

## **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND COMMUNITY**

### **COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM - A MODEL THAT NEEDS ATTENTION**

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#### **Abstract**

*As the tourism industry has become increasingly important to communities all over the world, the need for sustainable tourism development has also become a primary concern. The role of the community in the development of the cultural and economic environment has been underlined in the last few years, and has been seen from several perspectives. The community of a region is seen as a primary source on which tourism in that region depends, and their existence at a certain place at a given time may have been used to justify the development of tourism itself. The community is one of the basic reasons for tourists to travel, in order to experience other new ways of life and traditional products from different community countries. Communities are also considered as the "Natural" landscape in which many tourists consume. They are also the source of tourists, tourists are attracted by special places and social facilities that will find themselves about the experiences of tourists in the host community. Community support, in particular the community has become an essential element of sustainable tourism. The reason for sustainable tourism development lies in the sustainable economic, social and cultural benefits for the community and its environment. One of the most active and proven models that provide sustainability is the CBT Model (Community Based Tourism). This paper addresses this crucial issue by focusing on how local communities can contribute to sustainable tourism and what sustainable tourism can provide to local communities.*

*Keywords: Sustainable tourism, community based tourism, local community*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Community as the main actor in tourism development**

Community participation is widely accepted as one of the goals and principles of sustainable tourism. Since the 1970s, the attitudes and perceptions of residents to the influences of tourism in their community are widely analyzed by tourism industry managers, policymakers and academics. Further, since the year 1990, the component of "community participation" has grown in the field of economic development, as well as in sustainable tourism discussions due to the admission that its involvement can lead to a slight transition to favorable results to new ideas and opportunities.

Local communities form an integral part of the tourism development agenda. They represent the group of key players in the development of tourism, while are also considered as legitimate and moral actors in its development, because their interests influence and are influenced by the decisions of key policy makers.

The degree of involvement of local communities in decision-making and various policy issues is determined by the extent to which they affect or are affected by these decisions and policies. In the same logic, Pongponrat (2011) noted that "The development of local tourism requires people who are influenced by tourism to be involved both in the planning process and in policy implementation and action plans. This ensures that the development meets the perceived needs of local community".

If decisions about tourism development were not made in consultation with local communities during the design phase, it will be impossible for local communities to be involved during implementation. Whatever the circumstances, it is vitally important to identify and involve key actors in design phase. Failing can cause technical difficulties or policy during the implementation and may significantly affect the success and outcome of the process. "Enabling wide participation of different actors in the decision-making process, including local communities, it is possible to gain knowledge about other actors, gaining new skills and exchange ideas, which, in turn, promote the understanding of regional problems and allow the production of new and innovative solutions".

Studies about the community's attitude towards tourism have been well-known for decades, reflecting the importance of involvement in tourism for development sustainable sector. Tourism should be considered as a "community industry" in which residents are the main actors because they are so influenced directly from the negative effects of development. Understanding the attitude of residents is important to gain their active support without which it is difficult to develop tourism in a sustainable way socially compatible. It is important therefore to consider views, residences, desires when developing tourism in one community destination. For

this reason many studies have been realized by academics and researchers, regarding the attitudes of residents towards tourism.

### **Who is the "local community" in tourism**

Obviously it is not easy to find a valid theoretical definition of what is called a "local community" is an ambiguous and elusive term, which explains why some analysts tend to erase any reference to communities local, approaching more the concept of the environment (which should be maintained and protected) and forgetting that when we talk about human beings and society we should consider them as capable individuals for action and response.

Generally they are divided by geographic areas or shared interests.

In the first case it is for residents of a given country, in the second case is the commercial sector used to represent it. (Aas C., Flethcer J .., 2005) (Taylor G., 1995) considers that there are four ways that are used to define a community: within a given space; in a certain social system, as a "feeling" among people; ideologically.

We can thus refer to a group of organized individuals, a group of citizens interacting inside them; or a group of people sharing the same common characteristics but living in different countries. (Fischer E., 1996)

***What is certain is that within a "local community" not all residents of the destination are included, but different groups (Beritelli, 2011), each with their different expectations or skepticism (Taylor, 1995).***

The composition of the local community in terms of operators is quite different, the elements that need to form a local community are given in the table below:

Table 1. Elements

1	Group of active citizens, who live in touristic destination.
2	Local institution which organize touristic services
3	Economic institution connected with the touristic industry
4	Local tour operator
5	Local administrators
6	Tourists

## **The Role of Local Communities in Tourism Development**

Different scholars have concluded that to achieve sustainable tourism development, local communities should be part of the decision-making process to obtain lasting long-term results, communities should be active participants in lieu of passive observers. Participation also provides the local community with a voice in design and decision making to improve plans, delivering services and ultimately to foster a sense of community by bringing people together who share common goals.

