

Community Based Tourism and the education of visitors about their impacts and responsibilities for the community.

NHTV University of Applied Sciences, Breda
Tobias Dreisel
October 2015

Community Based Tourism (CBT) is widely perceived as the go-to method for a sustainable development approach. Various researches explained that an advantage of CBT development is to alleviate poverty and create further economic and social benefits (Baktygulov, 2010; Imashev, 2011; Wang, Y., & Pfister, R., 2008; Harrison, D. and Schipani, S., 2007; Manyara, G., & Jones, E., 2007). Besides these benefits, research has also shown that CBT can have various negative impacts on the community (Buccus, Hemson, Hicks, & Piper, 2008; Manyara & Jones, 2007). Some major problems described by Chock et al. (2007) are the dependency of communities on foreign organizations, money leakages, unbalanced involvement of locals as well as uneven distribution of financial benefits (Harrison and Schipani, 2007; Zapataa, Hallb & Lindoc, 2011).

Although CBT is mostly perceived to benefit the involved community, it is indisputable that it can also have negative impacts. The idea of CBT to reduce negative impacts on communities and to ensure a sustainable development is becoming more and more controversial, since many destinations struggle or even fail to implement it successfully (Wang, Y., & Pfister, R., 2008; Rocharungsat, P., 2005). Timothy (2002) explained some major barriers CBT has to overcome in order to be an effective approach. These include cultural aspects such as local traditions, differences in ethnicity and gender, the accessibility of information or the lack of cooperation. According to Mitchell and Eagles (2011) the development of a destination through CBT can lead to issues of unequal power-balances within the community which favors a strong party but neglects weak participants. This again can lead to a creation of local elite groups and change of property ownership. These arguments show the complexity of the issue and that cultural barriers need to be addressed properly in order to prevent negative impacts.

Previous research mainly focuses on the effectiveness of CBT and how to reduce negative and increase positive impacts of it. However, there is only limited research on how education of CBT travelers can be used in order to illustrate the impacts they have on the tourism community. It is argued that travelers who receive education in the context of CBT can contribute positively to the development of a community. However, the education relies mostly on support, respect and raising awareness for cultural and environmental conservation of the local way of life (Fyall, et al., 2003; Mason, 2003; Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008). The Dutch Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI) stated that "Education and interpretation regarding local cultures, geography, environment and history are important tools in creating an enjoyable and meaningful CBT experience, [...]" (CBI, 2015, p.7). A critical point to understand here is that the tourists mostly get educated about the context of the community's culture. What is actually lacking in this education is the understanding of the positive and negative impacts their visit has on the development of the community. Weaver and Lawton

(2002), for instance, describe acculturation as another negative socio-cultural impact of CBT, which means that a less developed culture adapts to the more developed visitor culture.

This shows the importance to educate CBT travelers beforehand and on site to make them aware of the cultural context and differences but specifically their responsibility in CBT. Therefore, tourists not only need to understand their involvement with the local host community but especially their role in how to involve all stakeholders of the community. One example to make CBT development more sustainable and balanced for all local residents is to diversify and increase the number of homestays and hosts in the community. Tourists need to be educated about the importance of that matter due to the fact that their involvement has a direct impact on these shared benefits.

To underline the above mentioned arguments, Tepelus (2008) and Mvula (2001) revealed that tourists who participate in CBT are not fully aware of what values and ideas it actually consists of. Additionally, it is unclear to what extent their understanding as CBT participants is linked to the actual development of a community. Hence, it can be identified that not only the bottom-up approach of CBT is essential to a proper management and development of a community but also the education and involvement of visitors themselves. The goal of this research paper is to find solutions to the issue of how to educate CBT tourists about their impact and responsibility of the community's development. An essential reason why more attention needs to be paid to this topic is that the main target group of CBT is people who have an increasing demand for meaningful experiences as well as a high interest in other cultures (CBI, 2015). Finding ways on how to introduce or implement education about the impacts of CBT from the tourist can be seen as a way to create a more meaningful understanding of the CBT experience. Moreover, prior education helps to decrease the negative impacts, since the tourist become more aware of their responsibilities.

