

Tourism among Indigenous Communities

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Abstract: This study prompts by two considerations: (1) the lack of tourism research in indigenous communities, in general, especially in the field of indigenous tourism; (2) the researcher's knowledge that the use of tourism development has been encouraged. Hence this study is an attempt to integrate the elements of tourism among indigenous communities. However, while there is an appreciation of tourism as a development tool, there is little understanding of tourism development in the indigenous community literature.

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1. Introduction

Tourism can be considered one of the most remarkable socio-economic phenomena of the twentieth century. Indigenous tourism is increasingly being viewed as a catalyst for economic development among many indigenous communities throughout the world (Aref & Ma'rof, 2009). Many indigenous communities also recognize that tourism development can stimulate change in social, cultural and environmental dimensions as well. Tourism development is widely seen as a tool for economic revitalization in rural areas, both domestically and abroad. Indigenous tourism has been embraced in the last decade as an economic development tool for rural areas. Tourism is one of the most popular topics in tourism studies involving indigenous communities (Aref & Ma'rof, 2008).

Tourism development come in many shapes and forms such as social, cultural, economic and environmental (Godfrey & Clarke, 2000). Tourism has been a source of social-economic change in many developing countries. Tourism is a complex mixture of local business and community activities (Godfrey & Clarke, 2000). Tourism is often referred to as the world's largest industry and regarded as a means of achieving sustainable community development and it represents significant economic, environmental, and socio cultural opportunities for many communities (Sharpley, 2002).

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) (2009), tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries and is one of the global engines of development. The tourism industry is an important economic activity involving different groups of community. Tourism is a multi sector, and as a means of economic, social and cultural exchange, it has many aspects and types (Mowforth & Munt, 2003). Because of its various forms, tourism researchers have been incapable of reaching either a

conceptual or operational unity over a consensus definition (Mill & Morrison, 2002; Mills, 2005; Wall & Mathieson, 2006). Mill & Morrison (2002) as well as Wall & Mathieson (2006) noted how the discipline of studying tourism struggled with establishing an international definition of tourism.

Harrill & Potts (2003, p. 233) believed that "tourism is an invisible industry, encompassing transportation, lodging, and entertainment. Unfortunately, tourism is also invisible to many planners, so tourism development is often left to private developers and leisure service providers" (Harrill & Potts, 2003, p. 233). Tourism also is the sum of the phenomena and links arising from the interaction of tourists, business suppliers, governments, and indigenous communities in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors. Tourism research has also recently come to be a favourite research subject in community development researches (Galston & Baehler, 1995). The growth of the tourism industry in developing countries such as Malaysia has generated a need to understand its dynamics, the development processes it brings about and the consequences for the peoples. Studies of tourism to date in the Southeast Asia region fail to provide us with a comprehensive view of indigenous communities.

2. Indigenous tourism

Indigenous tourism can be a highly profitable industry for indigenous communities. However, the impacts of tourism can be different in each community (Godfrey & Clarke, 2000). Indigenous tourism is undoubtedly important for local, national, levels. It should not form the core element of a community's economy, but is better suited to play a supplementary role to help diversify community economic activities (Godfrey & Clarke, 2000). Tourism development has become a source of

income generation for many communities seeking ways to improve their livelihoods. Clearly, tourism and its impacts is a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses economic, social, cultural, ecological, environmental, and political forces (Singh et al., 2003). 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 tends to fall 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.

3. Indigenous communities

The indigenous community plays a fundamental role in the lives of its members by promoting their physical, social, psychological, and spiritual well-being (Mancini, Martin, & Bowen, 2003). When reviewing research literature on 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 CCB and 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 indigenous communities.

Indigenous community is one component for understanding tourism development but is also important to appreciate how indigenous community affects tourism development. Indigenous communities have a key role in tourism development as they are crucial in providing a good environmental condition for tourists. Indigenous 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).

According to Telfer & Shrpley (2008) there is a wide range of perspectives that can be taken on indigenous communities in the context of tourism development. Iindigenous 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. Iindigenous 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 (Telfer & Sharpely, 2008, p. 115).

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 community residents (Fennell, 2003). 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 increasing skill and knowledge in indigenous communities as well as improving the community's economy level.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute to tourism literature and indigenous community development. The outcome of this article also assists researchers in the field of rural development and tourism industry. The findings this study can assist tourism developers in the design and implementation of tourism development strategies in indigenous communities.

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