

# COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM BENEFITS SHARING SCHEMES OF SRI LANKA: A CASE STUDY OF ARUGAM BAY DESTINATION

<sup>1</sup>C.N.R. WIJESUNDARA, <sup>2</sup>REV. W. WIMALARATANA

<sup>1</sup>Department of Tourism Management, Faculty of Management Studies,  
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

<sup>2</sup>Department of Economics, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo  
E-mail: <sup>1</sup>namalsusl@yahoo.com

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**Abstract**— This study focused on the local community participation in tourism development through benefits sharing schemes in Sri Lanka using a case study of Arugam-Bay destination. To investigate this research matter, the study inspected local community involvement in tourism benefits sharing schemes. To accomplish this task, the study is directed by the research objective: To evaluate the nature of community participation in tourism benefits sharing schemes. To achieve better understanding of the context of the research, the study utilized a case study approach, which offers: exploration at the community level to analyze the issue from the grass root level, where very few studies on this topic has been done. Participation of diverse stakeholders (Local government institutes, NGOs, Tourism entrepreneurs, members of community, and tourism professionals) and the use of quantitative method by using household questionnaire to effectively answer the main research question. Based on the results acquired from quantitative approach, this study concluded that there are enough spaces for local community to enjoy tourism related benefits in tourism development process. It further proved, local communities are mostly entertaining Economic benefits such as develop infrastructure facilities, create job opportunities for locals, increase household income and create market for local products while entertaining some other benefits such as makes community well-known, uplift the language skills of locals and environmental beautification.

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**Keywords**— Community Participation, Sharing Tourism Benefits, Tourism Development.

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## INTRODUCTION

### *1.1 Background of the study:*

Tourism is the world's largest and one of the emerging industries worldwide (UNCTAD, 2007). As mentioned above, tourism is one of the major industries in many countries, including Sri Lanka, with the highest growth potential. Tourism considers as the world's largest employer and also considers as major sources of substantial foreign exchange earner to any country (Blank, 1991 & Richards, 2003). According to Beeton (2006), tourism is one of the major means that helps to development of local community.

Honeck (2008) revealed that tourism industry has proved continued and strong growth in most of developing countries which are characterized with high level of widespread poverty. He further emphasized that tourism has become major contributors to their gross domestic production (GDP) in many of developing countries. Beeton (2006) point out that tourism now concerns as major agent of transformation in every tourists' destination it has touched. According to Scheyvens (2002), many communities in developing countries, are uninformed about the costs and complexities associated with this speedy transformation of development. One approach to improve community development via tourism is to active involvement of local communities and make sure that their role is tapped and sustained through genuine participation in the industry (Beeton, 2006). Active involvement and participation of local communities in tourism industry has been considered

as a positive force for transform and passport to development. It is vital to mention that involvement of local community is crucial for sustainable development of the tourism industry not only because tourism has been maintaining a close bond with the local communities as hosts, but also due to the destinations of tourists are communities and it is in the community that tourism happens (Blank, 1989). Even though it is easy to promote local participation and involvement for tourism, it is far more complex to practice in any context.

As noted earlier there are limited number of research studies carried out concerning this matter, which make it all the more relevant. Sri Lanka is a promising tourism destination with a vast unexplored potential. After Sri Lanka established the peace in 2009, tourism began quite spontaneous and arrivals increased in a fantastic rate. Now, as an emerging tourist's destination, the whole country has a challenge to uphold the existing simple lifestyles and traditions in the face of speedy tourism growth, globalization and modernity.

According to Sooriyagoda (2011) Active involvement of local community in decision making process ensures the locals have access to employment opportunities in tourism. As per the Tourism development strategy document (2011-2016), one of the major objectives of Sri Lanka tourism is "Distribute the economic benefits of tourism to larger cross section of the society and integrate tourism to the real economy". It implied that the government of Sri Lanka has a intention to develop and promote tourism within the country by taking maximum

participation of host communities for tourism development, through that they expect to trickle down the tourism benefits among larger cross section of the society. Even though the Government take tourism initiations with above intension, there is no single research has carried out in Sri Lankan context to find out whether the country is developing tourism by getting said participation and involvement from local communities. So, this lack of related studies motives the researcher to conduct this study to find out local community participation in tourism benefit sharing schemes in Sri Lanka. Finally, the case study approach will employ to succeed this objective.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