Theoretically, the role of local communities in the development of tourism in the context of policies and decision-making depends on the type and level of the participant model inside a tourist destination. So the power of local communities to influence decision-making as well as policy making will depend on the level of participatory approach which is operating in a particular destination. In most countries in development, decision making and policy making process is generally top-down and dominated by the government, the private sector and / or non-governmental organizations. In such a situation, the power of local communities to influence decision - making is questionable; their participation can hardly go beyond simple consulting and exchange of information.

Efforts to make tourism a more sustainable alternative, have been centered more and more in a community development approach, but an analysis of differences between traditional community economic development and development of CBT, clearly shows that tourism continues to be driven by government levels and not community interests. Meanwhile, the development of sustainable tourism has been adopted as a policy approach and planning by many governments in all around the world that seek to cause minimal impact on the local environment and culture, helping to generate income and employment for locals and on promotion and preservation of local ecosystems. A good conclusion of different approaches to sustainable tourism will be that of Bâc (2012). This author highlights that the concept of sustainable tourism emerged as an attempt to get one accurate assessment of the negative tourism impacts in host communities. Since tourism can play an important role in development and economic diversity, premeditated planning is needed for community inclusion.

Since the 1980s it has been acknowledged that residents do not form a homogenous group in the aspect of their perception of tourism impacts. On the other hand, there is no doubt that perceptions and attitudes of residents towards any tourism development policy should be analyzed and studied. A number of different influential variables on the perceptions of residents over tourism impacts have been identified in the literature, to gain support from residents towards current and future local tourism development policies. Most of the suggested variables

in the literature are related to the socio - demographic and economic profile of residents, such as age, sex and income level or relations with the local area and connection with tourists.

Many studies suggest that residents, who are economically dependent on industry of tourism are generally predisposed to having more favorable attitudes versus tourism rather than those who do not have such a dependency. In the same argument, we can observe that the perception of the inhabitants on the influence of tourism is influenced by the possibility of having an economic profit. Residents of a community decide whether will become dependent on the benefits and costs of tourism by weighing the concerns economic, social, cultural and environmental issues. Based on this theory, if residents or local people perceive that they are likely to benefit from such exchanges without causing intolerable costs, then these residents potentially support and participate in exchanges with visitors and support the development of CBT. However, if local residents perceive that community-based tourism development will cause more expense than benefits, they are likely to oppose this development.

On the other hand, Andereck (2007) suggests that the more residents are aware of tourism and the more intense the contacts with tourists, the more they have a positive perception of the benefits provided through tourism. The lifestyle of community residents can influence structural changes within the tourism industry that occurs as a result of its continuous development, such as changes in the local economy, social change, cultural changes and environmental changes. Understanding the support of local residents for sustainable tourism development is a critical factor in successful management and marketing community-based tourism.

Some studies have praised the support of local residents for tourism development with a focus on the extent to which these people are involved in tourism. Tourism studies show that engagement of the local community in management and decision - making can convince the community of the need to integrate tourism into the local economy. Sébasti emphasizes that community involvement in the field of tourism offers more opportunities for local residents to benefit from the development of tourism. Many scholars of this topic have looked at the attitudes and perceptions of residents to the impact of tourism development, with the justification that the findings will be critical to planning and managing tourism. Community-controlled tourism requires actors to have sufficient knowledge about the aspects of tourism that contribute positively to the sustainable development of the destination.

Moreover, community involvement is a key factor in tourism planning and community support is essential in achieving sustainable tourism development. Tourism development can be a "two-edged sword", being that his rapid and uncontrolled growth has ever been seen as a destructive force. Degradation of the environment, violation of the natural landscape, traditional

culture and local identity; erosion of political, economic, and destructive influences in social values are often listed as negative impacts associated with the industrial development. In fact, there has been a growing recognition in many tourist destinations that current management practices can lead to undesirable impacts on environment and society, which, in turn, may threaten the development of tourism and economic sustainability of the receiving communities.

In this sense, sustainable tourism puts particular emphasis on the need to preserve traditions and cultural and historical heritage of the local community to preserve environment, to generate income and jobs for host and destination recently, to involve the local community in decision making in the tourism industry. Tosun and Timothy (2003) suggest that public participation is one effective way to educate the community with rights, laws, and political maturity.

### **What influences community participation in the development of a tourism strategy?**

Many academics feel that sustainable tourism should involve people's views and resolve their present and future needs in terms of welfare and environmental, economic, social and cultural issues.

- Politically more acceptable, community involvement in the field of tourism planning, and involvement of interest groups with different interests and attitudes, and this participation can bring increased attention of the community to various economic, environmental and social impacts of tourism.
- Community participation in tourism planning can be considered as a source of knowledge and skills of different stakeholders, sharing ideas among these actors which may result in greater understanding of the issues.

While community participation in planning a tourist destination can offer some advantages, it also presents some tough challenges.

- Allocations of resources, policy ideas and institutional practices embedded in society can often limit the impact that some individuals or groups will have in the planning process.
- There is a disparity in the division of powers between different actors in the community, and also in the power of local communities within the wider society. Hall (1994) argues that this power governs the interaction of individuals, organizations and agencies that influence, or strive to influence, the formulation of tourism policy and the way in which it should be implemented."

### Local circumstances will affect acceptance or non-inclusion of the community in the tourism planning of a particular tourist destination

Table 2 provides an analytical framework for issues affecting community participation in tourism planning at a particular destination. The framework focuses on whether and how many different actors living or working in the destination are heard in the planning process.

Within this framework can be given the degree of reduction of the inequalities of power between the stakeholders, throughout the process of community participation. The framework addresses the issue of community participation in the development of a tourism strategy, it does not take into account issues arising from the subsequent implementation of the strategy.

Table 2. Some issues that affect in the community involvement in tourism planning

Issues Cluster	Special Issues
Aim of community involvement	If the members representing community are part of the stakeholders. Number of the stakeholders which will take part.
Intensity of community involvement	It depends on the fact if members are directly involved and respect each other in the dialog. How often the community members are involved in the planning process. How much do the participants learn by their interests and attitude.
The rate of consensus achievement between the participants in community	It depends on the rate of the consensus that the members achieve for the issues and politics. It depends on which consensus emerges from the inequality.

### Local community control

Giving people responsibility and control over their lives is an essential principle of sustainable development. Moreover, tourism projects involving directly local communities in planning and implementation have more of it likely to be successful in distributing local benefits and be sustainable in time. Likewise, the sustainability of tourism development in the countries less developed (LDC) is somehow in the hands of local communities. Therefore, their involvement in the development of tourism can not be overlooked because of their important roles. The policy in this context is not just about involvement through the consultation process; it is also about empowering communities in decisions about developments and activities that will impact their future, while enabling the needs of other legitimate interests should be considered. However,

barriers still exist that condition community involvement in local development of tourism sector development.

Ritchie and Crouch (2003) suggest that, while tourism is developing, governments local authorities need to adopt specific strategies to determine community directions and long-term goals. Community participation in particular has been accepted as well as consensus for every objective of world tourism development. Soteriou and Coccossis argue that sustainable tourism development is not a static concept that does not accept any creative approach. Since the participation of the community is widely accepted as one of the criteria for sustainable tourism, it is necessary that community participation be seen as a key aspect to the success of tourism development. The results of previous tourism studies related to local control have identified the four pillars that make up the sustainable tourism development:

- **Economic Sustainability:** The industry is profitable as in short-term period and long-term and keeps growth rates at manageable levels. This includes promoting tourism while considering the capacities holder.
- **Environmental sustainability:** the industry is in concordance with maintenance of biological diversity and environmental resources. One focus should be placed on natural and constructed capacity to handle tourism without damages.
- **Social sustainability:** the industry helps to increase people's control over their lives and local identity. It also supports communities to increase the number of tourists without affecting or negatively affecting local culture.
- **Local sustainability:** the industry has increased levels of local involvement in its development and is beneficial to local communities.

In the development of the tourism industry the goal of maximizing the impacts of positive selected, possible in the community and minimizing negative potential impacts should be a guiding principle. The concept of sustainable tourism emerged as a convergence of popularity and attention that sustainable development got in the global community. The development of sustainable tourism is dependent on the balance of social, economic and environmental components of the community.

A community that plans and uses tourism as an alternative way of strengthening of its economic development must develop sustainable tourism to meet the needs and requirements of its residents. Sustainable tourism development is difficult without the support and participation

of community. Thus, the support of residents is a critical factor for continuing development of the community.

