

Naggar - An Example of Community Based Tourism in Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

The word Himachal Pradesh translates to Region of Snowy Mountain. The state is not only famous for the natural beauty but also have a strong religious history. That is why probably one of the reasons that the state is also referred to as Dev Bhoomi that means the land of Gods. At administration level there are twelve districts in Himachal Pradesh, which are further divided in to more than 70 tehsils. Holidaying, sightseeing and religion are the main purpose of travel to the state. Among alternate forms of tourism adventure tourism and nature based tourism is also familiar. Now a day's community based tourism and community based tourism initiatives are also gaining popularity particularly in the rural areas with a specific aim to protect preserve and conserve local culture, heritage, customs and values thereby showcasing all these things as tourism products. The current study aims to explore the possible benefits of community based tourism initiatives to the community and thereby measuring the perception of local residents of the community regarding these benefits.

Keywords:

Introduction

The concept of Community Based Tourism came into picture during the early Nineties. This type of tourism is basically focused on rural area and is of small scale in nature and working. In other words it can be said that it is tourism of the community, by the community and for the community. In Indian context this type of tourism got boost with the advent of developmental sector where Non Governmental sector is working in association with the rural community and sometime with the support and thrust from the public sector.

Community Based Tourism (CBT), in an effort to provide real and all-inclusive community participation at all levels of the development (Boronyak et al, 2010). Similar

to other tourism development models, there is a “major gap between the academic definition of the concept and the way it is used by practitioners” (Goodwin and Santilli, 2009). There is also a substantial variance in definition and application of CBT among different destinations around the World.

While the emphasis on community-based tourism (CBT) has become greater since the discussion on Sustainable Tourism (ST) intensified in the 1990s, the idea of including the host community into tourism planning and development has been discussed even before that (Doxey, 1975; Murphy, 1983).

In many countries, tourism has been initiated and developed by the government using a top-down planning approach (McKercher, 1999; Timothy, 1999). However, more recently, there has been a gradual shift in focus on bottom - up approaches to tourism planning. Local residents, who are impacted by the development, are increasingly interested in getting involved in the planning and decision-making processes. Often times, the local people are themselves a critical part of the attraction; this is certainly true in destinations where ethnic minorities reside. Therefore, tourism development should not rely solely on the government anymore. Murphy argued that “tourism development is a local issue because that is the level where the action takes place” (1985, p. 172). Drawing from the principles of participatory development approach; CBT “aims to create a more sustainable tourism industry, focusing on the host community in terms of planning and maintaining tourism development” (c, p. 50) through community.

As outlined in table 1, many authors have worked on academic and theoretical aspects of community based tourism. These researchers have outlined what could be

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the benefits to the society at large if this community based tourism is adopted. However, not much work has been done in terms of case study and practically studying if these communities have been able to reap these benefits. The current paper tries to address this gap and study

if these benefits are actually reaped by communities which are adopting community based tourism in their communities by taking case study of Naggar in Himachal which has adopted community based tourism.

Table 1:

No.	Sources	Definition & concepts
1	Pearce, 1992 cited in Blackstock, 2005, p. 39	CBT delivers local control of development, consensus-based decision making and are equitable flow of benefits to all affected by the industry.
2	Inskip, 1994, Jamal, T. B., & Getz, D. (1995).	Community-based tourism focuses on community involvement in the planning and development process, and developing the types of tourism, which generate benefits to local communities. It accrues to local residents and not to outsiders. Maximizing benefits to local residents typically results in tourism being better accepted by them and their actively supporting conservation of local resources.
3	Wearing & Neil, 2000,	Community-based tourism is generally considered a privately offered set of hospitality services (and features), extended to visitors, by individuals, families, or a local community. A key objective of CBT is to establish direct personal/cultural exchange between host and guest in a balanced manner that enables a mutual understanding, solidarity and equality for those involved.
4	Hatton, 1999,	Community-based tourism is socially sustainable. This means the tourism activities are developed and operated, for the most part, by local community members, and certainly with their consent and support.
5	Suansri, 2003,	CBT is tourism that takes environmental, social, and cultural sustainability into account. It is managed and owned by the community, for the community, with the purpose of enabling visitors to increase their awareness and learn about the community and local ways of life.
6	Jain & Triraganon, 2003,	CBT emphasizes visitor-host interaction that has meaningful participation by both, and generates economic and conservation benefits for local communities and environment.
7	Hausler & Strasdas, 2002, Byczek, C. (2011)	CBT is a form of tourism in which a significant number of local people has substantial control over, and involvement in its tourism development and management. The major proportion of the benefits remains within the local economy.
8	Beeton, 2006,	CBT aims to create a more sustainable tourism industry, focusing on the host community in terms of planning and maintaining tourism development.
9	Pongponrat & Pongquan, 2007,	The CBT was developed as a form of tourism aimed at empowering local communities to be self-reliant, use a group process for local decision making and helping people to raise income and improve their standard of living on their own terms.
10	Leksakundilok & Hirsch, 2008,	CBT is whereby tourism is managed and controlled by the Community.
11	Simpson, 2008,	Definitions and interpretation of community-based tourism center on the question of ownership, management and/or control of tourism projects.
12	Mowforth & Munt, 2008,	CBT seeks to increase people's involvement and ownership of tourism at the destination end. CBT should initiate from and control stay with the local community, but sometimes arising from operator initiative.
13	Sroule, 1996, (cited in Fennel, 1999), Vajirakachorn, (2011)	CBET refers to ecotourism enterprises that are owned and managed by the community. Furthermore, community-based ecotourism implies that a community is taking care of their natural resources in order to gain income through operating a tourism enterprise and using that income to better their lives.
14	World Wildlife Fund, n.d. cited in Denman, 2001,	CBET is a form of ecotourism where the local community has substantial control over, and involvement in, its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community.

Source : Compiled by Researcher on the basis of review of literature

Research Methodology

A qualitative research oriented exploratory research design was adopted for current study. The main of the study was to explore the advantages of community based tourism in Naggar in Himachal Pradesh. The destination was chosen on basis of convenience and judgement. In recent literature the efforts of Community based tourism have greatly been appreciated and therefore, as a researcher it was felt that the claims needed to be verified. An observation oriented method of collecting data was adopted for this study. In order to observe the community two weeks were spend with the community observing and taking feedback from the people.

The perception of the community is studied across three dimension i.e. development, sustainability and cost of CBTI. Sustainability was phrased as benefits perceived by the community for ease of data collection. In places the questionnaire was converted into local language and therefore easier words for ease of interpretation were used.

The study is based on both secondary and primary data. The data was collected with the help of a structured non disguised questionnaire with help of systematic sampling. The questionnaire was self constructed on basis of review of literature and had 3 sections measuring perception, benefits and costs of CBTI.

Data was collected from 100 respondents in Naggar. Systematic random sampling was used to collect data from individuals in Naggar. N for systematic random sampling was determined in terms of households. Naggar had 511 households and sampling fraction was 1 in 5. This was done with help of village Sarpanch.

Himachal Pradesh and Tourism

Tourism in Himachal Pradesh is not a new concept. Its history goes back to Hiuen T-Sang, the Chinese traveller, visited India and made important observations about Jalandra, Kuluta and Srugna. Apart from Hiuen T-Sang many more foreign travellers have left interesting account of their tours to various parts of the hilly state of Himachal. William Moorcraft has described beautifully the power of various Rajas, economic and social conditions, art and architecture, painting, climate, scenic beauty, flora and fauna of the hill state.

The state is rich in Tribal Culture, Languages, Folklore, and Dress forms, special Himachal cuisine other than off

course the rich bounty of natural beauty. The State has all elements to attract various segments of tourist population.