As Baral and Heinen (2007) depicted, Community participation and involvement has become a general component in many development initiatives, such as community-based projects, which believe participatory approaches and has been promoted by prestige organizations such as the World Bank to concentrate on the inefficiency of highly centralized development approaches specially in the developing countries. According to Ribot, (2004), nowadays, development initiatives seek the contribution and active participation from all stakeholders, at the appropriate level. This active participation expect, not only for the sake of efficiency and fair play of the programmes, influence of donors and demands of frontline communities, but also for the sustainability of these initiatives (Ribot, 2004). Havel (1996) and Songorwa (1999), revealed that the real effect for soliciting active community involvement and participation is to create an enabling environment needed by different stakeholders, particularly frontline communities who have been exposed to negative impacts of tourism, to have an actual stake in development activities.

Local people participation is inevitable and essential for tourism development due to most of tourism attractions locates within the local communities or within their vicinities and most of times co-exists side by side with the local communities. Further, tourism take place in local communities and they are the people who frequently bear the negative impacts of tourism and damages and most of times they form part of the tourism products and experience that tourists seek (Havel, 1996; Wolfensohn, 1996; Tosun, 2000; Scheyvens, 2002; Kibicho, 2002; Li, 2005; Beeton, 2006). As Tosun (2000) further explained, community participation and involvement in tourism sector ensure the safeguard of these tourism products and related services via effective and collaborative management of the industry centered towards a more community-lead and community-driven planning process that ensure strong community support and participation for successful tourism development. A critical review of related literature reveals that local community's

participation for tourism development can be observed from two different angels: participation of the local community in the decision making process and local community participation for the tourism benefit sharing (Havel, 1996; Timothy, 1999; Tosun, 2000; Li, 2005; Chok & Macbeth, 2007; Zhao & Ritchie, 2007; Nault & Stapleton, 2011; Marzuki et al., 2012).

### *2.1 Local community participation in tourism benefits sharing schemes:*

Sharing and distributing tourism benefits among the frontline communities has constantly seen as one of the various means of community participation in the industry. Moreover, participation of local people for tourism through sharing and gaining the benefits that tourism produces is one of the main viewpoints of local people participation in tourism businesses (Timothy, 1999; Tosun, 2000; Li 2004).

Tourism open-up large number of economic opportunities which affect on many sectors including accommodation, communication, transportation, education, infrastructure, security, customs, immigration, banks and health (Van Der Merwe and Wocke, 2007; Spenceley, 2008; Nicolau, 2008). It clearly depicts that growth of tourism in any particular area, has the potential to offer such economic benefits to the host communities through direct and indirect demands for the tourism related products and services in third world countries where large number of poor people reside.

Local communities are looking at tourism & tourism related projects, because of the diverse benefits such as economic, environmental, and social attached with tourism. Let's explore these different types of benefits attached with tourism.

### *2.2 Economic Benefits*

Tourism industry jobs normally thought of as low paying, long working hours, part-time and seasonal (Mowforth and Munt, 2009). Even though said believes are existing, tourism offers significant, satisfying job opportunities for a large number of people, such as youth and first time employees who gain benefit from entry level positions where life-long talents are required (Makame and Boon, 2008). Mostly school leavers and older employees returning to the workforce due to attached benefits of tourism jobs, such as flexibility of part-time and seasonal work available in tourism industry. Other than this entry-level job positions, much front-line management, administrative and supervisory roles are well compensated.

### *2.3 Socio-cultural benefits*

According to Chok and Macbeth (2007), increased tourism can permit local community to benefit from the similar services and facilities established to support tourism. Moreover, local community and businesses usually benefit from improved revenue,

which in turn, escort to growth in the number and size of businesses and service choices for local community.

#### 2.4 Environmental Benefits

Tourism can place a greater concern on the preservation and protection of natural resources within a local community through identifying their significance to drawing tourists and generating economic benefits (Hawkins, 2006). Further, tourism activities frequently notify and educate visitors regarding the value of local & natural ecosystems and the necessity to protect them. So, this knowledge can surpass to also concerning about the value & importance of natural environment within their own communities (Hawkins, 2006).

