

# Tourism Development in Local Communities: As a Community Development Approach

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**Abstract:** This article illustrates the role of local communities for tourism development. This study also attempts to highlight the role of tourism local development. This article looks at how local communities can develop tourism in local area. The concepts of community and community development have been important for local tourism development. The implication of this study arises from the fact that there has been little research carried out on interaction between communities and local tourism. Theoretically, the findings of this study enrich the knowledge concerning local tourism industry [Journal of American Science 2010;6(2):155-161]. (ISSN: 1545-1003).

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## 1. Introduction

Community is one component for understanding community development for tourism development but is also important to appreciate how community affects local tourism development. Local communities have a key role in tourism development as they are crucial in providing a good environmental condition for tourists. Local communities are a basic element of modern tourism development. They are the focal point for the supply of accommodation, catering, information, transport, facilities and services for tourism development (Godfrey & Clarke, 2000). The term community can have a specific geographic meaning with a clearly defined spatial boundary and area and also refers to groups of people with a common interest (Chapman & Kirk, 2001). According to Bradshaw (2008, p. 6) Community as defined has historically shared boundaries one's geography of residence. For the purpose of this study, community is defined as a group of individuals living or working within the same geographic area with some shared cultures or common interests. This geographical definition of community is essential to understand how community development is linked to the ability of a community to improve tourism development.

The role of the local community in influencing the tourism development activities are becoming clearer (Hall et al., 2005). McIntyre, et al. (1993, p. 50) states that local communities must organize themselves at all levels to play a more effective role in development, and interact with government and role-players at all levels. They must be able to identify potential tourism resources and attractions within their communities and support responsible tourism and community development. They should be eager participants in tourism decision making with respect to major tourism development for communities. Kepe (2004, p. 45) states that local communities should play a proactive role to ensure positive benefits from tourism. Local communities should work closely with Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) to educate others in the community concerning tourism development projects.

## 2. Local communities

There is numerous definition of "community". In understanding the meaning of community development, the study needs first to be clear about the term of "community" itself. The definition of community is highly problematic and there are many definitions (Tesoriero & Lfe, 2006). For most

tourism purposes, the concept of community often hinged upon a common location. However, it has also been used to refer to groups that are not geographically determined but share common characteristics or interests. For the assessing the level of tourism development, a community can be any existing or potential network of individuals, groups and organizations that share or have the potential to share common concerns, interest and goals (Bush et al., 2002). According to Dalton et al. (2001) notion of community tend to falls within two major classifications. One a territorial conception of community based on geographic location and the other, relational conception of community based on social network relationships. Ivanovic (2009, p. 14) states that "Sociology use two approaches in defining community. First, it regards community as a territorial concept, and second, it regards community as a relational concept". As a territorial concept, a community can be defined and delineated on a map. A community has a name, borders, landmarks, types of people and recognizable symbols. Community as a rational concept represents people who are tied together by communication, friendship and association (Ivanovic, 2009). The term community is most commonly defined as residents contained by geographical boundaries, local zoning, or politics; the ethnicity of its residents or the resources or industry established in the area (Chaskin et al., 2001; Mancini et al., 2003). The local community play a fundamental role in the lives of its members by promoting their physical, social, psychological, and spiritual well-being (Mancini et al., 2003). The operational definition of "community" (Chaskin et al., 2001) is a geographical area that assumes a commonality of circumstances and identity among its people and contains functional units for the delivery of goods and services. In contrast, a "community" refers to a group of people who are associated in some way. However the most common definition of community is based on geographic location (Mahoney et al., 2007).

