Barriers to Community Participation in Tourism Development: Empirical Evidence from a Rural Destination

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is a fastest growing industry and is growing with a great pace. Tourism has become a top priority of the economic agenda of maximum countries. It is believed that tourism can be used as a tool to solve problems like unemployment and poverty in developing countries. Community participation is usually a necessary component for successful tourism development of a destination as there exists a symbiotic relationship between community participation and tourism development. Community participation proved to be a successful model for tourism development in developed countries, but there exists some barriers in case of developing countries. The three kinds of barriers which exist in community participation are Operational Barriers, Structural Barriers & Cultural Barriers (Tosun, 2000). To encourage community participation in tourism development planning at any destination, it is important to identify and minimise these barriers. The study deals with the identification of barriers to community participation which exists in a rural tourist destination – Sudh Mahadev of Jammu & Kashmir. For this purpose, a questionnaire was designed in both English and Hindi languages, which covers all the barriers of community participation as identified by Tosun (2000). Data was collected from the rural residents of Sudh Mahadev, Jammu by conducting personal interviews with them. Results of this study depict that barriers to community participation exists at the destination and the most important of these barriers is the Structural Barrier. The paper also highlights the implication of these barriers and suggests ways to minimise them.

KEY WORDS: Community Participation, Barriers, Rural Tourism
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 (Tosun, 2000), resulting in more positive attitudes to tourism development and conservation of local resources (Inskeep, 1994), 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
course 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 Harrill (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 constrains 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.
Review of Literature

Community Based Tourism

The academic literature lacks a universally accepted definition and subsequent operationalisation for community-based tourism. Some studies define community-based initiatives emphasizing local level stakeholder-related processes. These include studies focusing on levels of collaboration between different tourism-related stakeholders in the planning processes (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Reed, 1997) and the levels of involvement and participation in local tourism-related efforts (Belsky 1999; Kiss, 2004). Another definition, which stands out because of its focus on outcomes, considers whether a substantial amount of control (e.g., of decision making processes) is in the hands of residents, and whether a considerable proportion of the economic benefits from tourism stays among the residents of tourism-dependent communities (Scheyvens, 1999; Mitchell & Reid, 2001; Jones, 2005; Hipwell, 2007; Trejos & Chiang, 2009).

Ying and Zhou (2007) note that community participation in tourism can be examined from two perspectives; first, the decision making process, allowing residents to become empowered in tourism development, expressing their concerns and desires; and secondly the tourism benefits, for example, the increased employment opportunities. Cook (1982) and Murphy (1998) suggest that community involvement within the planning and development process is crucial for sustainable tourism development. Dredge (2006) argues that there is a need to involve wider community in tourism planning instead of that local government claiming that they represent the wider communities. According to Hillery (1995), most of researchers agrees that mostly there are three main points in community participation; community involves group of people who live in geographically distinct area; the quality of relationships within the groups, with members tied together with common characteristics such as culture, values and attitudes; and a group of people engaged in social interaction, such as neighbouring. Within any community there are different views regarding tourism development.

Cook (1982) and Haywood (1988) both argued that planning, which includes public participation at the local level, is important if the social and environmental effects of tourism development are to be avoided, as social
and environmental effects are associated with the local community. In order to involve local community in the tourism development process, community managers and planners need to provide educational information and programs (e.g. workshops, awareness programs) to residents (Sirakaya, 2001). Community participation holds the potential to transform the attitudes of local people from passivity to responsibility and forms a new relationship between individual and destination, based on a sharing power and decision making (Dinham, 2005). Cheong and Miller (2000) argue that local communities should become proactive and resistant to unwanted change; there should be negotiation in the plans and development so that they can ensure development in their community in best possible way. If tourism is to develop within a community, the host community must become willing partners to tourism development (Murphy, 1981).

Pretty (1995) states that when a community is involved in destination development process from design to maintenance, the best results occurred and when they are only involved in information sharing and consultation, then the results are poorer. Effective tourism planning requires resident involvement to overcome the negative impacts and to channelise the benefits associated with tourism development (Arnstein 1969; Chambers 2002, Sewell & Coppock 1977, Rohe & Gates 1985, Wates 2000). Tourism development at a destination is generally treated like other commercial forms. As we know that tourism industry is a service based industry and many players/stakeholders play/contribute their roles/parts to complete the whole process of tourism development at a destination into a successful process. Often, it develops incrementally with one business building on another, or one successful event such as festival inspiring the creation of similar undertakings.

