

Capacity Development of Community Organizations for Tourism Development and Planning in Shiraz, Iran

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ABSTRACT A lack of organizational capacity development has been identified as a barrier to tourism development in Third World countries. Hence, the study provides a focused academic analysis of this issue within local communities of Shiraz, Iran. Information for this study was derived from survey questionnaires and focus group discussions. The study has identified that lack of organizational capacity is an important barrier for tourism development in the local communities of Shiraz.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been one of the most popular strategies for community development. Tourism development can enhance local and national development. In pursuing this direction, the concept of organizational capacity has become of particular importance in identifying priorities and opportunities for community development (Victurine 2000; Hackett 2004). It is generally accepted that the development of community organizations is an urgent and crucial priority in many developing countries (Jones 2001). Hence, tourism developers should prefer to invest in strengthening of community organizations as a way of contributing to long-term sustainable development.

The local communities of Shiraz have great potential for tourism development, but they are faced with a number of barriers. The lack of external investment and inadequate infrastructure and transportation facilities for tourists can be seen as a major barrier for the tourism industry in Shiraz (Aref 2010). But it considers that the most important problem associated with tourism is the incapacity of local organizations to adapt and respond to change. Hence, strengthening of community organizations can be an effective element for process of tourism development. Therefore, the objective of this study is to determine the level of organizational capacity for tourism development in Shiraz, Iran

Literature Review

The term 'capacity development' as used today has its origins in the fields of technical

assistance and development cooperation. Organizational capacity refers to the resources, knowledge, and processes employed by the organization. Organizational capacity development is an ongoing process by which an organization increases its ability to formulate and achieve relevant objectives. It involves strengthening of both its operational and adaptive capacities. Organizational capacity development is undertaken by an organization through its own volition. It is carried out through the application of the organization's own resources, which may be supplemented with external resources and assistance (Horton et al. 2003). External support for organizational capacity development can take different forms, including provision of financial resources, technical expertise, training, information, political negotiation, and facilitation of capacity development processes (Douglas et al. 2003). In organizational capacity approach, organizations are seen as having talents, resources and aspirations that are positive (McEwen and Flowers 2004). Hawe et al. (2000) presented organizational capacity as a continuum of activities that cross both the top-down and bottom-up approaches described by Laverack and Labonte (2000). The process of organizational capacity development can be understood as embodying four different approaches. Crisp et al. (2000) identified these as: top-down approach, bottom-up approach, partnership approach and community organizing approach. A top-down approach recognizes the importance of organizational capacity. Within this approach, capacity development is achieved through restructuring the community organizations. A bottom-up organizational approach involves the skill

that benefits the individual, organizations and communities (Hall and Best 1997). A partnership approach to organizational capacity occurs through promoting an environment where knowledge can be exchanged. The final approach is community organizing. This approach involves working with excluded community members (Crisp et al. 2000). Therefore, this review helps to find the best approach for capacity development of community organizations. This research has identified three essential domains of organizational capacity that can be fostered within local communities. Provided below is a further description of each of the domains, which were used in this research.

Community Leadership: Community leadership is a specific form of the general concept of leadership. It is frequently based in place and so is local, although it can also represent a community of common interest, purpose or practice (Osborne and Gaebler 1993; Sorenson and Epps 1996). Goodman et al. (1998) stated that community leaders enhance capacity when they ensure active involvement of a diverse network of community members, thus enabling those with disparate interests to take collective action by forming a unit of solution. Leadership was identified as a key factor in developing tourism in local communities (Moscardo 2008). In an organizational capacity approach, community leaders play a vital role in handling the programs and plans towards achieving the community goals. In addition, a community without leadership may not be equipped to mobilize resources or influence tourism planning (Aref et al. 2009).

External Support: External support was measured in this research as a means of determining the community's access to external support for tourism development, community's access to external support that are both internal and external to a community, social capital or the ability to generate trust, confidence and cooperation, within and outside of a community (Aref et al. 2010). External support such as government and non-government departments and local authorities can link communities and external resources in tourism development. External support may also contribute to empowering community organization to take full advantage of opportunities for community development (Reid and Gibb 2004).

Resource Mobilization: Resource mobilization was considered as a means of determining