### **Use of tourism as an initiative of community development**

Similar to the theory of development, tourism research and planning have placed greater emphasis on the role of community development. Researchers are beginning to look at the development of indigenous tourism, recognizing that indigenous communities are not only influenced by tourism but also respond to it (Long and Wall 1993; Wall 1995). Similar to the trends in the development paradigm of dissatisfaction with existing development philosophies, many tourism analysts have been disappointed with mass tourism and are in favor of 'alternative tourism'. Brohman (1996) argues that while the term is abused, there are a number of themes in alternative tourism that can be used to clearly define the concept. Alternative tourism strategies emphasize: Local development in 'Small scale, community participation and cultural and environmental sustainability (Brohman 1996).

Brohman (1996) warns that, in point of these similarities, it is important to consider the changing conditions and individual countries' interests before any strategies are adopted. Recent studies have examined the role of indigenous entrepreneurial activity in response to tourism (Stott 1996). Archer (1978) stated that domestic tourism could be a better local revenue generator than international tourism because it relies more on local resources. Authors in the field of tourism planning also emphasize the need for local community involvement and co-operation in the planning process (Simmons 1994; Gunn 1994). They demonstrate that tourism development should include elements of community involvement, including: raising the standard of living of the local population, developing facilities for visitors and residents, and ensuring that the types of development are in accordance with the cultural, social and economic philosophy of the government and the people of the hosting places.

Encouraging an ecological approach to tourism planning, Murphy (1985) points out that each community should identify the goals of tourism development to the extent that they meet local needs. Long (1993) argues that if the affected peoples are not involved in development planning then the most planned programs are likely to be altered by the hosting community at the implementation stage. Similarly, Brohman (1996) argues that community-based tourism developments should strengthen institutions that increase local participation and promote the economic, social and cultural well-being of the majority of the community.

Hall (1994) warns, however, that power issues should be considered together with the inability of some groups to participate in decision-making. While community involvement is

promoted, there are often institutional barriers in developing countries, which may be difficult to overcome (Sofield 1993).

Reed (1997) examined power relations in community-based tourism planning and found that power relations have endemic characteristics in emerging tourism areas. It is difficult for independent agencies to narrow the differences in power between stakeholders and argue that power relations may change the outcome of collaborative tourism planning and even prevent cooperative action Joppe (1996).

### **Community Based Tourism (CBT)**

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is supported as a tool to improve the living of the poor and create opportunities for community development. Although some developing countries have struggled for many years to advance economic growth, many countries have used their resources in the region in order to increase their socio-economic welfare level (Nyaupane, Marais & Dowler, 2006).

Ashley, Hoe, and Goodwin (2001), who rely on pro-poor tourism, argue that such tourism aims to increase the overall tourism benefits for the poor and maximize tourism growth for poverty reduction. They argue that the benefits of poor tourism are unacceptable and include economic and living benefits as well as participation in decision-making.

Within the context of tourism, CBT's real support for development requires, that communities themselves own and operate tourism projects in their homes with positive effects on reducing the unsustainable resource, use patterns and social discontent (Ramsa & Mohd, 2004).

A potential strategy to facilitate long-term self-confidence is to include an initial monitoring period in community projects, after which local people will assume full responsibility (Van der Walt, 2008). Thus, although there is no doubt that tourism is important and appropriate, the question is who earns it from its development (Sofield, 2003). In a CBT specific environment, it is necessary to identify beneficiaries from CBT - the local community or elite (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008, p. 115).

In developing countries, CBT projects are usually developed in rural areas (Equation 2008). However, CBT can also be an instrument of development in poor urban areas. A critical issue is the different interpretation of the concept of CBT. Despite the growing number of CBT studies, the concept does not have a clear definition and interpretation (Flacke-Naurdofer, 2008).

## **The role of CBT in community development**

CBT can be associated with alternative development strategies that originated and developed during the 1970s and embrace issues of empowerment, self-reliance and sustainability (Cornelissen, 2005, Telfer, 2009). In this context, CBT development is seen as a way of promoting holistic community development, which includes empowerment, self-reliance, social justice, sustainability, freedom and so on.

CBT's decision-making, management and profit making process is under community control. CBT should be more sustainable than conventional mass tourism, freeing the community from the hegemonic influence of tour operators and elite control and ensuring local empowerment in line with the basic aspirations in order to benefit local economies instead of the economies of others (Timothy, 2002,).

In support of this concept of CBT, Giampiccoli and Nauright (2010,) argue CBT should be initiated, planned, mastered, controlled and managed by members of the local community towards achieving their needs and desires. "

Lack of basic resources and poor knowledge of specialists make it difficult for the community to support projects to start autonomously and become self-supporting (Tiffen, Mortimore, & Gichuki, 1994).