Himachal Pradesh Govt. has appreciated the importance of Tourism as an important economic activity by announcing its New Tourism Policy in the year 2005. The State Govt. has given a new mission to the Department of Tourism: -

“TO MAKE TOURISM THE PRIME ENGINE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE STATE BY POTIONING IT AS A LEADING GLOBAL DESTINATION BY THE YEAR 2020.”

Himachal Pradesh government has stated in its tourism policy that it wants to promote a sustainable tourism in the state, which is in harmony with the nature. Government is focusing on the development of activity based tourism especially eco tourism activities. By this way government is trying to increase the tourist length of stay in the state and with the involvement of rural population it is aiming at increasing employment in the tourism and hospitality sector (Tourism Policy, 2005).

It is under this policy that the Government of Himachal Pradesh has launched many community based tourism initiatives. One of them being in Naggar.

Naggar: A community Based Tourism Initiative

Naggar is a large village located at the height of 1000 ft. above the sea level in Kullu Valley of Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh. The village is on a hill surrounded by beautiful apple orchids and pine forests. The houses are traditional made up of wooden and stone roofs. The village has a peaceful environment and it also has many old temples and a castle, which was King's headquarter 500 years ago. Naggar came on the Global map because of Non-Government Organization named 'Ananda' which started working for the development of the village and the community with the aspect of Volunteer tourism initially. It is a charitable organization registered under the society registration act 1860 and 12AA trust act. Ananda project has its roots spread around a old Krishna temple in the higher reaches of Naggar village, where volunteers from various parts of the world work in close cooperation with the local community to fulfil the project objectives of sustainable development. Different work ranges from plant conservation to skill development of local community. In such ways project is creating eco

and indigenous knowledge awareness amongst the local people also.

Ananda - The Project

The Ananda Project was conceived in the sacred precincts of the Murlidhar Krishna Temple of Thawa, within the Naggar, Kullu Valley. The Valley is extremely popular among the domestic and international tourists. In 1999, a visitor (Ben Heron) was welcomed by the *Pujari's* family. While at the temple's guest house, Ben spent his time communicating with the people of the place and visitors, roaming around and trekking, reading, and picking up the vernacular language. In due time, this visitor developed a fondness for the place and the people. His fondness eventually translated into concern for the people and their future. Having grasped the milieu attributes of the valley he ingeniously thought of a community development project within the framework of the Krishna Temple Society (KTS). Later, this was registered as the Ananda Project in April 2002.

One of the most appealing features of the Ananda Project is the voluntary contributions of the Kulluvians and tourists alike. A self-determined commitment on both sides is of course eminent, and the nature of its execution will have a profound bearing on the long term viability of their current action. One feels greatly enriched by the environment created by man and nature, ones' experience of work among local groups, both men and women. Their common cause invokes caring and sharing among themselves and in the wider community. Ben and the *Pujari's* family are in constant consultation among themselves and with some community folk to chalk out future actions.

The Ananda project operates in the area around about 4000 old Krishna-temple near the village of Naggar, which is situated in the northern part of Kullu Valley in Himachal Pradesh, India. The purpose of the project is to "help local communities regain their self-reliance and return to a sustainable way of life" and the main focus is to "introduce cultivation techniques at the community level in order to help the villagers generate a sustainable source of income and to conserve endangered species of medicinal plants being over harvested from the wild." (Ananda Project Website)

As per the details provided by the project website it can be noted that the projects activities are focused on the

four main areas as propounded in its philosophy. These focused areas include:

- a) Ecological Development
- b) Economic Development
- c) Social Development
- d) Spiritual Development

The focused activities includes tree plantation drive and conservation of medicinal plants, empowering women groups by means of creating self help groups and activities aimed at promoting yoga awareness amongst host and visitor population. The project attracts volunteers from various parts of the world to undertake volunteer activities focused upon the four focused areas. Generally these volunteer take travels in the nearby places and work in tandem with the community on a flexible routine.