### III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data were gathered from the local community in Arugambay by using the self administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was consisted with two sections. The first section has focused to gain the demographic information of the respondents while second section consisted with twenty benefits statements. The respondents were advised to mark the benefits statements on five point likert-scale, starting from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The researcher conducted a pilot survey on a sample of 10 respondents at Arugam-bay village. It was conducted to verify the validity of the set questionnaire & its content to check whether respondents can understand the questions included to the questionnaire. Only minor adjustments were done for the questionnaire after the pilot survey. Required data gathered by the researcher by physically attending to the selected region Arugambay. By staying within the community, observations of the host community and their involvement and participation in tourism activities were also made. However, the researcher did not consider the observation as an official method for data gathering, but minor references to observations were incorporated.

Even though this study has its roots to the wide range of previous scholars' works as it appeared under the literature review, it will be more thorough and complex study, and it further tried to carry together and inspect empirically "community participation for sharing tourism benefits" in tourism development process. Due to the complexity of the study, it was designed to utilize a combination of questionnaire and observation for data gathering in order to address the major research questions successfully.

To gain a better understanding of the central theme and the research questions, the study employed a case study approach. This particular approach was selected due to its ability to explore and create a holistic, in-depth investigation and thorough knowledge about a certain community (Saunders et al, 2000). Further, the case study approach enables to gather in-depth

information about a certain community and gain a solid understanding about that specific community within the research context.

### 1. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper has set the objective as "To identify the level of community participation in tourism benefit sharing schemes" and it has guided to examine the level of local people participation and involvement in tourism development process. To accomplish that task, the researcher gathered the data from the local community in Arugam Bay by using self administered questionnaire.

Local people in Arugam Bay also believed participation in the benefits sharing schemes as a ideal way to take part the local people in tourism development process. As Li (2004) depicts that community take part in decision making is not only desirable but also it is vital to maximize the economic and socio-cultural benefits of tourism to the host community. Further, Tosun(2000) and Li (2004) mentioned that most of previous researches and existing literature seems to back up the idea that if host communities need to get benefits from tourism, they should actively involve and integrated with decision making process.

The reverent data have been gathered under the headings of "Economic benefits", "Socio-cultural benefits" and "Environmental benefits". All together twenty benefits statements have been listed under above headings. The results of each of these statements are ranked according to the mean ranking technique. As per the mean scores showed, all together nine benefits statements (out of twenty) have been confirmed by the community respondents, and they have agreed that those nine benefits are currently enjoying by local community in Arugam-Bay.

**Table 01: Mean ranking of Tourism benefits Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Makes the community well-known	162	4.78	.460
Develop infrastructure facilities	162	4.50	.537
Uplift the Language skills	162	4.33	.619
Creates job opportunities	162	4.31	.582
Environmental beautification	162	4.28	.623
Increase household income	162	4.04	.738
Get other organizations' support	162	4.01	1.109
Creates market for local products	162	3.88	.908
Benefits to other industries	162	3.78	.883
Diversify the local economy	162	3.72	.872
Introduced the Environmental protection projects	162	2.93	1.249
Learn through interaction	162	2.85	1.118
Generate Income	162	2.41	1.151
Platform for skills training	162	2.36	.890
Increase the quality of life	162	2.23	1.011
Uplift the quality of goods & services	162	2.14	.845
Increase the awareness on Environment	162	2.07	.982
Safeguard the Environment	162	1.97	.908
Prides on way of life	162	1.91	.771
Cultural restoration & conservation	162	1.73	.696
Valid N (listwise)	162		

As per the table shows, it confirmed that local community in Arugam Bay has been enjoying mostly Economic benefits rather than Socio-cultural and Environmental benefits. According to the results, it justified that both private and state sector tourism enterprises and institutes in the study area have some sort of schemes that satisfactorily benefit local community through approaches such as Develop infrastructure facilities, Creates job opportunities for local people, Increase locals' household income, Creates market for local products, Bring benefits to other industries, Diversifying the local economy, makes the community well known to outsiders, Uplift the language skills of locals and Environmental beautification. Out of these nine benefits which have been benefiting by the local community, six benefits belongs to the economic benefits category while two benefits belongs to Socio-cultural benefits and another benefit belongs to the Environmental benefits category.