It is rare for communities to initiate tourism developments themselves; they are normally run by a local non-governmental organization (NGO) or an international conservation agency (Scheyvens, 2002).

The character and methodology of intervention by external actors are very important in determining the results of the CBT project development. The role of the external catalyst is to support the initiative, especially at the early stages (Burkey, 1993,).

Facilitating community empowerment means 'Providing people with resources, opportunities, vocabulary, knowledge and skills to increase their capacity to determine their future and to participate in issues that affect their lives' (Ife, 2002).

Thus, a facilitator is a person who helps people achieve their goals by offering them the right tools and means to do so (Lecup & Nicholson, 2000). Giampiccoli and Nauright (2010,) further argue that foreign entities should help communities enter the markets and not be involved in any way in venture as partners; emphasis should be on preservation and municipal welfare.

As fairly stated by Sproule and Suhandi (1998, Ndlovu & Rogerson, 2004, Singh, 2008), in CBT, there are direct beneficiaries (employees, guides, craftsmen) and indirect beneficiaries (community members benefit from education, training and development projects funded financially by tourism income). CBT cannot solve all development problems in poor communities

but provides an additional strategy through which communities can diversify their living ;therefore, Ja (2009,) points out that: “*CBT 'does not contribute to the national economy in foreign exchange terms, but it has local economic significance*”. Nelson (2003) also argues that CBT is important in diversifying rural economies, particularly in areas where land use is limited and living conditions are scarce.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The topic of local communities permeates the reality of sustainable tourism clearly and unequivocally. Although there is still no convergence in their role or a deep theoretical study by these operators, the focus of attention on the local community is a matter of great interest, because it is one of the few distinctive signs of this understanding of tourism.

An open debate is whether this is sufficient to give the community a passive role or if it requires an active role in the context of the tourism process. In the first case we are dealing with well-tested multitasking strategies in other contexts, while in the second part we see a greater potential for the community not only to identify itself better but also to reinforcing a new understanding of tourism, where economic outcomes are supported by interrelationships.

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is supported as a tool to improve the living of the poor and create opportunities for community development. The essence of this model is that all activities are fully owned and managed by community members and external actors intervene only as intermediaries or supporters. They do not participate in any way in the ownership and management of CBT ventures and related activities in the country.

The perceived local tourism impact is related to the relationship of personal benefits. These dictate the attitudes of local residents to tourism development and sustainability aspects. All three aspects of sustainability are influenced by the community's involvement in tourist planning, particularly its socio-cultural aspect. Involvement of local communities in tourism planning will enable policy makers to prepare a policy that meets the needs of stakeholders, addressing their interests and expectations from sectorial development. Local involvement in development processes will help formulate the most appropriate decisions and generate an increase in local motivation. Support for environmental protection activities will increase.

As a tourism service industry, it requires the goodwill and cooperation of host communities. The visitor satisfaction will be greater when the support of residents will be greater, and the latter will be proud of their tourism.

## IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY IN TERMS OF IMPLICATIONS

The tourism industry has continually reviewed the issue of sustainability through the lens of destination communities. This study presents a number of significant practices beneficial to tour managers and planners at these sites, helping them to clearly understand how local communities and businesses can participate in local touristic development.

Since it has been emphasized that local support and the participation of stakeholders are among the most critical factors in the tourism business, this study will provide clarity supporting the perceptions and attitudes of participating communities regarding the development of destination tourism. Their professional involvement, along with the practical experience of planning tourist activities and specific knowledge of their local attractions are reliable resources for program and strategy development, increasing the competition among the destination communities.

In addition, the study illuminates ways for the policymakers of each community to find methods of encouraging participation among residents and businesses. The development of strategies for long-term resource sharing is an opportunity for further improvement in destination tourism. Local tourism is hampered mainly by the inability of local administrators to implement regulations in this sector. Significant capacity building at the municipal level is a prime example of how local administrations should exercise enlightened authority over the development of this industry. This capacity building is vital to maintaining focus and developing a sense of ownership in tourism-based spaces, while considering the perceived effects of tourism development as a positive impact for local governments, and minimizing perceived negative influences by community members.

This study contributes to the debate on the nature of community participation in tourism development, serving as a “bottom-up” based model for strategic planning. This model can be extended in a wider context of study regarding the principles of sustainability by facing the issues still challenging tourism in destination communities. This study seeks to provide a definitive discussion that emphasizes a strengthening of co-operation between the public-private sectors and the communities they serve to achieve sustainable and successful tourism.

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