Naggar - Perception of Community based Tourism

The analysis of demographic characteristics indicated that in Naggar 78% out of 100 sample collected there were males and 22% were females i.e. 78 respondents were male and 22 respondents were females. Naggar the sample further showed that 40 respondents with a percentage of 40.0% were of below 30 years of age, 24 respondents with percentage of 24.0% were in between 30 to 45 years of age, 31 respondents were of between 45 to 60 years of age having a percentage of 31.0% and only 5 respondents with a percentage of 5.0% were of 60 years of age or above than that. Therefore the results indicated that the sample represents all age groups. Further, in terms of education 16 respondents with 16.0% were below matric, 39 respondents with 39.0% had completed their matric, 37 respondents with 37.0% were studied up to gradation, 6 respondents with 6.0% have achieved their qualification up to post graduate level and the remaining 2 respondents with 2.0% were studied above post graduate level.

The sample was further analysed for the Occupational activities of the respondents in Naggar which was the third location of the study and the results indicated that out of 100 respondents 22 respondents with 22.0% were public sector or governmental employees, 47respondentst with 47.0% were private sector employees, 11 respondents with 11.0% were Businessman or entrepreneurs, 16 respondents with 16.0% were students, 2 respondents with 2.0% were community tourist entrepreneurs and the

remaining 2 respondents with a percentage of 2.0% were involved in some other occupational activities for their livelihood. Furthermore, in Naggar out of 100 respondents 42 respondents with a percentage of 42.0% were having 4 members in their family, 22 respondents with 22.0% were having 5 members in their family, 20 respondents with 20.0% were having 6 members in their family, while 7 respondents with 7.0% were having 7 members in their family and another 7 respondents with .0% were having 3 members in their family and 1 respondent have only

single member in his family. Interestingly, despite all the hype In Naggar out of 100 respondents 69 respondents with 69.0% refused that no one in their family is directly involved in tourism related activities , 23 respondents with 23.0% accepted that 01 person from their family is involved in tourism while 08 respondents wit 8.0% agreed that 02 members from their family are involve in tourism. This indicated that the perception could be skewed.

Statistics^a

		Overall what is your opinion regarding CBTI in your community?	Do you want much or less tourism in future in your community?	CBTI increased the cost of living	CBTI increased overcrowding in the area	CBTI helps in maintaining sustainability
N	Valid	100	100	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.7700	4.5100	3.1000	2.3600	3.1400
Std. Deviation		.58353	.75872	1.25931	.85894	1.19781
Sum		377.00	451.00	310.00	236.00	314.00

a. Place/Location = Naggar

An analysis of the perception of the respondents regarding community based tourism indicated that in the opinion of the respondents 76% respondents felt that CBTI was good for their economy while 16% felt that it was not at all helpful to the community.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	9	9.0	9.0	9.0
disagree	28	28.0	28.0	37.0
neutral	13	13.0	13.0	50.0
agree	40	40.0	40.0	90.0
strongly agree	10	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

a. Place/Location = Naggar

This was supported by the fact that 66% of the respondents wanted tourism initiatives like the Ananda Project to increase. Interestingly the results indicated that in perception of the respondents the CBTI helped increase sustainability of the community but it also increased the cost of living.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	13	13.0	13.0	13.0
disagree	24	24.0	24.0	37.0
neutral	14	14.0	14.0	51.0
agree	38	38.0	38.0	89.0
strongly agree	11	11.0	11.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

a. Place/Location = Naggar

Conclusion

The present study concludes that CBTI is a developing concept in the area and people have just started to associate with such new initiatives. The local community members are supporting such initiatives with healthy spirit and adopting innovative ideas for the promotion and development of CBTI in their area. The results of the study indicated that overall the perception of the community based tourism matched the claims made by the researchers and government and that the community was benefiting socially and economically from the initiatives.

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