**Barriers to Community Participation**

Tosun (2000), 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 (2004) 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 (2006) 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 (2000) 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 then others in both these cities.

**Study Area**

Located in the town of Chenani in the Udhampur district of Jammu, the temple of Sudh Mahadev was built by Chaudhauri Ramdas of Chenani and his Chaudhauri Parag Mahajan about 80 years ago. This holy place is around 30 kms away from the main city of Chenani and around 130 kms from Jammu. Pilgrims visit the shrine to worship the famous trident (Trishul) and a mace, which is believed to belong to Lord Shiva. The Devak stream originating at this place disappears enchantingly among the rocks a few kilometers downstream. The temple has a natural black marble 'Lingam' and goddess Parvati mounted on Nandi, the bull. In 2011 above 5 lakh pilgrims visited Jammu & Kashmir for Amarnath pilgrimage and this place falls in the route of that pilgrimage, so this can be connected with that circuit. Dharmarth trust of Jammu and Kashmir takes care of this temple and they can play an important role in the development of this tourist destination by involving the local community.

**Research Methodology**

A questionnaire was designed on the basis of thirteen barriers mentioned by Tosun (2000). Eighteen questions were designed in the questionnaire to cover all the barriers and to get the information in more accurate form from the respondents. The questionnaire was designed in both Hindi and English languages for the ease of the locals of the study area.
We tried to cover every section of the locals including sarpanch, shopkeepers, artists, temple priests, school teachers, farmers and the transporters. A total of forty seven personal interviews with the locals were conducted so as to make them understand our questionnaire in easy way. The respondents were asked to mark the statement on a five point Likert scale, starting from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

Results and Findings

This study was designed to identify the existing barriers to community participation in Sudhmahadev tourist destination of Jammu and Kashmir. Results of this study found that all three barriers - Operational, Structural and Cultural as mentioned by Tosun (2000), exists in the Sudhmahadev. Under operational barriers the findings suggest that the residents of the destination perceive that there is high level of centralization of public administration towards tourism development (mean = 2.56, σ = 1.17). Further the data suggests that the residents believe that various government and other agencies coordinate well for the development of tourism in their region (mean = 3.41, σ = 1.14). The residents believe that the government officials have adequate information about the various tourism resources of their region (mean = 3.43, σ = 1.28). Under structural barriers the findings suggests that residents of destination believe that there is high attitude of professionals (mean = 3.34, σ = 1.09) and they do not give importance to the suggestions of locals. The data suggests that only few people (generally outsiders) are taking the benefit of tourism and the people of the destination are not getting maximum benefit because of tourism development. The residents also believe that there is no appropriate legal system to encourage local community participation. Locals strongly believe that there is high cost of community participation (mean = 4.72, σ = 0.45) which diverts the interest of locals from tourism participation in their destination and also because of lack of financial resources (mean = 2.60, σ = 1.25) locals avoid to participate in the tourism activities. Under cultural barriers the findings suggest that because of the limited capacity of poor people (mean = 4.28, σ = 0.74) they are unable to participate in the tourism development. The residents strongly believe that they are aware of the tourism potential of their region and the benefits of tourism development.
The data was also subjected to one way ANOVA and the findings suggest that there is no statistical difference (p > 0.05) among all major items with respect to age and gender. In case of gender only two items indicated statistical difference. With respect to expertise, the females reflected high confidence and indicated that they can handle tourism activities on their own. Similarly the females strongly believed that government officials have full information with respect to the tourism destination

### Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Barriers to Community Participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>OPERATIONAL BARRIERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Representatives of locals are getting involved in decision making process.</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Our Panchayats/Representatives have enough powers to take decision regarding tourism promotion.</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Govt. representatives want to involve locals in tourism development process.</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>There is strong coordination between various Govt. and Non Govt. authorities.</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>People of this area work in coordination with tourism development authorities.</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Govt. officials have complete information about the tourism resources in your area.</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Govt. officials regularly meet and share their policies regarding tourism development of this area with locals.</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>STRUCTURAL BARRIERS</strong></td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Govt. officials think that they know best about the tourism development.</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.No.</td>
<td>Statements</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Govt. officials give importance to the suggestions of locals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>People of this area can tackle all the tourism related activities at their own.</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Outsiders and few prominent people are taking the benefits of tourism development in your area.</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The benefits of tourism are flowing to the maximum people of your area.</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>We have enough laws and institutions that encourage local participation.</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Participating in tourism development requires time, effort and money.</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Govt. allocates funds to develop a tourist infrastructure of facilities with in your communities.</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CULTURAL BARRIERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>We have not got enough opportunity for participation in tourism development.</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>We are aware of the Master Plan formed for the Development of tourism in our area.</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>We are aware regarding the tourism product and tourism benefits of our area.</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion and Future Research**

This study has identified and discussed the barriers to community participation towards tourism development in the Sudhmahadev tourist destination of Jammu & Kashmir. The study has found that the barriers proposed by Tosun (2000), exists in Sudhmahadev and few of them like...
relatively high cost of community participation, limited capacity of poor people and attitudes of professionals exists there. We can interpret by these results that barriers exist there due to the non involvement of locals in tourism development process by Tourism and Government. It is found that local residents believe that their representatives should be involved in decision making processes and locals should be involved in tourism related projects. Local residents also believe that tourism related activities need large amount of investments and time. According to local residents: Sudhmahadev is a well known tourist spot with beautiful hills and religiously important Shiv temple is having a huge potential to attract more and more tourists. As Amarnath pilgrimage is a huge attraction for tourists and pilgrims in Jammu & Kashmir and this destination can be promoted by linking it with that pilgrimage. People also believe that tourism authorities are not showing their interests in the promotion of this destination and they are mostly focusing on the already developed destinations. Locals said that from long time they are demanding for the construction of a road to connect Sudhmahadev with famous tourist destination Patnitop, but their demand is never been herd by concerned tourism development authorities. Locals also believe that their destination, Sudhmahadev, should be connected with other nearby tourist destinations like Patnitop and Shivkhori, so that Sudhmahadev can be developed as an enroute tourist destination.

As barriers and development are inversely proportional to each other so there is an urgent need to remove or reduce these barriers so that there should be no hurdle in the destination development process and more local people get involved in tourism related activities and tourism development process and the local residents gets the benefit out of the tourism activities of their destination. Government authorities also has to play an important role in reducing the above said barriers by involving the locals in the tourism development processes and also creating awareness among local residents about the potential benefits of participation in tourism related activities. There is a need to develop the skills of locals, so that they can choose tourism as their career and can play their role in the tourism development in their destination. Motivational schemes along with short term tourism courses like 'Tourist Guide course' should be organized by the Tourism authorities to involve and motivate locals in the development
processes. There is a need to implement change in the attitudes of tourism development authorities and the concerned government agencies so that the locals should feel free to share their views with them.

Clearly the mentioned barriers are not only specific to the community participation; some of them may also be seen as common problems of development in many other local communities. Hence it should be accepted that all the three barriers proposed by Tosun (2000), exists in Sudhmahadev, which has prevented them from achieving higher level of development. This study can be seen as a beginning in the preparation of a tool to measure and identify the barriers in the community participation in India. Although the study tried to identify the barriers to community participation in Sudhmahadev tourist destination, but still study has certain limitations. Because of illiteracy of local residents we received very small sample of 47 respondents and because of the village culture we received very less number of female respondents. Even though the questionnaire was translated in Hindi language for the ease of local residents, it is expected that respondents may have not interpreted statements in its true sense. There is also a limitation that responses of some respondents may have been influenced by the responses of other respondents. As Tosun (2000) mentioned that no empirical work has been done in developing countries regarding the identification of barriers to community participation in tourism development activities, so future research can be done in identification of barriers other than the barriers mentioned by Tosun (2000) and future research can also measure the level of participation of local community in the development process of tourism in their destination.

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