When analyze the above table, it depicts that majority of respondents have agreed with the statement of "Makes the community well known" in first rank (mean 4.78, SD 0.460) and "Uplift the language skills" in third position (mean 4.33, SD 0.619). These two statements show their mean ranking as 4.78 and 4.33 respectively. Those values are above 3.50, therefore it confirmed that majority has agreed with these two statements and community people have gained these two benefits due to tourism development in Arugam-bay.

As per the table depicts second highest rank (mean 4.50, SD 0.537) has gained the "Develop infrastructure facilities". It confirmed that majority of respondents believed that tourism has done great impact on infrastructure development in Arugam\_bay. According to the literature review done by the researcher, it has proved that infrastructure development is one of the major benefits that any community can receive through tourism development. Even in this study it has gained the highest mean rank (4.50) and lowest standard deviation (0.537) and it implied that all most all respondents were either strongly agree or agree with this statement.

As per the table depicts fourth highest mean rank (mean 4.31, SD 0.582) has gained the "Creates job opportunities" while "Environmental beautification-(mean 4.78, SD 0.460)" and "Increase household income -(mean 4.04, SD 0.738)" assured the fifth & sixth positions. It confirmed that most of respondents agreed that tourism has significantly contributed to create employment opportunities for local people and it has pushed up their house-hold income while positively contribute for environmental beautification. Seventh rank has gained the "Get other organizations support – (mean 4.01, SD 1.109)". it confirmed that tourism supported to get other organizations' support & assistance to the area due to it motivate the corporation & networking different organizations within the zone.

As per the table shows eighth, ninth and tenth positions goes to "Creates market for local products", "Benefits to other industries" and "Diversify the local economy" respectively. All these three factors have gained the mean score above 3.50 and it justified that majority of respondents have positively agreed with these three statements. Their mean scores stand 3.88, 3.78 and 3.72 respectively.

As per Timothy (1999), Tosun (2000) and Li (2004) mentioned, participation of local people for tourism through sharing and receiving the benefits that tourism produce is one of the main viewpoints of local people participation in tourism development. Many scholars Tosun (2000), Merwe and Wocke (2007), Spenceley (2008) and Michael (2013) have revealed that growth of tourism in any particular destination, has the great potential to offer more economic benefits rather than socio-cultural and environmental benefits to the host communities in third world (developing) countries where large number of poor people reside. They further emphasized that these potential economic benefits may be infrastructure facilities, transportation, employment creation, creating new markets, cross industry benefits and diverse local economy. By confirming above thoughts revealed by different scholars, this study also proved that Sri Lanka as an developing country, has been benefiting mostly economic benefits to enhance economic aspects of local people. As Michael (2013) mentioned, distribution and sharing of tourism related benefits with local communities is stimulating to attract local people's participation and their maximum contribution for tourism to make sure the sustainability and it will promote human welfare as well.

## CONCLUSION

Through this case study, the research has constructed a vital practical contribution to understanding tourism development process & local community's participation for it in Sri Lankan context. Particularly, Local community's participation in tourism benefits sharing schemes. The results of this study are expected to be useful for the tourism policy makers, tourism entrepreneurs, government authorities, academicians and other key stake-holders in the tourism industry.

The study findings have further established that local community in Arugam Bay has been enjoying mostly economic benefits rather than Socio-cultural and Environmental benefits. According to the results, it confirmed that both private and state sector tourism enterprises and institutes in the study area have some sort of schemes that satisfactorily benefit local community through approaches such as Develop infrastructure facilities, Creates job opportunities for local people, Increase locals' household income, Creates market for local products, Bring benefits to

other industries, Diversifying the local economy, makes the community well known to outsiders, Uplift the language skills of locals and Environmental beautification. As many reputed scholar revealed, this study also proved that Sri Lanka as a developing country, has been benefiting mostly economic benefits to enhance the economic aspects of local people.

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