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# Community participation in rural tourism: Towards a conceptual framework

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## Abstract

This study presents a discussion of the community participation construct, within a rural tourism perspective. The study also reviews the methodological characteristics of community participation's theory and measurement and its association to rural tourism environment. The extant literature is revisited to establish taxonomy of the methodological procedures for measuring community participation from the context of rural tourism. Hence, proposing a comprehensive conceptual framework featuring its multifaceted, intertwined and progressive nature for community participation in a rural tourism environment.

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## 1. Introduction

Studies conducted by scholars have explained that many rural communities have diversified their local economy to tourism to improve their livelihood (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004; Mair, 2006). In developing or launching a tourism industry, communities rummage to change themselves from an economy of product manufacturing to a site of services (Gill, 1997). Tourism has the prospective to mark a positive economic influence, yet the achievement of this industry is not a given and the results are not constantly optimistic. Tourism can be manipulative and in cultural terms, socially, and environmentally detrimental and can be unsuccessful to deliver an anticipated economic lift (Sharpley, 2002).

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Communities can play a part in the decision-making practice (Zhao and Ritchie, 2007; Li, 2005; Li, 2004; Tosun, 2000; Chok and Macbeth, 2007). One of the main fundamental ideologies of pro-poor tourism evidently states that local communities “must contribute in tourism decisions if their livelihood significances are to be mirrored in the way tourism is developed” (Chok and Macbeth, 2007). Tosun (2006) in his study believed that by having participatory approach would enable employment of principles of sustainable tourism by producing enhanced opportunities for local residents to gain larger and more balanced benefits from tourism which is taking place in their areas, which will subsequently lead to a positive attitudes to in conserving the local resources and nature (Inskeep, 1994). Participation is a concept that differs through its application and explanation. The method participation is defined similarly depends on the situation in which it happens. For certain, it is a substance of principle; for others, practice (World Bank, 1995).

The essential characteristic of this research line is its multidisciplinary (Lasker and Weiss, 2003) there are many possible approaches to studying community participation rural tourism. This study investigates the degree to which a multifaceted approach to community participation in rural tourism including waste management, economy, social and community-based service-learning can enhance the participation and how it influences community’s attitudes and perceptions about their role in a rural tourism context.

## 2. Literature Review

The community participation is viewed as a discussion or consultancy between the local people and the local government based on the Skeffington Report (1969). In addition the report explains the involvement of the both party’s action of policies and proposal development. Nevertheless, it is only a comprehensive participation when there is complete participation by the local in the planning procedure (Litchfield, 1996).. Kayat (2002) also discuss that public involvement is not solitary about the affiliation between the local government and the local community but it is an authorization process given to the local community for decision making.

The necessity for community to take part during decision making process are for their own interest in addition to the society’s broad involvement, since preparation undertakings effects the community lives was enlightened in detail by Slocum and Thomas-Slayter (1995). There are also numerous debates as to why the community participation process is vital from the perspective of professional and citizens working with local government which have been developed by the WHO (2002).

The view of the locals must be taken into consideration so that it will aid attain worthy decision making process and manage resource competently and effectively (WHO, 2002). The professionals in the other pointer has approved that involving the community might contribute to an enhanced decision making, in fact, community participation also has the probability to teach and escalate their responsiveness by being more receptive.

Based on a study conducted by Glass (1979) community participation in development will produce greater information exchange between the community and the planners, which can be a significant component to upkeep the government and the proposed development. To confirm the projected plan will mirror their aims encouraging community to give their say and recognising their opinions on a concern is essential to be completed.

A study conducted by Fagence (1977) has explained that community participation is a portion of the democratic system which will permit the locals to express their views on development matters which will affect their lives in the future. Based on another study by Chekki (1979, cited in James and Blamey, 1999) has elucidated that the participatory democratic is ‘all acts of citizen that are intended to influence the behavior of those empowered to make the decisions’.

Most of the scholars has propose that community participation process which being a part of democratic system also comprises community’s decision making process. Timothy (1999) in his study has enlightened that tourism planning which has community participation fundamentals occurs from approaches to safeguard locals from the effect of tourism planning and gain the benefits of tourism development.

A study done by Keogh (1990) describes that it is significant to transfer information between decision makers and stakeholders. An explanation in swapping the information and gaining the feedback from the stakeholder must be done to ensure effectiveness of the decision.

Therefore, the access for information should be viewed as a transparent process to gain public confidence on any development proposal for tourism planning. The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2002) has proposed that public

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