the community's ability to identify resources' development of tourism (Goodman et al. 1998). A successful organizational capacity development requires strategic use of community resources. Goodman et al. (1998) discussed the dimension of resource mobilization as pertaining to resource acquisition, diversity equitable distribution, sharing, use, appreciation and planning. Eng and Parker (1994) discussed resource mobilization as the measurement of relations with wider society. Fawcett et al. (1995) identified access to resources to be one of the multiple dimensions of environmental factors influencing initiatives and ability to engage in an empowerment building process. A local community with capacity also has access to resources. These resources include those of economic, human, physical and political nature (Chaskin et al. 2001). These resources represent the community's ability to make instrumental connections with larger social network, and the ability to access and leverage resources located inside and outside of the community. According to Schaeffer and Loveridge (2000), building capacity in local communities requires multiple source and also time to develop. Hence, resource mobilization is an essential component for capacity development of community organizations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in the local communities of Shiraz, Iran. The primary data for this study was collected from community leaders. Community leaders were identified as a key factor in developing tourism industry in local communities (Moscardo 2008). The research study also used Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The participants in FGD groups were local residents. The items in the questionnaire for this survey were measured using Likert scale. The Likert scale is most commonly used in tourism marketing research (Grover and Vriens 2006). The questionnaire and FGD were used to collect data through three dimensions of organizational capacity. For study of organizational capacity, 16 questions were designed including leadership (6 items), resources mobilization (5 items), and external support (5 items). The value of each response for these questions was as follows: 0 = Never, 1 = Seldom, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often and 4 = Always. Most of the questions for this section were obtained and modified

through Public Health Agency of Canada (2007) and Maclellan (2007). Descriptive Analysis was used to interpret the data in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of descriptive analysis for socio-demographic information indicated that among the analyzed samples (N =175), 94.86% of the leaders were male and 5.14% were female with an average age of 53.12 years. This study was to determine the level of organizational capacity development for tourism development. The results showed the level of leadership is higher than resource mobilization and external support (10.60, 6.88, and 6.70 respectively).

The participants in FGD groups clearly indicated that improvement of tourism industry requires capable leaders. They believed that leaders lack necessary knowledge of tourism industry. Hence, the perception of the residents in some communities were not positive about the role of the leaders. Based on the FGD, the community structure suffers from lack of the financial resources for tourism development. Regarding resource mobilization and external support, it was fair to draw a conclusion that the government did not have any effective role in tourism development. These results also supported findings through the survey questionnaire.

In terms of external support, most of them perceived that the government has little investment in tourism development. They believed that the government has been making investments

for a few communities which have famous tourism attractions.

According to the results, community structure, external support and resource mobilization given a low rating of 2.0, was identified as being weak because of the failure of leaders to provide resources to other members of the community. Therefore, the leaders failed to develop community structure for tourism development. However, most researchers emphasized on local communities as an important element in tourism decision-making (Luloff et al. 1994); but in this case, respondents indicated that the communities, in reality were lacking decision making in tourism development and planning. Therefore, without organizational involvement in tourism development, it is difficult to improve tourism industry (Andreck and Vogt 2000: 27). The finding indicated that need for prioritization is necessary because local communities do not usually have the resources at their disposal to address all the dimensions as a part of the strategy of tourism development, unless assisted by external support. The findings supported the researchers' argument that lack of organizational capacity development is a main barrier for tourism development in communities of Shiraz. One of the reasons for underdevelopment of tourism industry in Shiraz is the low level of collaboration between the government sectors. However, the role of government is essential for tourism development and building community capacity in the Third World countries (Cole 2007; Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition 2007), but in this case study,

Table 1: Means and standard deviations of the organizational capacity

<i>Organizational capacity</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Community leadership	Encourage residence in finding solutions	1.54	0.79
	Actively involved in tourism development efforts	2.79	0.76
	Accountability of the leaders to local residents for tourism	1.91	0.73
	Create method of training the new leaders	1.07	0.87
	Provide leadership opportunities for youth	0.97	0.88
	Encourage the involvement of informal leaders	2.34	0.92
External support	Provide tourism information for this community	1.05	0.79
	Bring external supports such as local investment	1.50	0.89
	Use foreign investment in tourism development	1.04	1.09
	Identify local organizations to develop tourism	1.63	0.83
	Invite tourism expertise from outside the community	1.53	0.81
Resource mobilization	Access to local resources for tourism	1.80	0.81
	Seek external resources needed for tourism	1.20	0.91
	Maximum utilizing of available resources for tourism	1.01	0.76
	Know where the resources are needed for tourism	1.50	0.88
	Create mobilizing local resources for tourism	1.39	0.95

the government has taken a little initiative to improve tourism industry.

CONCLUSION

In this study, an attempt has been made to measure organizational capacity development in tourism development. The findings showed that level of organizational capacity in the study area is low. Hence, this study implies that low level of organizational capacity development can be a factor for underdevelopment of the tourism industry in the local communities of Shiraz. Therefore, there is a need for the community to prioritize its action in order to strengthen the community's organizational capacities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Through findings of this article the author has forward some suggestions for development of organizational capacity for tourism development:

- Establish tourism cooperatives to support the local people for investment in tourism development. The establishment of tourism cooperatives can boost tourism development.
- Provide potential community leaders with knowledge, skills, and experiences, which would enable them to provide leadership in their community organizations.
- Encourage the interaction among community groups, government, and tourism organizations.
- Develop tourism institutional capability to provide community training by developing a curriculum, demonstrating a model of organizing.
- Increase in the leadership capabilities of the leaders which can be achieved through community support and provide skills and knowledge.
- Decrease the number of community organizations that are involved in tourism decision-making or integrate them into a unique, cohesive planning unit.

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