The origins of the modern notion of community are generally traced back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was a time of growing industrialization and urbanization. One of the most important writers on the topic was Ferdinand Tonnies, who summarized this form of thought in 1887 in his book *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. The term *Gemeinschaft* refers to a community that is characterised by associations based on mutual aid and trust. *Gesellschaft* refers to society, characterized by associations based on individual self-interest (Goodwin, 2003). Hence the historical discussion of community begins with Tonnies work on *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Ricketts & Phipps, 2008; Wood & Judikis, 2002). Tonnies

represents these two perspectives of community as a shift from *Gemeinschaft* towards that of *Gesellschaft*. *Gemeinschaft* can be described in three dimensions, through kinship, locality and mind, and actions are considered in the context of some common purpose or goal. *Gemeinschaft* is characterized by a strong identification with community, emotionalism, traditionalism and holistic conceptions to other members of the community (Ricketts & Phipps, 2008). When reviewing research literature on community development and tourism development, it is necessary to understand the definition of community as it was used in research. One must understand the concept of community in order to understand the purpose of community development. Therefore, this section of the literature review offers definitions of community and discusses the needs for community development by illustrating the nature of problems in local communities. Hillery (1955) suggested that there were at least ninety four different definitions of community. He presented the general definitions of community: community consists of persons in social and cultural interaction within geographic area and having one or more additional common ties. Mattessich & Monsey (2004, p. 56) defined community as a "people who live within a geographically defined area and who have social and psychological ties with each other and with the place where they live". This definition was used in study for definition of community as the main concept for tourism development. Fellin (2001) also described local communities as social systems, including families, groups, organizations. He noted that community is a social unit based on a common place, interest, identification, or some combination of these characteristics. Dalton et al. (2001) also states community is a meaningful entity that represents resources of empowerment (Dalton et al., 2001).

According to Telfer & Shrpely (2008) there is a wide range of perspectives that can be taken on local communities in the context of tourism development. Local communities may be considered as the main attractions to community skill and knowledge while for others the community is simply the setting where tourism occurs. And for others still, a community may, in fact, stand in the way of other potential tourism development. Local communities are increasingly being drawn into tourism not only from the demand side, as tourists actively seek out new destinations and communities to experience, but also from the supply side, as communities are becoming aware of the potential of the products they can offer to tourists and the economic gains that can be made (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008, p. 115).

### 3. Community Development

The concept of community development is explored in terms of participation, empowerment and community capacity as they related to tourism development (Singh, Timothy, & Dowling, 2003). Community development can be seen as building social capital for collective benefits. It uses skill and knowledge and strategy in their practice (Gilchrist, 2004). Community development aims to increase citizens' participation in their community. In community development, emphasis is placed on community as a social system, bounded by geographical location or common interest (Talbot & Verrinder, 2005). Community development is linked to community capacity building through a shared focus of building capacity to a collective participatory force (Williams, 2004). According to Frank & Smith (1999) community development is the planned evaluation of all aspects of community well-being. Community development is undertaken to strengthen or build community relationship and strengthen structures that have become fragmented (Yan, 2004). According to Gilchrist (2004) community development helps local community residents to identify unmet needs. It seeks to build capacity by improving skill and knowledge for individuals and the community as a whole (Gilchrist, 2004). Community development is

viewed as the best way to build the capacity of community residents to engage with each other and find solutions to issues that affect their community. Community development holds potential to build community cohesion by facilitating a community's capacity to engage connections between individuals, organizations and groups (Chaskin et al., 2001). Helping a community to build its capacity for development is a primary goal of community development (Ife, 2002). Community development is a process that allows community residents to come together to plan, generate solutions and take action developing the evolution of social, economic, environmental and cultural aspects of community (Hackett, 2004). Community development emphasizes the importance of participation as a means of strengthening local communities (Kuponiyi, 2008). Increased community capacity building is a result of successful community development (Hackett, 2004). Hence, the process of tourism development in local communities is the process of community development. Community development builds peoples' skills for community issue. Hence it is vital to the survival of local communities (Talbot & Verrinder, 2005). The figure (1) illustrates components of community development in local communities.