References

- Baktygulov S., Raeva D. 2010: Creating Value for All. Community Based Tourism. UNESCO
- Binns, T., & Nel, E. (2002). Tourism as a Local Development Strategy in South Africa. *The Geographical Journal*, 168(3), 235-247.
- Bottomley, R. (2002). Contested Forests: An analysis of the highlander response to logging, Ratankiri province, Northeast Cambodia. *Critical Asian Studies*, 34(4), 587-606.
- Buccus, I., Hemson, D., Hicks, J., & Piper, L. (2008). Community Development and Engagement with Local Governance in South Africa. *Community Development Journal*, 43(3), 297-311.
- CBI. (2015). Tailored intelligence study: Community Based Tourism (CBT) in Bolivia. Retrieved October 4, 2015, from <http://www.cbi.eu/sites/default/files/tailored-information-community-based-tourism-europe-to-bolivia-tourism-2015.pdf>
- Chock, S., Macbeth, J. and Warren, C. (2007). Tourism as a Tool for Poverty Alleviation: A Critical Analysis of 'pro-Poor Tourism' and Implications
- Fyall, A., Garrod, B., & Leask, A. (2003). *Managing Visitor Attractions: New directions* Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

- Hanh, V. T. H. (2006). Canal-side Highway in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), Vietnam: Issues of urban cultural conservation and tourism development. *GeoJournal*, 66(3), 165.
- Harrison, D. and Schipani, S. (2007). Lao Tourism and Poverty Alleviation: Community-Based Tourism and the Private Sector. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 10 (2/3), 194-230.
- Imashev K., 2011: Contribution of Community Based Tourism to Poverty Reduction in Kyrgyzstan. Master Thesis at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. Geneva.
- Manyara, G., & Jones, E. (2007). Community-based Tourism Enterprise Development in Kenya: An exploration of their potential as avenues of poverty reduction. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 15(6), 628-644.
- Mason, P., & Cheyne, J. (2000). Residents' Attitudes to Proposed Tourism Development. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(2), 391-411.
- Mensah, E. A. and Amuquandoh, F. E. (2010). Poverty reduction through tourism: residents' perspectives. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Research*, 10 (1), 77- 96.
- Rocharungsat, P. (2005). Community-based tourism: Perspectives and future possibilities. PhD Thesis at the School of Business, Tourism program at James Cook University. Australia.
- Mvula, C. D. (2001). Fair Trade in Tourism to Protected Areas: A micro case study of wildlife tourism to South Luangwa National Park, Zambia. *The International Journal of Tourism Research*, 3(5), 393.
- Scheyvens, R., & Momsen, J. H. (2008). Tourism and Poverty Reduction: Issues for Small Island States. *Tourism Geographies*, 10(1), 22.
- Shunnaq, M., Schwab, W. A., & Reid, M. F. (2008). Community Development Using a Sustainable Tourism Strategy: A case study of the Jordan River Valley touristway. *The International Journal of Tourism Research*, 10(1), 1.
- Tepelus, C. M. (2008). Social Responsibility and Innovation on Trafficking and Child Sex Tourism: Morphing of practice into sustainable tourism policies? *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 8(2), 98-115.
- Van De Berg, W. R. (2000). Tourism, Globalization, and a Multi-Sited Approach to Fieldwork in Nepal. *Journal of Ecological Anthropology*, 4, 76
- Wang, Y., & Pfister, R. (2008). Residents' Attitudes Toward Tourism and Perceived Personal Benefits in a Rural Community. *Journal of Travel Research*, 84-93.
- Weaver, D., & Lawton, L. (1999). *Sustainable Tourism: A critical analysis*. Australia: Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism.