiting the rural areas or the area having potential but not develop as a tourist destination, local communities see the job opportunities. The disadvantaged communities need to be involved in tourism as owners of hotels, restaurants, and tour operators' etc. Participation of communities in tourism depends on the municipalities supporting the local communities in the form of finance, training, and education etc. For community-based tourism promotion and development proper implementation of advertising, training, financing and communication strategies are needed. All promotion and development initiatives need the participation of local community so that local policies and ideology can be better understood and employ for the benefit for destitute communities.

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