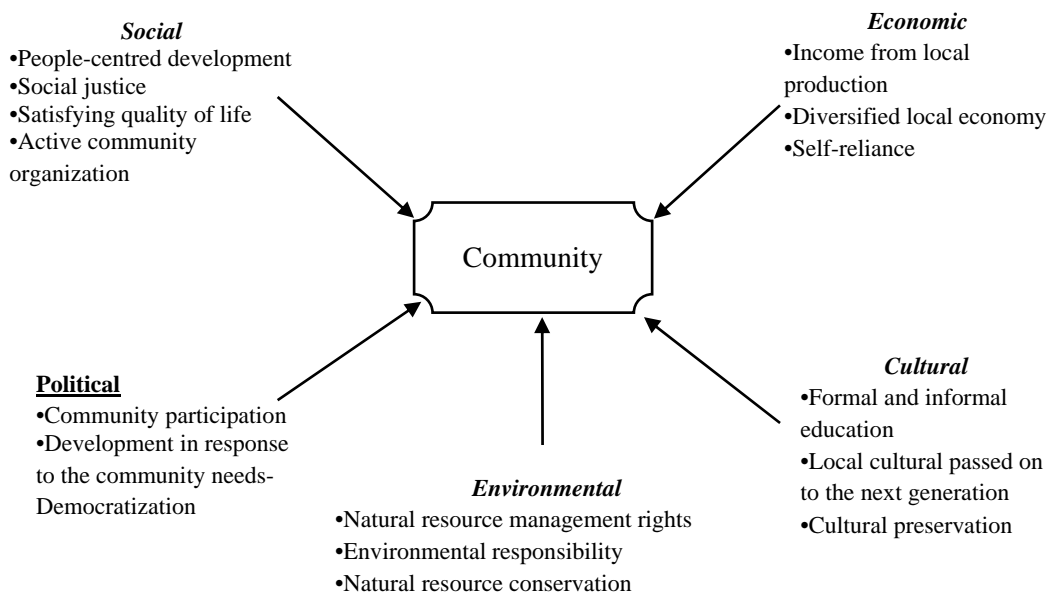


Figure 1. Five Aspects of Community Development. Adapted from Suansri (2004)

#### 4. Tourism and Community Development

Tourism is increasingly seen as a key community tool, with the recognition of its economic contribution in bolstering stagnating economies and its ability to unify local community residents (Fennell, 2003). At community levels, tourism offered opportunities for direct, indirect, and induced employment and income, spurring regional and local economic development (Aref, 2010; Coccossis, 2004). According to Godfrey & Clarke (2000) tourism development is an ongoing process. It is no economic panacea, and is best suited as a supplement to a local community for achieving development (Godfrey & Clarke, 2000). Bushell & Eagles (2007) says tourism plays a role in facilitating community development through business mentoring and educational opportunities that contribute to local communities in increasing skill and knowledge in local communities and local residents as well as improving the community's economic level. The process of tourism development is important as an important tool in community development. Hence many local communities have turned to tourism development to provide economic, social, cultural and overall development of the community. Allen, et al., (1993) suggested that tourism is increasingly being viewed as an important component community

development. However, while there is appreciation of tourism as a development tool, there is little understanding of tourism development in the literature. In recent years as local communities have realized the developmental promise of tourism, there has been also a growth in research on tourism and its contribution to community development. Tourism holds promise for local community development as illustrated in the studies, but how can tourism be developed? This study attempted to answer this question through community capacity building. Tourism has grown as a topic of research in the field of community development and community development researchers have increasingly investigated tourism and its potential (Flora et al., 1992). However, there is no research on how a certain community developed tourism when it decided to become a tourist destination. Before tourism can be used as a developmental tool in a community, it has to be developed. However, there is a little literature that explains the process development of tourism through local communities. That gap in the tourism research was apparent and the gap will be to be attempted to be filled by this study. The following figure shows the contribution of tourism in community development.

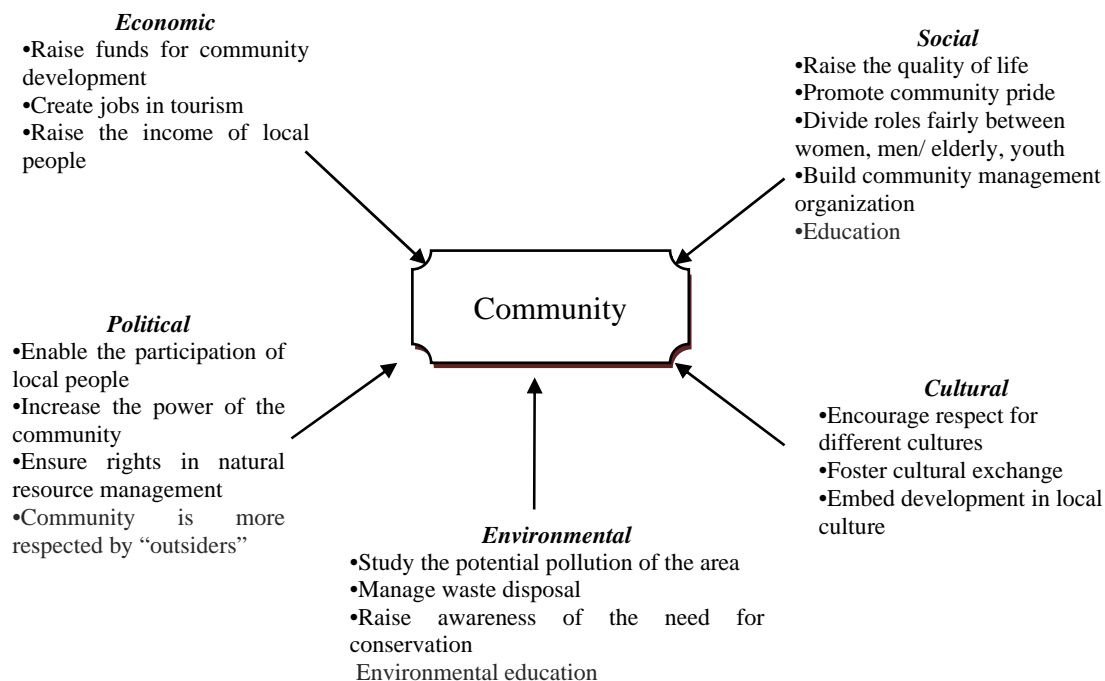


Figure 2: Contribution of Tourism in Community. Adapted from Strasdas (2005) & Suansri (2004)

## 5. Community Development for Tourism Development

The development of tourism in local communities is often an illustration of a community taking advantage of resources within community, which is an example of self-help approach to community development. The most prevalent approaches are: the self-help approaches to community development which is a strategy of community development in tourism development (Christenson, 1989). The technical assistance approach to community development is based on technical information and expertise for improving the tourism in local communities. However, this approach has a downside and it can limit community capacity building. This is because governments use the technical approach to develop tourism and this can disempowering local community and create dependency (Cavaye, 2000). Some writers referred to technical assistance as a key element in building community capacity and increase skill (Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition, 2007). Zody (1980) agrees that technical assistance solves short-term problems, it can establish dependency relationship that becomes part of the problem. Brown (1980) argues technical assistance does not address a real community's capacity building. According to Cavaye (2000), however the support of the government through a technical assistance can be limit building capacity. Yet at the same time, government can also develop partnerships that foster community capacity building for tourism development. Thus in third world countries particularly, without the government support, community capacity cannot be achieved. The conflict approach stresses the equal distribution of resource in community and usually focuses on those with limited power. The idea of the conflict approach is to get people together to change a community (Christenson, 1989). In this study, this approach has referred to decentralization in tourism organization and so it can refer to community participation in tourism development. In summary, community development literature is relevant to this study as it provides the rational and theoretical background for tourism development.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper takes a closer look at tourism based in local areas and their associated communities. Local communities are a main reason for tourists to travel, to experience the way of life and material products of different communities. Local communities also shape the 'natural' landscapes, which many tourists consume. Communities are, of course, also the source of tourists; tourists are drawn from particular places and social contexts which in themselves will help shape the context of the tourist's experience in the host community

(Richards & Hall, 2000). Consequently, tourism can positively promote a community to potential investors and residents as well as visitors. This paper showed a brief conception of community and its involvement in the tourism development (Beeton, 2006). The main importance approaches that suggested in this study were self-help approaches for community development through tourism development. Hence, this study can be motivation for futures investigate in local communities base tourism development.

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